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#### **STATE OF THE UNION RECAP: TELL US WHAT YOU THOUGHT**

In his third State of the Union Address to the nation before a joint session of Congress, President Obama focused on “restoring an economy where everyone gets a **fair shot**, and everyone does **their fair share**, and everyone **plays by the same set of rules.**” The president again pledged to continue making education a top domestic priority in his administration, saying that “teachers matter” and that “rather than bashing them or defending the status quo,” we should support teachers. Read the [full text](#) of the State of the Union.

NEA President Dennis Van Roekel [praised the president’s bold vision](#) and ambitious plan to lead the country and provide more hope for middle class families. Much of the vision laid out in the speech was consistent with the [letter](#) president Van Roekel sent to President Obama earlier this month.

NEA member [Sara C. Ferguson](#), an elementary math and literary teacher in Chester Upland, Pennsylvania, attended the State of the Union address as a guest of First Lady Michelle Obama. Chester Upland School District officials recently told educators that there wouldn’t be enough money to pay them. Teachers and support staff [agreed to continue working](#) without pay for the sake of their students. Read Sara Ferguson’s [blog post](#) in the Huffington Post.

**Tell us what you Thought:** What is your reaction to the State of the Union Address? [Tell us](#) what you liked in the president’s speech and your thoughts about his plan.

#### **ESEA REAUTHORIZATION: MAKE SURE YOU ARE PART OF THE DEBATE!**

The House Committee on Education and the Workforce Chairman has not yet scheduled a “mark-up” on two new draft ESEA reauthorization proposals – the Student Success Act and the Encouraging Innovation and Effective Teachers Act. **Now is the time to weigh in and make sure educators’ voices are part of the debate.** [Read more](#) about the House bills, including a list of pros and cons.

NEA believes that all students have the human and civil right to a quality public education and a great public school that develops their potential, independence, and character. But, more than 50 years after the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, too many students are still banished to unequal schools and a lifetime of lost opportunities. The House draft bills fail to address equity issues adequately. They do not push states enough to narrow achievement gaps; provide equal access to quality education; and ensure that state standards and assessment and accountability systems work for students. The proposals also lack a comprehensive plan to address existing inequities in public education that harm students and communities, particularly students and communities of color. [Read more](#) about troubling gaps affecting equity, access, and opportunity in the House bills.

**Take Action Today:** Educators working in schools and classrooms across the country are the best and most effective voices to ensure a good ESEA reauthorization bill. Your experience and expertise are critical to the debates in Congress and policymakers need to hear what you have to

say. [Contact your Representative](#) today to give your thoughts about what will work best for your students and school.

### **EDUCATION FUNDING: FISCAL YEAR 2013 PREVIEW**

President Obama has announced that he will release his fiscal year 2013 budget proposal the week of February 13, one week later than expected. Budget negotiations this year will be particularly critical, as automatic cuts are scheduled to go into effect for many programs, including education, on January 1, 2013. These cuts, triggered by the failure of the “super committee” to reach a deficit reduction deal late last year, could slash billions from education and cost additional loss of jobs across America. [See](#) the projected impact of these cuts on education. The cuts to education programs would also result in a projected loss of more than 71,000 jobs in communities across America.

**Take Action today:** [Tell Congress](#) to protect education from further cuts.

### **CHEERS AND JEERS**

#### **Cheers to:**

✓ - **President Obama**, whose State of the Union Address outlined plans to give hope and help to Americans and showed that he understands that investing in education now and opening opportunities to all students are fundamental to the long-term economic well-being of our children and our nation.

✓ - **Representative Joe Courtney (D-CT)**, who this week [introduced legislation](#) to ensure that interest rates on certain student loans do not dramatically increase this year

#### **Jeers to:**

X - **Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels**, who in his Republican response to the State of the Union Address called the president’s policies “extremism” that amount to a “pro-poverty” policy.

X - **Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney**, who in his response to the State of the Union criticized the proposal to require millionaires to pay more in taxes.

X - **Republican presidential candidate Newt Gingrich**, who said that the president “will always prefer a food stamp economy to a paycheck economy and call it fair.”