North Dakota Receives 2008 Frank Newman Award for State Innovation

DENVER, CO – The North Dakota Commission on Education Improvement has been selected as the winner of the Education Commission of the States’ (ECS) 2008 Frank Newman Award for State Innovation. The award recognizes excellence in state education policymaking, honoring the late Frank Newman, a former ECS president. It will be presented at the 2008 ECS National Forum on Education Policy June 30 – July 2 in Austin, TX.

This year’s annual award honors North Dakota’s effective, diplomatic approach to policymaking. North Dakota’s Commission on Education Improvement succeeded in solving a school funding issue similarly faced by many states across the country — using a method of consensus rather than litigation.

“It is very gratifying for the North Dakota Commission on Education Improvement to be recognized for its hard work,” said North Dakota Lt. Gov. Jack Dalrymple. “The reforms that came as a result of the commission’s efforts were substantial, and it’s nice to see education leaders from across the country recognize these accomplishments.”

When nine North Dakota school districts filed legal action against the state for inadequate and inequitable funding, North Dakota Governor John Hoeven encouraged out-of-court settlement and the formation of a commission to pioneer a new funding formula that would create funding equity for all North Dakota districts. This group of 14 administrators, educators, legislators and education association representatives is chaired by Dalrymple. In addition to creating the commission, Hoeven also committed at least $60 million dollars of new money for elementary and secondary education in his 2007-2009 budget.

In the fall of 2006, the commission voted on the results of the final formula draft and agreed that a bill be written for presentation to the full legislative body during the 2007 legislative session. Throughout the following months, the commission worked from both sides of the aisle to gain legislative support. A little more than a year after the commission’s launch, the bill was passed — reforming the state’s education funding formula for the first time in a generation and adding more than $90 million to achieve greater funding equity. The legislation also authorized the commission to continue its work through the 2009 legislative session to address funding adequacy.

###

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) is the only nationwide, nonpartisan interstate compact devoted to education. ECS helps governors, legislators, state education officials and others identify, develop and implement public policies to improve student learning at all levels. A nonprofit organization, ECS (www.ecs.org) was formed in 1965 and is located in Denver, Colorado.

Equipping Education Leaders, Advancing Ideas

Education Commission of the States • 700 Broadway, Suite 801 • Denver, CO 80203-3460 • 303.299.3600 • fax 303.296.8332 • www.ecs.org