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From: Miller, Sarah E.
Sent: Friday, August 21, 2009 3:15 PM
To: Wilmarth, Fiona E.; Schalles, Scott R.; Totino, Michael; Gelnett, Wanda B.; Cooper, Kathy
Subject: FW: IRRC Website - New Message

From: Independent Regulatory Review Commission [mailto:No-Reply@irrc.state.pa.us]
Sent: Friday, August 21, 2009 3:12 PM
To: Help
Subject: IRRC Website - New Message



IRRC

Independent Regulatory Review Commission

A new message has arrived from the IRRC Website

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Subject: Keystone Exams Under Chapter 4 Regs

Message:

Connecting the Dots: The Cost of Implementing Keystone Exams Vs Race To The Top Funds, State Stabilization Funds, and State Budget Negotiations August 20, 2009 Compiled by: Kim Geyer, www.marsrrservices.com (Three page summary) Pennsylvania Senator Piccola, Chairman of the State Board of Education Joe Torsella, and PDE, aware of the reservations that many have with regard to the cost of implementing Keystone Exams, are now advocating that federal "Race to the Top" funds will be secured to help pay and defray these costs. However, there is high probability that Pennsylvania will not be inclined to even submit application due to various factors inclusive of being ineligible to meet the USDOE's criteria documented below. While many legislators have imagined that the failure to apply was due to an application would necessitate the administration's undesired confession that the federal funds are actually "stabilization" and not expanded spending. The real issue on the RTTT Funds is the correlation and criteria of teacher evaluations and pay based on student performance. PSEA has been silent on the RTTT Funds whereas in other states such as California, the unions have been very vocal on the component of the funds. While by the Obama Administration's own admission that 90% of the states have used the State Fiscal Stabilization Funds to fill state budget gaps, the issue for Governor Rendell appears to be that the budget proposals by both the House and Senate Republicans is using the funds to "maintain" education funding with increased levels rather than "expand" it during a \$3.2 billion deficit with new initiatives, new spending, and tax increases. The passage below from the Federal Register references merit and teacher/principal performance pay as an essential criteria just for a state to be eligible to apply for Race To The Top Funds. "Second, we propose that to be eligible under

this program, a State must not have any legal, statutory, or regulatory barriers to linking student achievement or student growth data to teachers for the purpose of teacher and principal evaluation.” (Federal Register, 7/29/09, for Race To The Top) Pennsylvania is the ONLY state out of 51 approved states, without an approved State Fiscal Stabilization Fund application which is not contingent on a state budget being approved and can be based on the best possible budget projections. Illinois and Connecticut have approved State Fiscal Stabilization Fund applications, however, both have unresolved state budgets approved. In order for a state to be eligible for the Race To The Top Phase One competition, the State’s applications for funding under the Phase One and Phase Two of the State Fiscal Stabilization program must be approved by the USDOE by December 31, 2009. Pennsylvania will have to have both Phase One and Phase Two applications of the State Stabilization Fund Applications approved by December 2009 to be eligible to “even apply” for Race To The Top Funds national competition. March 2010 is when Phase One grants will be awarded to states. Pennsylvania's Governor has chosen himself to hold out and create leverage for himself for state budget negotiations, writing to USDOE Secretary Duncan in June asking for federal intervention in a state policy issue from a federal official. June 26th, four days prior to the July 1st deadline, Pennsylvania submitted a preliminary application withholding the federal funding from the following four universities, (Penn State, Pitt, Temple, and Lincoln) again at the discretion of the Governor for his own leverage purposes only to have it rejected the following week by USDOE and directed by the USDOE to include them in application and to resubmit. Since that time, Pennsylvania has submitted a preliminary application but no final form application which was a prerequisite for SFSFs. The RTT state reform conditions criteria requires applicant states who are participating in the consortium of (46) states working toward jointly developing the common core standards, to ADOPT BY JUNE 2010, “ a common set of K-12 standards that are internationally benchmarked and that build toward college and career readiness by the time of high school graduation”. This passage references the national standards. This would be applicable to Pennsylvania who joined the Common Core States Initiative in June 2009. Phase Two RTT applications must detail and demonstrate a commitment toward enhancing a state’s quality of assessments “by participating in a consortium of states” (Common State Standards Initiative aka National Standards) and “having high-quality assessments aligned with the consortium’s common set of K-12 standards that are internationally benchmarked...” This passage references a new national assessment aligned to the new national standards which again are to be adopted by states by June of 2010. The Governor’s Initiative, the Keystone Exams are based on the state academic standards as are Pennsylvania’s curriculum and local and state assessments. The notion that Pennsylvania’s current Administration may suggest that the proposed Keystone Exams as referenced in the recent Torsella Compromise Plan can simply be adapted to national standards, as well as the state model curriculum currently being developed under the PDE’s guidance, is inaccurate and misleading. The Keystone Exams are contradictory to the direction, administrative guidelines, and advisement of the USDOE. The Keystone Exams/Torsella Compromise Plan do not support the nation’s movement toward a coherent system of standards, assessments, curriculum, instruction, and educator development as specified by the USDOE. The Keystone Exams/Torsella Compromise Plan does not support the state in moving toward common standards and assessments that are vertically aligned, internationally benchmarked, and college and career ready as intended by the federal administration. Pennsylvania’s Debunked Theory: “We didn’t know the USDOE was moving in this direction?” Approximately forty state’s had their Secretary of Education attend a national conference in mid- April 2009 in Chicago, inclusive of Pennsylvania to publicly announce the “Common Core States Initiative” which was the consortium to jointly develop new national academic standards and new national assessments to utilize for international benchmarking. Many states joined on in the month of April and Pennsylvania joined in early June. Despite having this knowledge, Pennsylvania’s Administration proceeded forth in signing a \$201 million contract with DRC for development of the Keystone Exams on May 13th, 2009 despite statewide opposition and despite knowing the federal education agenda would supersede the state’s own agenda. The National Governors Association came out Dec. 19th with their national report on “International Benchmarking” and Governor Rendell was Chairman of the NGA at that time. (“Benchmarking For Success” National Report funded by The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation). Unlike Pennsylvania, the state of Kentucky is up the challenge and has positioned itself ahead of most other states to resume some of the leadership it had at one time by having the legislature pass a bill this year known as Senate Bill 1 which scraps the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System known as CATS and requires the Dept. of Education to

devise new educational standards which can be internationally benchmarked and a new test for the 2011-12 school year. In addition, The Gates Foundation awarded Kentucky a \$250,000 grant to hire a consultant to help prepare the state's application for the "Race To The Top Money". Kentucky's goal is to receive as much as \$200 million for the development of a new assessment system to reflect the international benchmarking and common core standards also known as national standards. California, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, and Tennessee and several other states have moved to bring their laws and policies into line with President Obama's school improvement agenda. It is my hope to have clearly demonstrated in this short summary as to how the PDE's initiative continues to be in conflict with not only the current legislature, grassroots levels, and is furthermore consistent in its conflict with the USDOE's criteria and regulations to advance school reform in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Kimberly D. Geyer Mars Research & Retrieval Services Policy Analyst Mars Area School Board President Midwestern Intermediate Unit 4 Board Member 451 Denny Road Valencia, Pennsylvania 16059 Butler County, Western Pennsylvania marsrrservices@zoominternet.net 724-799-1195 August 20, 2009