

A New Chapter in American Governance

As the inauguration of Donald Trump is history, the stage is being set by the new Congress for a new chapter in American governance.

For education, setting the stage included the House Education and Labor Committee electing a new chair, Republican Representative Virginia Foxx who represents the fifth district of North Carolina, to replace Representative John Kline who did not seek reelection. Foxx is a strong advocate for limited federal involvement in education, having told [Education Week](#), "I would love to get the federal government out of education policy altogether. However, that's not going to happen. So my position is, if we're going to be involved, then we should have the money spent as well as it can be spent." And, "We have to push things down to the state and local level in order to reduce spending."

The confirmation hearing for Betsy DeVos, Trump's nominee for Secretary of Education, was held last week by the Senate Health, Education Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee. DeVos is a strong advocate for federal funding of charter and private schools so it appears that DeVos and Foxx will be on the same page when it comes to reducing the federal imprint on public education.

The other key congressional education player is Senator Lamar Alexander of Tennessee who continues to serve as the chairman of the Senate HELP Committee. Alexander is no stranger to public education policy having served from 1991 to 1993 as Secretary of Education under the first President Bush (George H.W.). The National Education Association awarded Alexander their Friend of Education Award last summer for his role in ensuring the passage of Every Student Succeeds Act, which replaced No Child Left Behind. Alexander's long years of service in politics and the support received from the NEA could signal that he is an "establishment" minded Senator, one who would be likely to maintain the status quo. However, in recent months he vociferously spoke out against those who would interpret the new Every Student Succeeds Act as a way of maintaining the status quo.

Senator Alexander chaired the DeVos hearing and ensured a relatively smooth process for her. Democrat members of the committee complained about time limits on questions that Alexander placed on the Senators, but he explained that the time limits were the same as what the committee had used in confirming President Obama's two secretaries of Education, Arne Duncan and John King. Chairman Alexander also allowed for written questions to be submitted to nominee DeVos. According to the [Chattanooga.com](#) Alexander is fully behind the DeVos appointment, saying that DeVos will, "make an excellent Secretary of Education. I'm looking forward to her hearing because I know she will impress the Senate with her passionate support for improving education for all children. I am fully confident that she will be swiftly confirmed by the full Senate."

Surprisingly the DeVos confirmation hearing was free of protestors, unlike many other confirmation hearings over the past several weeks. The need for the Capitol Police to escort protestors out of the hearing rooms and the expected protestors at the inauguration reminds us that the divisions in our country are deep. I am sure that the committee rooms of Congress and the Washington DC Mall are not

the only places where the election rancor continues – perhaps the debate also continues in your school among colleagues in the teachers’ lounge, or even among the students in your classrooms.

As Christians how should we engage in the ongoing discussion? Perhaps we should focus on two truths of scripture: First Jesus was quite clear in telling us that His kingdom was “not of this world.” (John 18:36) And second, he also let us know that while we are temporarily in the world we are not to be “of the world.” (John 17:10-19). Therefore, while before the election Christians had a role to play as salt and light to the world by sharing with others the truth as we saw it, now is the time for us to remember that we have neither lost nor gained anything in the election. Rather, the Lord has set the course of our nation and none of us can be sure where this will take us.

Whether we think that President Trump will serve the nation well, or not, the one thing we know is that the kingdom of the Lord remains secure and is our firm hope for the future. What may not be secure is the future for our friends and colleagues who are not in Christ’s kingdom. So, when we engage in discussions about the future, we should pray that others see in us a peace and confidence in the future that does not come from political victories, but rather from Christ’s victory over our sin and death. If they see something winsome in us, that may lead them to Christ.

CEAI is interested in your thoughts on the ideas expressed here. Members can express their thoughts on education and faith by entering comments below. Personal comments may be addressed to the author at JMitchell@ceai.org. John Mitchell is the Washington, DC Area Director for the Christian Educators Association.