

Chiefs Meet with U.S. Secretary of Education Duncan and Vice President Biden at the White House

Washington, DC, February 26, 2009 – The nation's chief state school officers met with U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden, U.S. Second Lady Jill Biden, and U.S. Department of Education (ED) senior advisors at the White House yesterday afternoon. Chiefs were invited by Secretary Duncan and Vice President Biden for a briefing session on President Obama's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) in addition to other pressing education issues.

The tone of the meeting was that of collaboration and partnership between chief state school officers, ED, and the Obama Administration. CCSSO Executive Director Gene Wilhoit stated, "This is a historic opportunity for education, and with this comes great responsibility. There is a clear sense of excitement among chiefs around reform and change both nationally and within states."

Chiefs were introduced to ED's guiding principles for ARRA: delivering funds quickly; saving and creating jobs; ensuring transparency and accountability; and advancing reforms. Additionally, chief state school officers were very pleased to hear that initial guidance on the funding could be expected next week. Regarding the use of recovery funds as well as the future of reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, ED discussed four key opportunities for innovation and reform which align clearly with the Council's priority issues: standards and assessments; data systems; teacher quality and distribution; and school improvement.

The ARRA is investing more than \$100 billion in the nation's education system over the next two years. At the White House meeting, chief state school officers had specific questions concerning the stimulus including the implementation timeline; strategies for promoting state-level coordination and consultation between governors and education leaders in states; reinforcing state collaboration, innovation, and the long-term impact of the stimulus dollars; and monitoring and reporting issues around this historic allocation of education funding.

CCSSO Board President Ken James stated, "Our meeting with Vice President Biden and Secretary Duncan to discuss the stimulus package was an excellent beginning to forming a true partnership with the nation's chief state school officers. It is imperative that we work together with the Secretary and his staff to build and design an educational delivery system that will ensure the students of this nation are prepared to compete in the global market place."

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