Governors' Top Education Issues: 2015 state of the state addresses

To date, governors in 37 states have presented their 2015 state of the state addresses. Although new investments in business, technology and infrastructure received considerable attention, improving education from preschool to college was, without a doubt, a top priority. Governors proposed an assortment of strategies to enhance education and ultimately boost the economic and social growth of their citizens.

This ECS Education Trends report highlights the top six education priorities for governors in 2015: Early learning, school finance, school choice, teaching quality, workforce development/career and technical education, and postsecondary funding, affordability and access.

"The proposals range from simple ideas -- Gov. Martinez in New Mexico wants to give teachers preloaded debit cards to buy classroom supplies -- to really big overhauls like Gov. Brownback’s proposal to create a new school finance formula in Kansas," said ECS Researcher Julie Rowland, a co-author of the report. "No matter where they are in the U.S., governors are all facing the challenge of balancing limited budgets and unlimited ideas."

Some important takeaways from this report:

- Many governors supported their calls for educational improvements with promises for funding increases at the P-12 and postsecondary levels.
- Tying education deliverables to workplace needs remains a top economic development priority in many states.
- Governors are intent on making college more affordable and accessible for underserved groups, including undocumented students.
- Safe, well-funded early childcare and education was a common theme in state of the state addresses.

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Related ECS resources that you'll find useful:
- For more information on pre-K funding policies, a key issue for many governors, see our recent report detailing 2014-15 state pre-k funding.
- To better understand how states are increasing access to college, check out our recent reports on postsecondary access for undocumented students and trends in state financial aid.
- Find out more about improving teaching quality from our reports on teacher performance in employment decisions, reduction in force policies and tenure decisions.
The Education Commission of the States has reviewed governors' state of the state addresses for education priorities since 2005. Visit our online database to learn about education priorities in previous years. The database is searchable by year, state and issue.

For questions, contact ECS Director of Communications Amy Skinner at askinner@ecs.org or (303) 299.3609.

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