

Stunning Victory for Trump: Will it Change Your Lesson Plans?

The victory for President-Elect Donald Trump was stunning. The breadth of the mandate for change as indicated by the Republican majorities which were maintained in the Senate and the House of Representatives should make this an election that will truly make a difference. The election has the potential to change the course of the economy, bolster our national defense, and shore up traditional legal foundations on social issues and religious liberties. But will it have any impact on your work in the classroom? Education policy was not a primary topic discussed in the Presidential campaign. But changes in the Supreme Court, and reigning in the expansive role of the Executive Branch of government – including the US Department Education – were hot topics and change in these areas is bound to affect you and your students.

Charters and Private School funding for Children in Poverty

The one area in which President-Elect Trump spoke out about promoting a new education program was supporting charter and private school options for families in high poverty neighborhoods. Because Trump's direct appeal to the inner city minority communities was one of the most surprising aspects of his campaign, and because revitalizing inner city schools was always mentioned as an important part of this agenda, this policy initiative could be a central feature of the Trump administration.

The Christian News Service in, [Trump's Education Plan: School Choice for 'Every Single Inner City Child in America'](#), details how a \$20 Billion Federal expenditure could be combined with local and state revenues to revitalize these schools, with state and local entities making most of the decisions about how the funding could be used. States opposed to charter school and private school options for these students would not receive the funding.

US Department of Education Could Be Eliminated or Dramatically Scaled Back

In the heat of the election many Republican candidates, including President-Elect Trump, said that if elected they would do away with some Departments and the US Department of Education was mentioned for [elimination or dramatic cuts](#). One can easily imagine a Department of Education whose primary role would be to distribute funds to states with states being trusted with the responsibility to administer these funds in accord with law.

If the Department of Education does survive, a host of individuals have been suggested as possible Trump appointments to Secretary of Education including: Ben Carson; Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker; former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee; former State School Superintendent in Florida and Virginia, Gerard Robinson; New York City charter school operator Eva Moskowitz; Former Washington DC school superintendent Michelle Rhee; Indiana State Representative Luke Messer; William Evers, a research fellow at the Hoover Institution; and former Indiana Superintendent of Schools Tony Bennett. These are all individuals with conservative credentials and many have experience with charter schools.

Whether the Department of Education is completely eliminated or just scaled back dramatically it is likely that there will be a dramatic reduction in the influence of the Department and a reversal of some recent trends:

The recent guidance on the use of restrooms by transgender students is almost certainly going to be rescinded. The guidance came in the form of a letter from the US Departments of Education and Justice that could be one of many regulations and executive orders that President-Elect Trump promised to eliminate on one of his first days in office.

The Common Core Standards have died a third death. Many believe that the way the Department of Education incentivized states to adopt the standards was illegal to start with. However, to make this clear the Congress in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) specifically restricted the Department from promoting the Common Core Standards and candidate Trump promised their elimination. However, states who really want the Common Core Standards would be free to continue with them.

The distribution of Title I funding for students in poverty will not be micromanaged from Washington DC. The US Department of Education in proposed ESSA regulations has proposed a very detailed and onerous method to ensure that Title I dollars did not supplant any regular state or district funding for children in poverty. School districts and many others felt the regulations would have done more harm than good and it is now likely that these regulations will not survive.

Change in Direction for the Supreme Court

The Supreme Court decision that made same sex marriage legally recognized in all 50 states sounded a clear alarm to those of us who hold traditional, biblically based views of marriage and other social matters. Justice Alito in his dissent to the Obergefell v. Hodges decision wrote specifically about how Christian teachers in public schools could be affected:

I assume that those who cling to old beliefs will be able to whisper their thoughts in the recesses of their homes, but if they repeat those views in public, they will risk being labeled as bigots and treated as such by governments, employers, and schools...

Similarly, Chief Justice Roberts wrote in his dissent,

The majority graciously suggests that religious believers may continue to “advocate” and “teach” their views of marriage. The First Amendment guarantees, however, the freedom to “exercise” religion. Ominously, that is not a word the majority uses.

The death of Justice Scalia, who also opposed the Obergefell decision, made teachers working in the public schools even more nervous about what they could say in their classrooms and espouse publicly. The list of potential Justices that Trump said he would look to for nominees to the bench indicates that we can all breathe a sigh of relief. Further, once a Trump nominee is appointed to

replace Justice Scalia it is likely that the expected tide of Supreme Court opinions further eroding a teacher's Freedom of Religion will be turned back.

Specifically, the Rebecca Friedrichs case, that ten CEAI members took to the Supreme Court, which would have protected teachers from being forced to pay to pay fees to the local teacher's union, would likely have been upheld if Justice Scalia – or a Trump appointed justice – had been on the court to break the 4-4 tie that doomed this case. A similar case could be on the Court docket in the near future since the court was deadlocked and the tie decision was not precedent setting.

We can also be encouraged that each appointee to the Supreme Court has a lifetime term so those appointed by President Trump over the next four years could be serving for decades into the future.

Elections do make a difference and this one could signal dramatic changes for our culture and your work in the classroom. Polling indicates that 81% of evangelical Christians voted for President-Elect Trump. Many of us are deeply concerned about the character of the man elected, but we also know that the Lord has always seen fit to use deeply flawed humans to work his will in politics and the course of nations. As Christians we know what we need to do:

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

1 Timothy 2:1-2

You can address your comments on this column to JMitchell@ceai.org. John Mitchell is the Washington, DC Area Director for the Christian Educators Association.

© 2016 Christian Educators Association International www.ceai.org/ 888.798.1124
Washington Education Watch 11/2016 Used with permission.