

An Open Letter to Governor Nathan Deal on Common Core Standards Initiative

Dear Governor Deal:

As you know, there is a rising tide of opposition among parents and other taxpayers to the Common Core national standards and their accompanying framework. This new education policy was advanced by the previous administration without legislative debate. The Executive Branch has no legitimate constitutional power to bypass the people's duly elected representatives when such fundamental policy shifts are under consideration. But now that Common Core is being examined openly and objectively, Georgians are increasingly alarmed at the direction it is taking our schools, our teachers, and our children.

Governor Deal, we have been some of your strongest supporters in the past, because we know you to be a conservative leader willing to stand up to the federal government and other powerful interests whose agendas conflict with what's best for Georgia. We ask you now to be such a leader on the issue of Common Core. The problems we raise are serious, they are well documented, and they threaten not only our children's education but our system of federalism and republican government. We have previously provided your office with extensive research supporting our concerns. This research should persuade you to exercise your leadership in supporting Sen. William Ligon's legislation, SB 167 and SB 203, which would help restore Georgia's educational sovereignty, not in name only, but in fact.

Here is a very brief summary of the problems with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS):

Even though former Governor Sonny Perdue and former State School Superintendent Kathy Cox jumped on the bandwagon for national standards, CCSS did not result from a "state-led" process.

CCSS emerged from two private trade associations in Washington, D. C., with massive financing by private interests such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and was pushed on the states by the federal government through the Race to the Top (RTTT) grant. This was not a routine upgrade of standards properly accomplished by the State School Board and the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) – it was a radical shift in how education would be controlled and delivered in this state. This was accomplished through Executive fiat, rubber-stamped by an appointed School Board - a result that was predetermined when the RTTT application was first signed. The process ignored the foundational principle of republican government, the consent of the governed, which is exercised through the Legislative Branch.

CCSS eliminates state and local control over what Georgia children learn in English language arts and math.

With the adoption of CCSS, Georgia no longer controls its English language arts (ELA) and mathematics standards. Rather, that control was transferred to unaccountable private groups which copyrighted the standards, a consortium of states that must agree on revisions, and the federal government through the RTTT grant conditions. Georgia may have a "seat at the table," but it sits there in an educational straightjacket. GaDOE's own training materials acknowledge that "100% of the CCSS must be delivered in our curriculum" and "CCSS must be addressed at the grade level where they are assessed." With Common Core, Georgia is no longer in control. Georgia Executive Branch officials had no legal authority to relinquish our voice to outsiders.

CCSS eliminates competition and innovation among states and is contrary to the principle of federalism.

We respect your desire to improve Georgia education so that it bolsters economic competitiveness, but CCSS actually works against this goal. How will Georgia outperform other states if it is doing the same thing educationally as the other states? We believe Georgia should be a leader, not a follower, in education. Our Founders staked the preservation of individual liberty on the system of federalism, yet this CCSS centralized framework restricts educational freedom, interferes with local control, compromises state sovereignty, and creates additional tax burdens to support decisions in which we had no voice. Innovation thrives in an atmosphere of freedom; without

freedom there can only be stagnation. If we are nationalizing our system and allowing outside entities to drive our educational priorities, why should we continue to support highly paid superintendents and administrative staff who have become mere facilitators of this national agenda?

CCSS is part of a workforce-development plan that stifles innovation in the free market and ignores the primary purpose of education.

The overall CCSS framework uses public schools to prepare “workers” for existing corporations in existing industries. This narrow focus on producing employees in a government-directed economy ignores the most fundamental responsibility of schools – to provide a genuine liberal-arts education that allows students to not only pursue whatever career they desire, but also develop their full potential as human beings. But even focusing only on workforce-development, this approach is doomed to fail since it ignores the dynamism of capitalism. How can government, or government schools, possibly predict what kinds of jobs will be available in a particular region five, ten, or twenty years from now? Is it not common sense that the broad liberal-arts education that built the greatest economic power on earth can also sustain that economic position?

CCSS math standards are inferior to the previous Georgia Performance Standards (GPS).

The drafters of the CCSS math standards admit that the standards are not designed to prepare students for authentic university mathematics. The chief drafter of the math standards, Jason Zimba, admitted before the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education that the standards are not for STEM and are not for selective universities. The definition of “college-readiness” is minimal and means, in Zimba’s words, that a “minimally college-ready student is a student who passed Algebra II.” In fact, CCSS fails to even advance beyond an incomplete Algebra II course; it contains only minimal amounts of trigonometry, with no pre-calculus or calculus. Moreover, even the Fordham Institute, a staunch CCSS proponent, has criticized CCSS’s experimental approach to geometry.

Fordham also found the previous Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) had the sixth-best math standards in the nation and were at least comparable to CCSS. (Fordham ignored the problematic features of CCSS, such as the delay in teaching Algebra I, and should have given GPS a superior rating.) Moreover, Dr. Mary Kay Bacallao of Mercer University performed a line-by-line comparison of the CCSS math standards to the previous GPS and concluded that CCSS math is demonstrably inferior.

Finally, Dr. Bud Peterson, President of Georgia Tech, stated at a 2013 conference in Atlanta that he “continue[s] to believe that for admission to a ‘technology based’ college program [such as Georgia Tech], algebra needs to be taught in 8th grade so that the students can have some exposure to calculus before entering college.” CCSS moves Algebra I to ninth grade, stops with Algebra II, and makes it difficult if not impossible for the great majority of Georgia students to reach calculus in high school. Under CCSS, will any Georgia public-school student be qualified to enter Georgia Tech?

Dr. Peterson’s views are not unique. The National Mathematics Advisory Panel strongly recommended placing Algebra I in eighth grade. Our high-performing international competitors place it there, or even in seventh grade. Doing this allows a comfortable progression to pre-calculus and calculus by twelfth grade and greatly increases students’ chances of obtaining a Bachelor’s degree in college. Federal studies, “The Toolbox” and “The Toolbox Revisited,” show that only 39.3% of students who complete no more than Algebra II (the Common Core standard) will earn a Bachelor’s degree, compared to 60% who study trigonometry, 75% who study pre-calculus, and 83% who study calculus.

Even worse, Common Core’s failure to include higher mathematics in high school will disproportionately harm minority and lower socio-economic class children. When Algebra I is placed in ninth grade, as it is under Common Core, the students who are most able to avail themselves of the compressed progression to calculus by twelfth grade are children from well-to-do families –those who can afford private tutoring and supplemental courses. Georgia should be helping less fortunate students, not making it harder for them to enter and graduate from college.

CCSS ELA standards are inferior to the previous Georgia Performance Standards.

The nation's premier expert on ELA standards, Dr. Sandra Stotsky, who authored the ELA standards in Massachusetts that helped propel that state to the top of national rankings and achievement, compared Common Core ELA to the GPS and concluded that Common Core ELA is a huge step down for Georgia. The Georgia Public Policy Foundation noted that according to Fordham's own analysis, Georgia already had the seventh-best ELA standards in the nation before CCSS. Furthermore, Fordham had recognized that Georgia's former ELA standards were superior in many ways to Common Core ELA. The literature-rich GPS has been exchanged for Common Core's empty skill sets and excessive use of "informational texts."

CCSS introduces pedagogy and requirements that are developmentally inappropriate for young children and special-needs students.

Perhaps because no experts on early childhood education participated in the CCSS development, the resulting standards for those grade levels are disturbingly at odds with the brain development of young children. Many of the standards require abstract thinking that a young child's brain is incapable of performing. The developmental inappropriateness of the K-3 standards is so severe that over 500 early-childhood professionals signed a "Joint Statement of Early Childhood Health and Education Professionals on the Common Core Standards Initiative" expressing "grave concerns" about the standards.

Many parents and teachers of special-needs students are also observing the detrimental effect of CCSS's "one size fits all" mandates. Requiring these students to conform to unrealistic standards could be devastating to their emotional health, and deeply unfair to the teachers whose evaluations will be based on the students' performance.

CCSS ushers in a fundamentally flawed evaluation system for both teachers and schools.

Part of the RTTT/No Child Left Behind waiver structure was the requirement that states tie teacher evaluations to the experimental CCSS-aligned tests and use an unproven value-added evaluation system. Not only does this disenfranchise teachers who teach challenging student populations, it also discourages teaching practices that have been effective for years. In addition, the CCRPI measures are fundamentally flawed as they allow schools to inflate their scores using "bonus" points to conceal a school's true "grade."

CCSS is part of a broader framework that requires intrusive data-collection, violating the privacy of students and families.

One of the "priorities" of the RTTT competition was that states agree to enhance their statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDS), creating and expanding systems that facilitate collection and sharing of massive amounts of student data. Myriad federal initiatives, such as the Common Education Data Standards and Assessment Operability Framework, tie these expanded SLDS to CCSS. As long as Georgia remains in the CCSS Initiative, it is almost a certainty that Georgia students' data will escape the boundaries of the state.

Georgia is aggressively fulfilling the SLDS commitments it made in its RTTT application. Despite promises from GaDOE that all student data remains within the state, Georgia is anchoring a multi-state data-sharing initiative called the Southeast Education Data Exchange (SEED). GaDOE is apparently not as concerned about data privacy as Georgia parents are.

While we appreciate your Executive Order limiting certain categories of data-collection and data-sharing, an executive order can be changed with the stroke of a pen. Moreover, the recent regulatory gutting of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) by the Obama Administration endangers the privacy of student data even if it remains with GaDOE, because the new FERPA regulations remove most of the limitations on what even state agencies may do with private, personally identifiable data. Georgia needs to make a clean break with this RTTT/ CCSS system that so threatens our children's privacy.

CCSS constitutes an enormous unfunded mandate on our local school districts.

In the rush for RTTT money, CCSS was adopted without serious analysis of future fiscal ramifications. One example of this is the recent decision, properly taken by you and Dr. Barge, to withdraw Georgia from the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) testing consortium because of PARCC's ruinous costs. How could those costs not have been foreseen? Since the progressive education "experts" behind CCSS insist that all testing be converted to online assessments, will Georgia just trade one testing boondoggle for another and stick local districts with an ever-increasing price tag for technology infrastructure? As taxpayers, we object to paying for radical education reform that we never approved in the first place. What other unforeseen financial ramifications will appear? Will we see regional redistribution of funds for promoting RTTT "equity" at the expense of local control of tax funds? Will RTTT's push for extended learning time herd all states into an extended calendar to ensure uniform testing? Where does it end?

CCSS constitutes an enormous nationwide experiment on our children.

Though the CCSS promises more "rigor" in standards, the developers mistakenly confuse developmentally inappropriate learning goals for "rigor" at the lower grades, withhold higher learning opportunities in mathematics at the high school level, and impose arbitrary elevation of "informational texts" over literature in ELA, ignoring the evidence that literature is the best way to prepare students for college. Furthermore, the rhetoric that these standards are somehow the magic bullet to provide the skills students need to compete in the global economy is nonsense. There is no independent research to back up this claim. It is a mere slick sales phrase designed to hoodwink businesses and citizens alike. The real agenda here is centralizing control of education and giving educational monopolies access to our tax dollars and our children.

Georgians don't want CCSS.

Regardless of whether the "experts" insist that CCSS will ultimately be a good thing, the people of Georgia, who pay the bills, have demonstrated that they reject national standards and a national framework for education. Evidence includes the numerous anti-CCSS resolutions passed by Republican groups, including a resolution by the State GOP Resolutions Committee and the entire State Committee of the Georgia GOP.

But opposition is not limited to Republican voters. When Georgia citizens learn the truth about CCSS, they overwhelmingly express dismay that our state would ever have joined this initiative. CCSS potentially enables enormous centralized power over education, and citizens of all political persuasions recognize that power will someday rest in the hands of officials they oppose. This is the danger of centralized, standardized control.

Governor Deal, we ask you to consider the legacy you will leave this state when you leave office. That legacy will be tarnished if the pleas of the people of Georgia to exit CCSS are ignored. But if you exercise leadership to help us withdraw from CCSS, Georgia can act on its own to truly improve its education system through superior standards and effective teaching. Georgia can be a beacon not only for first-class education, but for resistance to the gradual but relentless intrusion of the federal government and powerful private interests that do not have the good of Georgians at heart.

Governor Deal, every year of schooling is critical in a child's life. Time is of the essence in the effort to reclaim our educational autonomy. We ask you to do the right thing. Thank you.

Sincerely,
[the undersigned]

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State Director
**Concerned Women for America
of Georgia LAC**

Whitney Neal
Director of Grassroots
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**Georgia Association of Christian
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Educational Freedom Coalition
Represents concerned parents, teachers,
citizens and school board members who
oppose the Common Core.

Jane Robbins, Esq.
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**Citizens Helping America Restore
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Vesta Smith, President, CEO and Founder
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Sam Letson
**TEA Party Patriots of Jackson
County**

RNC RESOLUTION CONCERNING COMMON CORE EDUCATION STANDARDS

WHEREAS, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a set of academic standards, promoted and supported by two private membership organizations, the National Governor’s Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) as a method for conforming American students to uniform (“one size fits all”) achievement goals to make them more competitive in a global marketplace, (1.) and

WHEREAS, the NGA and the CCSSO, **received tens of millions of dollars from private third parties to advocate for and develop the CCSS strategy, subsequently created the CCSS through a process that was not subject to any freedom of information acts or other sunshine laws, and never piloted the CCSS, and**

WHEREAS, even though Federal Law prohibits the federalizing of curriculum (2.), the Obama Administration accepted the CCSS plan and used 2009 Stimulus Bill money to reward the states that were most committed to the president’s CCSS agenda; but, they failed to give states, their legislatures and their citizens time to evaluate the CCSS before having to commit to them, and

WHEREAS, the NGA and CCSSO in concert with the same corporations developing the CCSS ‘assessments’ have created new textbooks, digital media and other teaching materials aligned to the standards which must be purchased and adopted by local school districts in order that students may effectively compete on CCSS ‘assessments’, and

WHEREAS, the CCSS program includes federally funded testing and the collection and sharing of massive amounts of personal student and teacher data, and

WHEREAS, the CCSS effectively removes educational choice and competition since all schools and all districts must use Common Core ‘assessments’ based on the Common Core standards to allow all students to advance in the school system and to advance to higher education pursuits; therefore be it

RESOLVED, the Republican National Committee, as stated in the 2012 Republican Party Platform, “do not believe in a one size fits all approach to education and support providing broad education choices to parents and children at the State and local level,” (p35)(3.), which is best based on a free market approach to education for students to achieve individual excellence; and, be it further

RESOLVED, the Republican National Committee recognizes the CCSS for what it is– an inappropriate overreach to standardize and control the education of our children so they will conform to a preconceived “normal,” and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Republican National Committee rejects the collection of personal student data for any non-educational purpose without the prior written consent of an adult student or a child student’s parent and that it rejects the sharing of such personal data, without the prior written consent of an adult student or a child student’s parent, with any person or entity other than schools or education agencies within the state, and be it finally

RESOLVED, the 2012 Republican Party Platform specifically states the need to repeal the numerous federal regulations which interfere with State and local control of public schools, (p36) (3.); and therefore, the Republican National Committee rejects this CCSS plan which creates and fits the country with a nationwide straitjacket on academic freedom and achievement.

GAGOP Resolution 7: Opposing Common Core

June 22, 2013

Resolution Opposing “Nationalized” Common Core Standards; Opposing PARCC Testing; Protecting Student Privacy; and Commending the Governor’s Executive Order

WHEREAS, the control of education is left to the States and the people and is not an enumerated power of Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution; and

WHEREAS, in 2010 Georgia Executive Branch officials committed this state to adopting common standards with a consortium of states through the Race to the Top grant created by the federal Executive Branch; and

WHEREAS, this participation required Georgia to adopt common standards in K-12 English language arts and mathematics (now known as the Common Core State Standards Initiative) and to commit to implementing the aligned assessments developed by a consortium of states with federal money, all without the consent of the people exercised through their Legislative Branch despite the fact that the people fund K-12 education with over \$13 billion in state and local taxes each year; and

WHEREAS, the Common Core standards have been evaluated by educational experts and were determined to be no better than Georgia’s previous performance standards and according to key members of the Validation Committee, the standards were even inferior; and

WHEREAS, adoption of Common Core obliterates Georgia’s constitutional autonomy over the educational standards for Georgia’s children in English language arts and mathematics because 100 percent of the Common Core standards must be delivered through Georgia’s curriculum, yet the standards belong to unaccountable private interests in Washington, D.C. Which have copyright authority and do not allow any standards to be deleted or changed, but only allow Georgia to add 15 percent to those standards; and

WHEREAS, this push to nationalize standards will inevitably lead to more centralization of education in violation of federalism and local control and violates the spirit, if not the letter, of three federal laws; and

WHEREAS, both the Common Core standards and the PARCC tests will create new tax burdens to pay for enormous unfunded mandates on our state and our local school districts; and

WHEREAS, the Race to the Top grant conditions require the collection and sharing of massive amounts of student-level data through the PARCC agreement which violates student privacy;

THEREFORE the Georgia Republican Party delegates to the 2013 Convention resolve that state leaders should:

- Withdraw Georgia from the Common Core State Standards Initiative;
- Withdraw Georgia from the PARCC consortium and its planned assessments for Georgia’s students, and any other testing aligned with the Common Core standards;
- Prohibit all state officials from entering into any agreements that cede any measure of control over Georgia education to entities outside the state and ensure that all content standards as well as curriculum decisions supporting those standards are adopted through a transparent statewide and/or local process fully accountable to the citizens in every school district of Georgia; and
- Prohibit the collection, tracking, and sharing of personally identifiable student and teacher data except with schools or educational agencies within the state.

Be it further resolved that we appreciate Governor Nathan Deal’s principled Executive Order issued on May 15th which strongly recognized the need to honor the constitutional sovereignty of the people of Georgia over education and the urgent need to protect student privacy.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GEORGIA REPUBLICAN ASSEMBLY PASSES
RESOLUTION OPPOSING COMMON CORE

ATLANTA, GEORGIA, February 27, 2013 - "The membership of the Georgia Republican Assembly unanimously voted to pass the following resolution regarding the Common Core curriculum", said GRA President Julianne Thompson.

She continued, "This national curriculum will not only result in significantly lowered educational standards, but will erode local and parental control over children's educations. The power to educate our children is not granted to the federal government by the United States Constitution, and we strongly call on our legislators and our Governor to reject any policies or procedures based on the Common Core Standards Initiative."

GEORGIA REPUBLICAN ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION OPPOSING
COMMON CORE

WHEREAS, high student performance and closing the achievement gap is fundamentally linked to an overall reform of our public education system through a strong system of accountability and transparency built on state standards; and

WHEREAS, the responsibility for the education of each child of this nation primarily lies with parents, supported by locally elected school boards and state governments; and

WHEREAS, in 2009 and 2010, the State was offered the chance to compete for education funding through the "Race to the Top" program created by the U. S. Department of Education ("ED"); and

WHEREAS, the only way to achieve a score in the competition sufficient to qualify for funding was to agree to "participation in a consortium of States that ... [i]s working toward jointly developing and adopting a common set of K-12 standards..."; and

WHEREAS, the only such "common set of K-12 standards" existent at that time, or since, is known as the Common Core State Standards Initiative ("CCSSI") and was developed without a grant of authority from any state; and

WHEREAS, the CCSSI standards were released in June 2010, and to meet the ED "Race to the Top" requirements the State had only 60 days to evaluate them and agree to adopt them; and

WHEREAS, local education officials, school leaders, teachers, and parents were not included in the discussion, evaluation and preparation of the CCSSI standards that would affect students in this state; and

WHEREAS, citizens had no opportunity to review and comment on the final version of CCSSI standards, and states were not offered an option to modify those standards before their adoption; and

WHEREAS, no empirical evidence indicates that centralized education standards result in higher student achievement; and

WHEREAS, adoption of the CCSSI standards would force several states to lower the rigor and quality of their standards; and

WHEREAS, the National Assessment of Educational Progress national test already exists and allows comparisons of academic achievement to be made across the states, without the necessity of imposing national standards, curricula, or assessments; and

WHEREAS, imposing a set of national standards is likely to lead to the imposition of a national curriculum and national assessment upon the various states, in violation of the General Education Provisions Act, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; and the Department of Education Organization Act and

WHEREAS, claims from the Common Core Initiative that the CCSSI standards will not dictate what teachers teach in the classroom are refuted by language in the standards as written; and

WHEREAS, common standards will lessen the ability for local stakeholders to innovate and continue to make improvements over time; and

WHEREAS, when no less than 22 states face budget shortfalls and Race to the Top funding for states is limited, \$350 million for consortia to develop new assessments aligned with the CCSSI standards will not cover the entire cost of overhauling state accountability systems, which includes implementation of standards and testing and associated professional development and curriculum restructuring; and

WHEREAS, special interest groups can manipulate the vulnerability of the centralized decision making that governs common standards and lower the standards' rigor and quality over time to suit their priorities;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the GEORGIA REPUBLICAN ASSEMBLY calls upon the State of Georgia to reject any policies and procedures that would be incumbent on the state based on the Common Core State Standards Initiative.