



Whiteboard  
Advisors

# Tracking Approval Ratings, ESEA Reauthorization, and Student Loan Rates

June 2013

# Why Education Insider?

We harness the wisdom of well-connected influentials to provide insights and predict policy outcomes for stakeholders in the education debate.

## The Value

**Whiteboard Advisors** is a policy-oriented consulting practice. We provide proprietary research and strategic support to investors and philanthropic donors, government leaders, and entrepreneurs who seek unparalleled understanding of the education policy and business environment.

**Education Insider** helps those who need quality information to make high-stakes decisions about the direction of federal policy. Education Insider combines the wisdom of informed crowds with expert analysis to offer unparalleled information, analysis, and forecasting on a range of federal education policy issues and likely outcomes.

Education Insider conducts an anonymous survey of a **small group of key education influentials** (policymakers, thought leaders, and association heads) to get their thoughts and commentary about the context of the current debate and possible outcomes. This helps surface the underlying dynamics that can affect the trajectory of policies, positively or negatively, and go deeper than the conventional wisdom and rhetoric.

# Why Education Insider?



## The Process

**Education Insider** is a monthly report that cuts through the noise and provides real-time insights on national education policy trends, debates, and issues—from the handful of decision makers that are really driving the process. We combine a survey of key education influencers with our own analysis to provide a unique perspective on the current state of debate.

## Who Are The Insiders?

Influential leaders who are shaping federal education reform, including individuals who have or are currently serving as key policy and political “insiders,” such as:

- Current and former White House and U.S. Department of Education leaders;
- Current and former Congressional staff;
- State education leaders including state school chiefs and former governors; and
- Leaders of major education organizations, think tanks and other key influentials

## Executive Summary

**81%** of Insiders think ESEA reauthorization will take place after January 2015.

**58%** of Insiders find it unlikely that the final ESEA bill from Capitol Hill could trigger a veto threat and **96%** find an actual presidential veto unlikely.

**72%** of Insiders think the full Senate will not pass an ESEA bill before the end of 2014.

**62%** of Insiders think the Senate will pass a student loan bill by July 1.

A year ago only **44%** of Insiders thought the SBAC Common Core assessment consortia was on the right track. Now **54%** do.

- Despite recent committee action on Capitol Hill, Insiders remain pessimistic about the prospects of **ESEA reauthorization** during this Congress.
- Insiders believe a deal will be struck on **student loan interests rates**, with the most likely outcome being a plan to tie rates to the market.
- Insiders give higher marks to both **Common Core assessment consortia** but 63 percent still see the PARCC consortia as being on the wrong track. 54 percent of Insiders now say the SBAC consortia is on the right track, marking a significant shift this month.
- 74 percent of Insiders think the **Defending State Authority Over Education Act** will be included in the final House version of ESEA. But Insiders are split as to whether the legislation would create new restrictions or be redundant with current law.
- **Approval ratings for Congress** remain unchanged, and low. **Approval ratings for the Obama Administration** remain below 50 percent but ticked up this month.

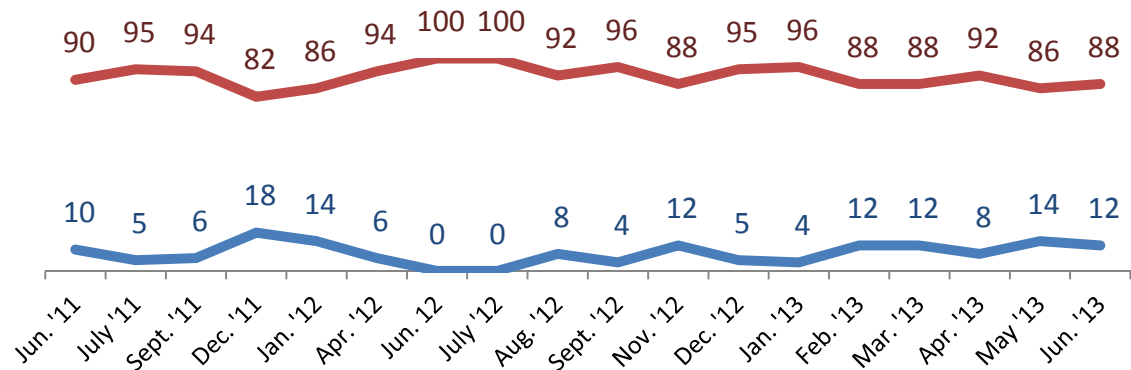
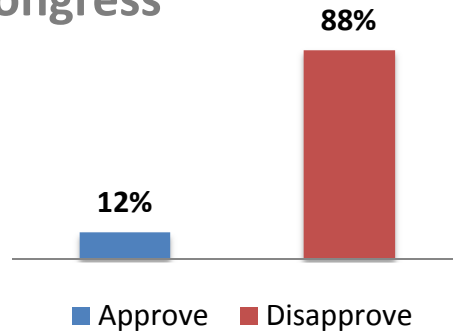
# Table of Contents

◆	TRACKING MEASURES	6
◆	ESEA REAUTHORIZATION	13
◆	TIMELY TOPICS IN EDUCATION	21

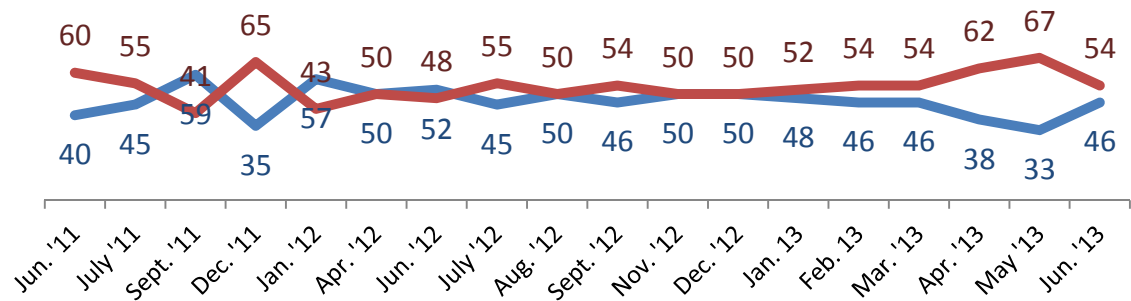
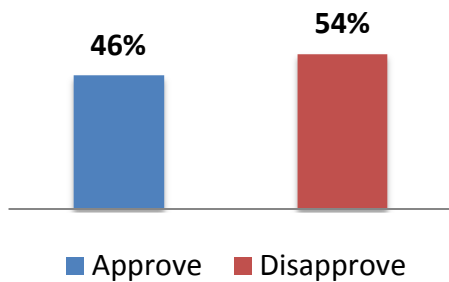
# Approval for Congress Higher; Administration Approval Dips

## Job Approval on Education

### Congress



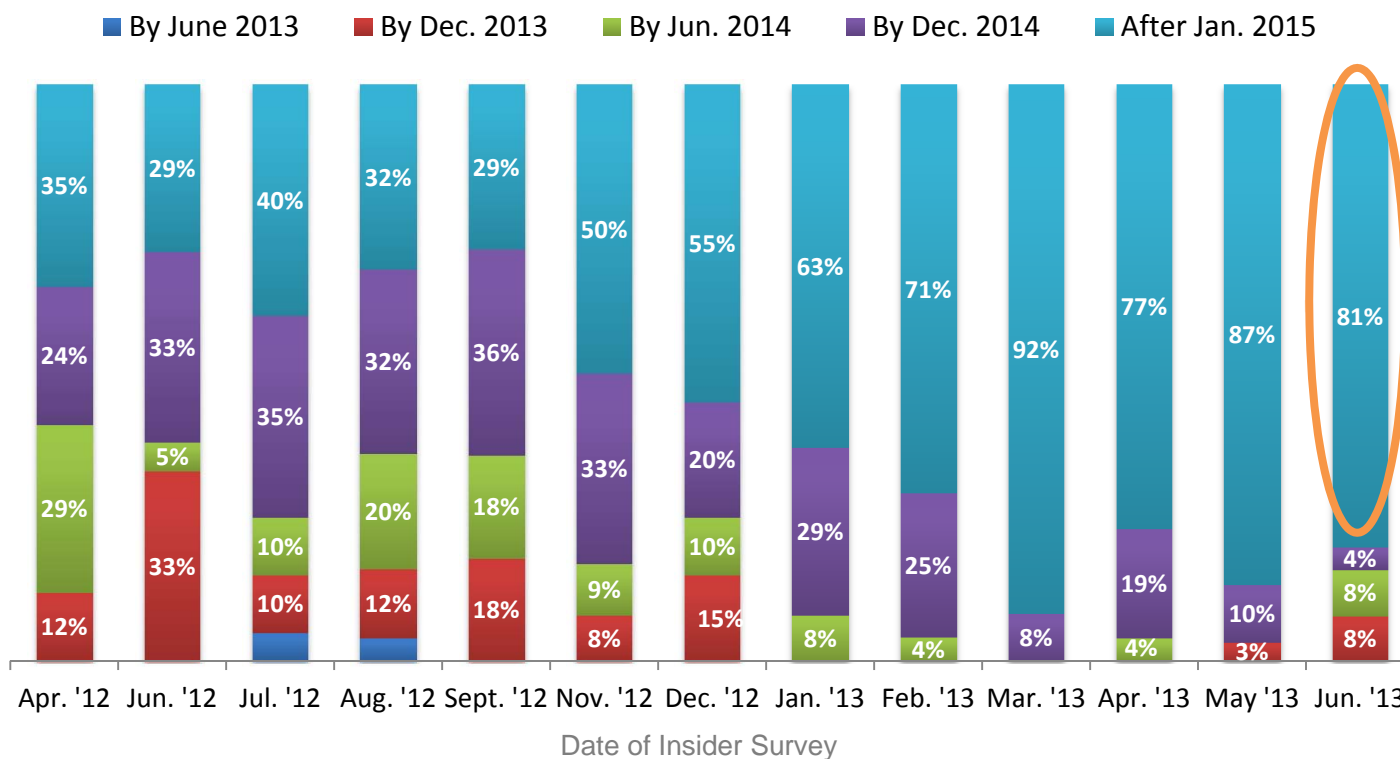
### Administration



Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress/the Administration is handling education?

# ESEA Reauthorization: Tracking Timeline

## Timing of ESEA Reauthorization



81% of Insiders believe that reauthorization will not take place until after January 2015.

Question: About when do you believe a final ESEA bill will be signed into law?

## Insider Insight: Reauthorization Timing

### Why?

- “The House and Senate are so far apart in how they view the federal role in education, I don't see how they can come together.”
- “All sides will want to get the NCLB gut job done before the election...”
- “First, you should split the Congress question into House/Senate. There's a difference between the two chambers. Second, Harkin veering far to the wacky left is eerily reminiscent of House of Cards. There's no hope of a bill moving until he is off the scene.”
- “Kline wants to get it done before waivers expire, Harkin wants to get it done before he retires; Obama/Duncan want to get it done on their watch. Best window is this session before campaign season gets underway in earnest.”
- “We're beginning to see bills but NOTHING bipartisan or even with the potential for same.”
- “Watered-down mush. What's not to love?”

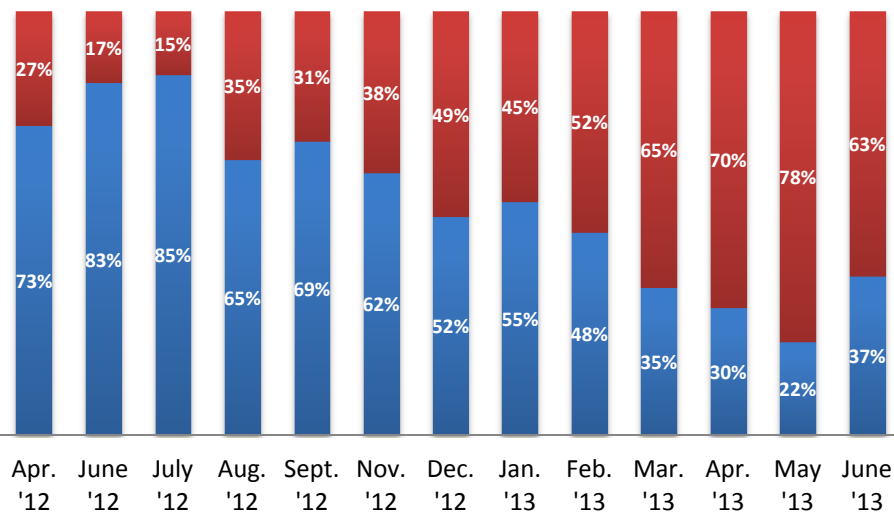


# Common Core Assessments – Right Track or Wrong Track?

Are the assessment consortia on the right track or wrong track?

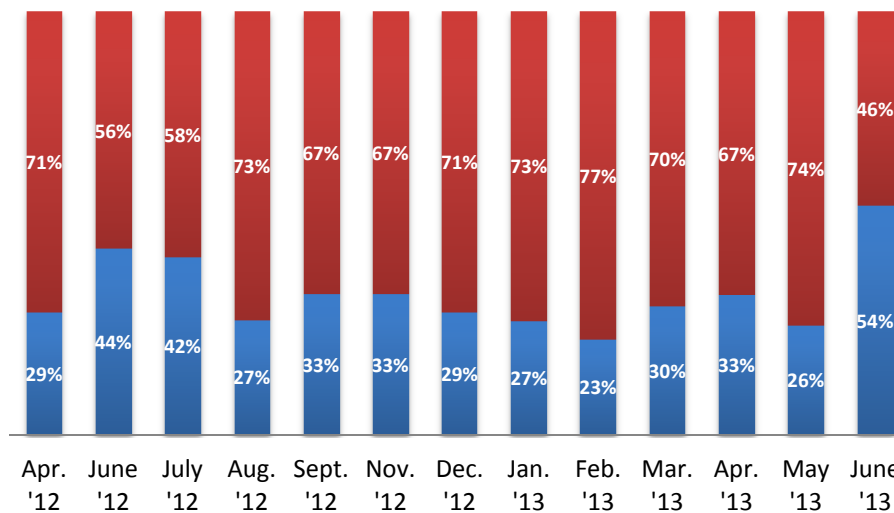
## PARCC

■ Right Track ■ Wrong Track



## SBAC

■ Right Track ■ Wrong Track



Question: Are the assessment consortia on the right track or wrong track?

## Insider Insight: Right Track / Wrong Track

### Why do you believe PARCC and SBAC are on the right or wrong track?

- “Both of these ill-conceived artificial constructs of Washington origin are exactly the wrong answer to improving test quality.”
- “Prototype assessments are a huge improvement over current state tests and address many of the concerns about NCLB-era assessments.”
- **“Smarter [Balance] has already started to pilot its assessments, has been very savvy about procurement, and has a decent sustainability plan.** Almost none of this has been covered by the media and/or discussed by education policy folks (do they even know?). As far as implementation goes Smarter seems to be leading the pack.”
- “It is really so hard to know. I read so many conflicting things about them.”
- **“SBAC is chugging along and PARCC is back on track.”**
- “Both consortia are beginning to get their acts together. This means they are not train wrecks in the happening. In the meantime, other developers are, too.”

## Insider Insight: Right Track / Wrong Track

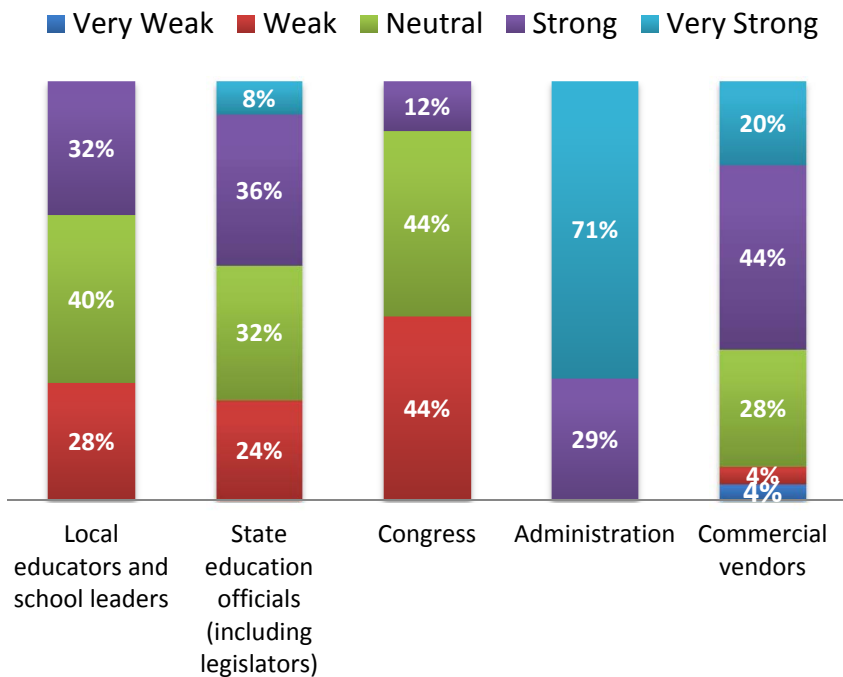
### Why do you believe PARCC and SBAC are on the right or wrong track?

- “If you had to bet it all, SBAC would be the bet at this point but they still haven't proven they can deliver everything and the recently released questions are fine but not all that different from what's on some standardized tests now so they may face a ‘let down’ problem.”
- “At this point I feel like I just want to support these guys and believe they are trying. I think we should welcome a few more players in the assessment of the core, however. It will help us in the battle against a sense of one-size-fits-all.”
- “Smarter Balanced is full of bad ideas competently organized, PARCC replete with good ideas incompetently managed.”

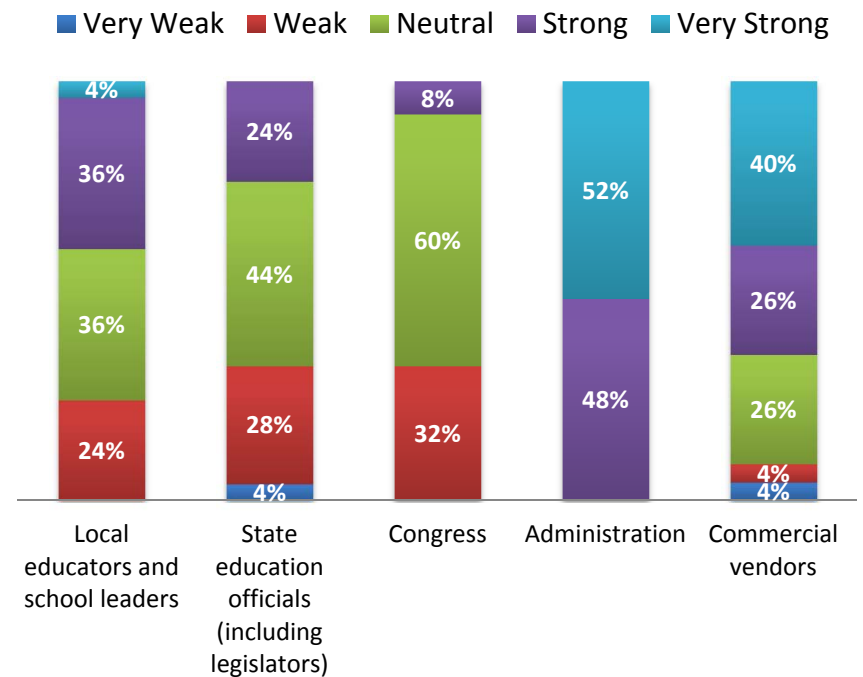
# Stakeholder Support for the Common Core

Insiders see the levels of support among key stakeholders as shifting somewhat since November 2012.

Levels of Support Among...  
*November 2012*



Levels of Support Among...  
*June 2013*



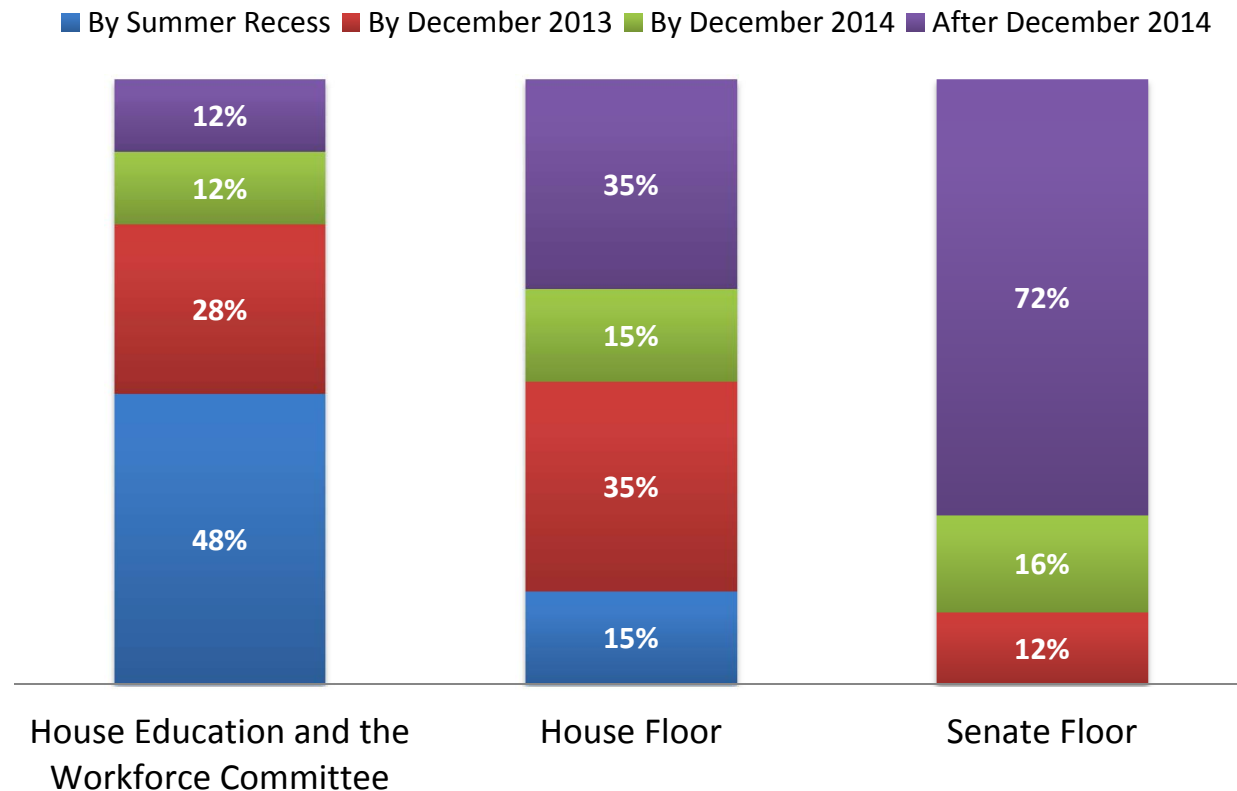
Question: Please rate the level of support for the Common Core among the following groups...

## Projected Timeline of Reauthorized ESEA Bill Pass

Many Insiders think an ESEA bill will pass out of the House Education and Workforce Committee by Summer recess, possibly with a vote on the floor by December.

The Senate appears more problematic. While the Senate HELP Committee passed an ESEA bill last week, Insiders believe a floor vote is unlikely until after December 2014.

### When do you think a reauthorized ESEA bill will pass the following bodies?



Question: When do you think a reauthorized ESEA bill will pass the following bodies?

## Projected Timeline of Reauthorized ESEA Bill Pass

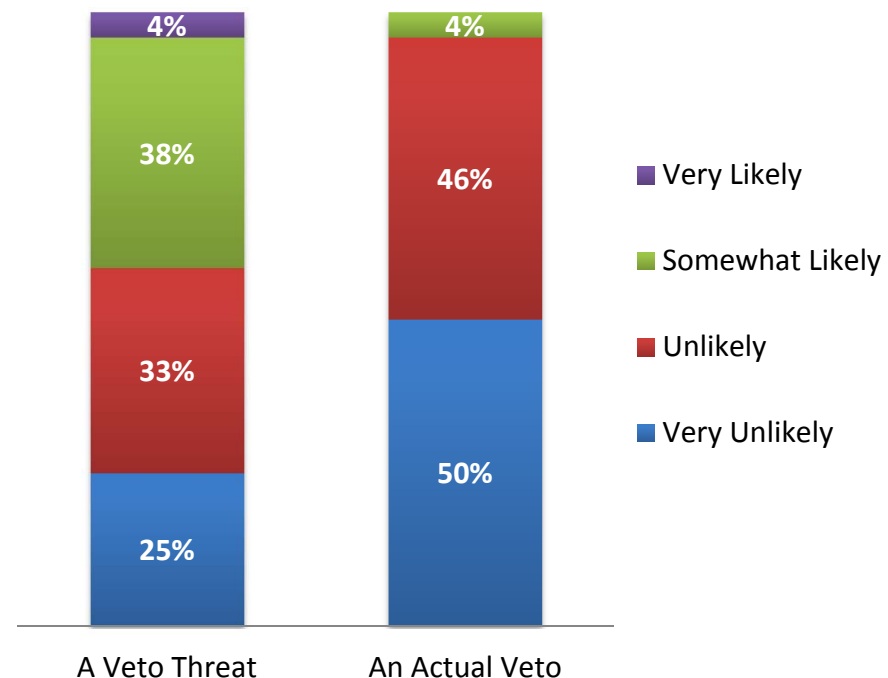
### Why or Why Not?

- **“Reid has made clear he will not give ESEA any floor time.”**
- “You should have a ‘never’ option for the Senate floor. Counting to 60 is impossible with the Harkin bill. Heck 50 will be hard with that 1,200 page monstrosity.”
- “I think they are ready to move this thing.”
- “It will depend on the substitutes offered and how they negotiate the differences
- **“[A Senate bill] will never get off the floor because it won't pass cloture.”**
- “The House is a majoritarian body. If it wants to bring up a partisan bill, it will bring it up. The business community might not like it, however.”

## Likelihood of Final ESEA Bill Triggering a Presidential Veto

58% of Insiders find it unlikely that the final ESEA bill from Capitol Hill could trigger a veto threat and 96% find an actual presidential veto unlikely.

How likely is it that the final ESEA bill from Capitol Hill will contain elements that trigger a veto threat or veto from President Obama?



Question: In your view, how likely is it that the final ESEA bill from Capitol Hill will contain elements that trigger a veto threat or veto from President Obama?

## Likelihood of Final ESEA Bill Triggering a Presidential Veto

### Why or Why Not?

- “I don't think an ESEA bill would ever be close enough to getting to this President's desk that it would warrant a veto threat.”
- “Neither chamber will produce a bill that could be considered that bad.”
- “I really don't think Congress will pass ESEA during Obama's term.”
- “If it gets to him, the president will sign it.”
- “There will be no final bill from Capitol Hill.”
- “There won't be a bill to threaten a veto over!”
- “Obama won't be president when a ‘final ESEA bill’ is enacted!”
- “It'll have to get out of Congress, and I doubt it will.”
- “If we do it right, it won't come to that.”

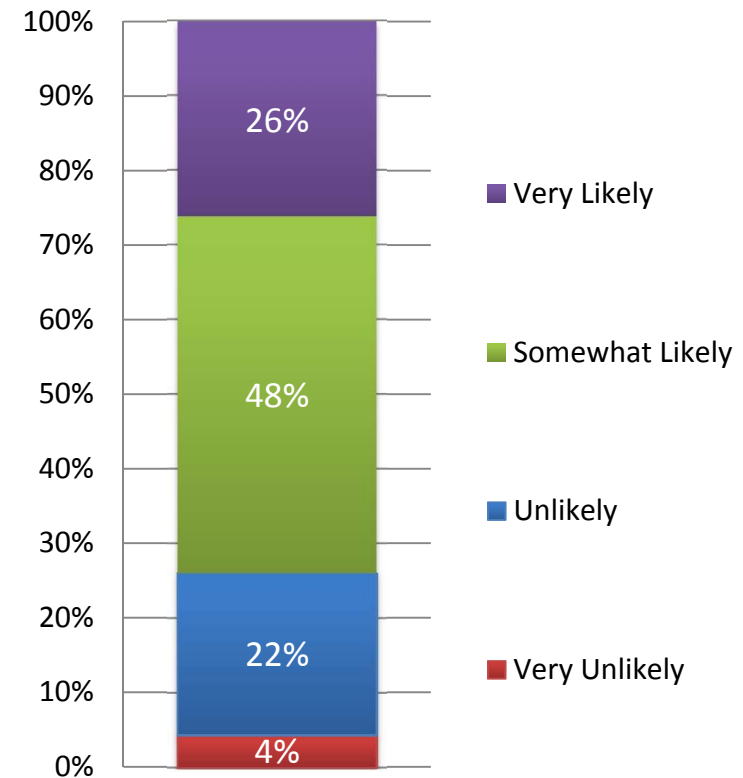


## Likelihood of Roby Bill in ESEA

Congresswoman Martha Roby (R-AL) introduced the Defending State Authority Over Education Act, which will prohibit the federal government from making any federal dollars contingent on whether a state is using particular standards, assessments, or curriculum.

74% of Insiders think it is likely that this bill will be included in the House's version of ESEA.

### Likelihood Roby Bill will be enacted in full



Question: Last month, Congresswoman Martha Roby (R-AL) introduced the Defending State Authority Over Education Act, which will prohibit the federal government from making any federal dollars contingent on whether a state is using particular standards, assessments, or curriculum. What is the likelihood that this bill will be included in the House's version of ESEA?

## Roby Bill In ESEA

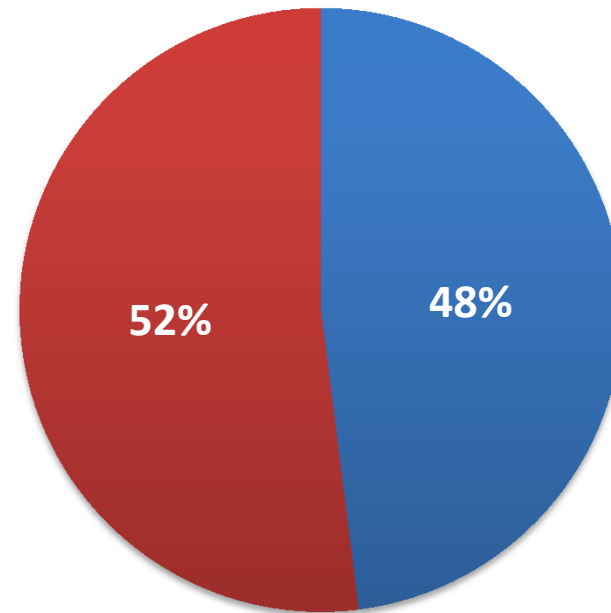
### Why or Why Not?

- “Local control sells.”
- “Freedom reigns. The Secretary made a massive mistake essentially mandating Common Core. It was arrogant and foolish.”
- “It's silly. I hope Congress is not as dumb as that.”
- “It'll have to get out of Congress, and I doubt it will.”
- “Depends on how based in reality Kline chooses to be...”

## Roby Bill Redundancy

Insiders are fairly split over whether the Roby bill is redundant with prohibitions in existing law or whether it would have an impact on policy and practice at the U.S. Department of Education.

**Is the Roby bill redundant with prohibitions in existing law or would it have an impact on policy and practice at the Department of Education?**



■ Redundant    ■ Would change policy and practice

Question: Is the Roby bill redundant with prohibitions in existing law or would it have an impact on policy and practice at the Department of Education?

## Roby Bill Redundancy

### Why or Why Not?

- “I think it is redundant, and at the same time there’s no reason why the Department believes they should change their policies.”
- “Would send the signal that federal ed reform is finished (for the time being anyway).”
- “Between Race to the Top and the waivers, the Secretary has used subterfuge and obfuscation and peer review to mandate adoption of the Common Core... A new prohibition might finally wake up the career staffers and the Inspector General and get them to say no to further encroachments of state liberty.”
- “The language is a little murky, but I could see states using the language to push back on the Department on standards, assessments, and teacher evaluation systems.”

## Roby Bill Redundancy

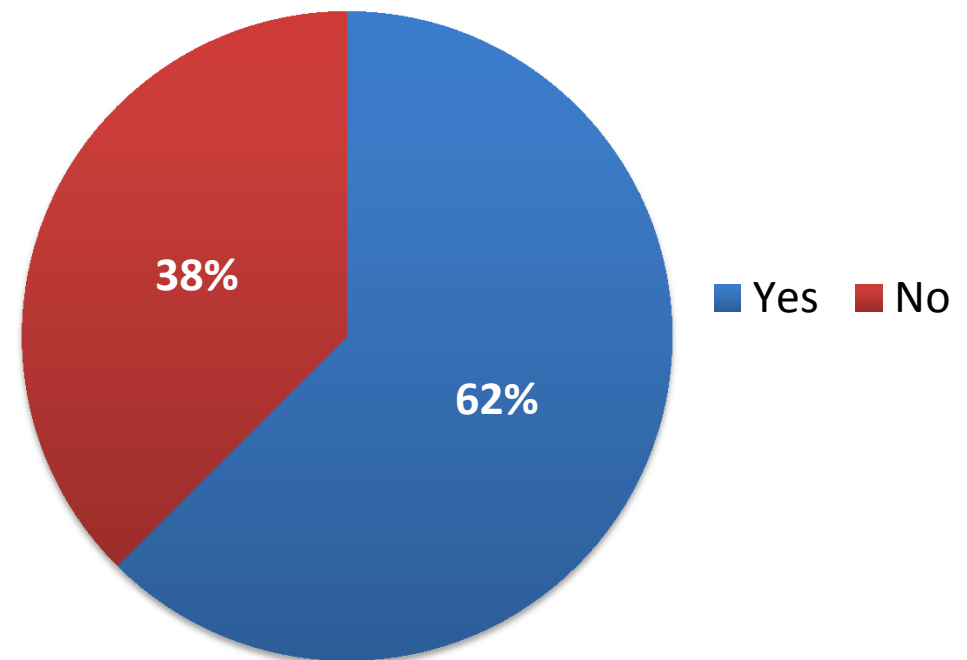
### Why or Why Not?

- “While curriculum is clearly off the table in current law, ED had a fairly rigorous peer review process regarding assessment and alignment during NCLB's peak. (For example: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/saaprguidance.pdf>) This process felt pretty intrusive to many states (although was viewed as helpful by some), and if this Roby language was included it would be interesting to see how ED dealt with it from an implementation standpoint, and if any states used it as a way to tell ED to back off.”
- “The Department's peer review process of assessments is in NCLB and will be invoked when states decide on assessments for 2014-15 (per the Smarick interview with USED).”
- “Current practice is absolutely to provide financial incentive for using Common Core.”

## Student Loan Rates

Student loan rates are set to double on July 1. The House has recently passed a bill to tie loan interest rates to market rates. Senate proposals have ranged from keeping the current rates steady for another two years to dramatic lowering rates to similar market-based approaches at the House. 62% of Insiders think the Senate will pass a bill before July 1.

### Will the Senate pass a bill before July 1?



Question: Student loan rates are set to double on July 1. The House has recently passed a bill to tie loan interest rates to market rates. Senate proposals have ranged from keeping the current rates steady for another two years to dramatic lowering rates to similar market-based approaches at the House. Will the Senate pass a bill before July 1?

# Student Loan Rates

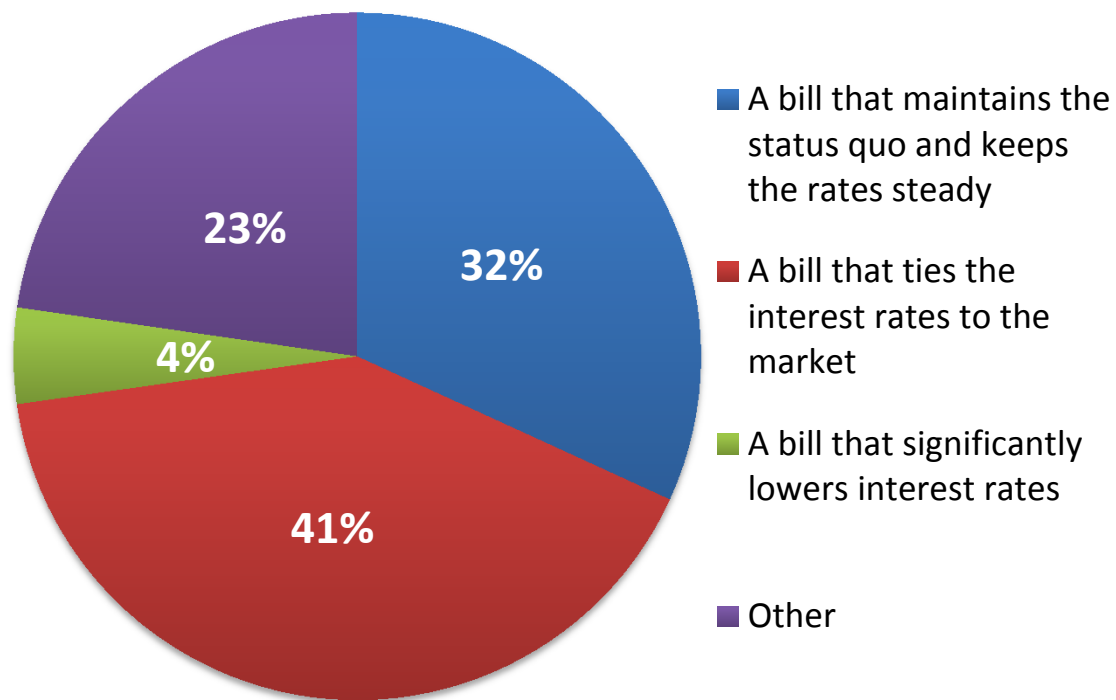
## Why or Why Not?

- “I think they need the theater of letting the rates go up to get to real negotiations. They will get something done this summer, though.”
- “Senate Democrats want an issue, not a solution. They are angry with the Administration for supporting a rational policy proposal and will work tirelessly to prevent a deal that doesn't reflect their core values of more Washington, more spending, and less rational policy making.”
- “Feels like this is getting so much press and the debt is so enormous, something will give. Something.”

# Student Loan Rates

If there is a bill signed into law to prevent student loans from doubling before July 1, the majority of Insiders believe this bill will either tie interest rates to the market or maintain the status quo and keep the rates steady. Very few Insiders foresee a bill that would significantly lower the interest rate.

If there is a bill signed into law to prevent student loans from doubling before July 1, it will be...



Question: If there is a bill signed into law to prevent student loans from doubling before July 1, will it be...



# Student Loan Rates

## Why or Why Not?

- “Short term extension. A two year extension is too expensive for House R’s to accept, I think.”
- “The only solution Republicans will accept will be a market-based proposal.”
- “Combo platter – maintains rate and phases to market approach.”
- “This might be wishful thinking on my part.”
- “Combo – keeps steady for interim period and then ties interest rates to the market.”
- “Seems the one place there is any agreement on this.”
- “No help from the White House on this one, from Dems' perspective.”

# Whiteboard Advisors



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