



2012 Congressional Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate: Eric Swalwell _____

Office Sought: Congress, CA-15 _____

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These are my official positions in seeking federal office.

Candidate Signature: _____

Date: 1/23/13 _____

*Candidates: Please indicate your response to each of the questions. **Clarifications, explanations and other information may be attached, but please be certain to indicate clearly the question(s) to which you refer.** Please return your completed and signed questionnaire to your NEA state affiliate.*

State Affiliates: Return ALL completed questionnaires and your interview team worksheets to The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education.

Questionnaire Topics:

- Overhauling the Elementary and Secondary Education Act
- Financial Resources for Education

- **Act**
- **Financial Resources for**
- **Education**
- **Vouchers**
- **Access to Higher**
- **Education**
- **Children's Healthcare**
- **Taxation of Healthcare**
- **Benefits**
- **Protecting Educators' Voices**
- **Retirement Security**

Overhauling the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

1. Multiple Measures of Performance

Background:

- Annual standardized tests do not provide adequately detailed information about individual students' specific strengths and needs, and the test results are not provided in a timely manner in order to inform teaching and learning. In addition, by design, and in contrast to classroom-, school-, and district-based assessments, they are often insensitive to particular curricula or instructional approaches.
- Coherent and comprehensive assessment systems provide evidence of student and school performance in relation to rich and challenging educational goals, using multiple indicators of student learning from a variety of sources at multiple points in time. Important standards, such as reasoning, communication, problem-solving, research, oral communication, and applied learning, cannot be assessed well with current large-scale assessments. Comprehensive assessment systems address these areas through multiple appropriate assessment practices and tools, including: teacher observations; tests that include multiple-choice, short and longer constructed response items; essays; tasks and projects; laboratory work; presentations; and portfolios.
- Attaching high stakes to the typical standardized state test, and low or no stakes to other means of assessment, tends to narrow instructional and assessment practices, replacing an emphasis on critical thinking with a focus on basic skills.

Question:

1. Do you support or oppose ensuring the use of multiple measures to evaluate student achievement and school performance?

Support
 Oppose

2. Federal Role in Teacher Evaluation

Background:

- States, school districts, schools, and teacher development programs can use performance assessments to make systematic decisions about recruitment, employment, professional development, and career development, etc. Collaboration and involving educators throughout every step is critical.
- Credible, meaningful evaluation can only be achieved when multiple stakeholders

and involving educators throughout every step is critical.

- Credible, meaningful evaluation can only be achieved when multiple stakeholders are involved in the development of a system said to be meaningful to all.
 - The core purpose of teacher assessment and evaluation should be to strengthen educators' knowledge, skills, and classroom practices, to promote student growth and learning, and to inspire great educators to remain in the classroom. Effective evaluation systems measure performance on multiple ratings and clear standards; link procedures with curricular standards, professional development activities, targeted support, and human capital decisions; and are co-created or designed with educators at the local level through collective bargaining or, where there is no collective bargaining, agreed to by the organization representing educators.
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2. Question: Which of the following statements comes closer to your view?

Statement A: The federal government should not dictate terms and conditions of educator employment, including how individual teachers are evaluated. Federal policy does not dictate performance evaluation standards for other local public employees—such as firefighters or police officers—nor should it dictate to local school boards and superintendents how to evaluate individual employees.

Statement B: Research clearly shows that a great teacher has a large, positive impact on student success, yet across the country, teachers are routinely ignored and not given meaningful evaluations or feedback about instructional practice. The federal government should require states to ensure comprehensive and meaningful evaluation systems developed collaboratively by educators and administrators in each local district that evaluates a teacher's practice.

Statement A is closer to my view

Statement B is closer to my view

Please explain why:

With education, we should think globally but allow decisions to be made locally. In this changing economy, we need flexible standards that reflect regional needs. Not nationalized standards that hand-cuff our teachers' ability to teach, puts a ceiling on our children's ability to learn, and unfairly labels too many schools as "failing." Under the current law, teachers are required to ensure that students pass a test. The myriad different learning styles and experiences among students are not addressed or considered. Scoring poorly on a test does not mean that a student is poorly educated

3 & 4. Teacher Effectiveness

Background:

- Current standardized tests are narrow measures of what students know, relying largely on multiple-choice items that do not evaluate communication skills, depth of knowledge and understanding, or critical thinking.
 - Most secondary school teachers, all teachers in kindergarten, first, and second grades, and some in grades three through eight do not teach courses in which students are subject to the types of tests needed to evaluate test score gains.
 - Student test scores are heavily influenced by parents' education and home literacy environment, family resources, student health, family mobility, and the influence of neighborhood peers and classmates. A teacher who appears ineffective in one year might have a dramatically different result the following year. Over-reliance on test scores for teacher evaluation will almost always make educators in affluent suburban districts look more effective than educators in urban districts.
 - Given the range of measures currently available for teacher evaluation, and the
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make educators in affluent suburban districts look more effective than educators in urban districts.

- Given the range of measures currently available for teacher evaluation, and the need for research about their effective implementation and consequences, legislatures should avoid imposing mandated solutions to the complex problem of identifying more and less effective teachers.
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Questions:

- 3. In thinking about teacher evaluation systems, do you support or oppose a federal mandate that teacher evaluations be based predominantly or significantly on student standardized test scores?**

Support
 Oppose

- 4. Do you support or oppose the following statement?**

Evaluations of a teacher's performance, including determinations of effectiveness and employer-prescribed professional development, should be considered confidential personnel file information.

Support
 Oppose

5. Models of School Reform

Background:

- School Improvement Grant regulations limit school districts receiving funds to turnaround low-performing schools to four reform models: Turnaround, Restart, Closure, and Transformation

- Schools that raise achievement use a flexible menu of tools and strategies to improve their school's performance. When schools are allowed flexibility and choice, they can adapt their plan as needs arise.

- School turnaround is difficult and very complex and corporate sector lessons are not always applicable to education. Shortchanging effective, long-term solutions could hamper sustained achievement. The most successful school improvements come about when educators, parents, administrators, and the community all come to the table.

- The Turnaround Model requires firing and replacing the school's principal and at least half the teachers. But teacher recruitment in rural areas is already hard because the pool of highly qualified teachers is usually smaller than in urban communities. The School Closure Model requires the failing school to shut down and send its students to higher-achieving schools in the same district, but, in rural areas, the closest school may be 30 miles away.

Question:

- 5. Do you support or oppose including in ESEA only those school improvement models currently prescribed by the School Improvement Grant program?**

Support
 Oppose

6. Adequacy and Equity in Educational Resources and Opportunities

Background:

- Nationally, students from historically disadvantaged groups have just a 51 percent Opportunity to Learn, when compared to White, non-Latino students. Only eight states provide at least a moderately proficient and high access education for all students. Sixteen states provide a moderately proficient education for most students, but demonstrate low access in providing that education to historically disadvantaged students. Seventeen states provide high-access, low-proficiency education to their students.
- The educational achievement gap in the United States exists in and out of the classroom, and extends from the earliest years of childhood across the lifespan.
- By the end of fourth grade, African American, Latino, and poor students of all races are two years behind wealthier, predominantly White peers in reading and math. By eighth grade, they are three years behind, and by twelfth grade, four years behind. By the end of high school, Black and Hispanic students' reading and mathematics skills are roughly the same as those of white students in the eighth grade.
- In the five states with large English Language Learner (ELL) student populations, the proportion of ELL students scoring at or above the proficient level on the state mathematics test is often below the proportion of Black students scoring at or above the proficient level. In both elementary grades and middle school grades in these states, ELL students are much less likely than White students to score at or above the proficient level in mathematics. The measured gaps are in the double-digits.
- Rural schools receive little revenue from local sources; they receive the bulk of their funding from state and federal funds. Rural school districts tend to tax at a higher percentage and with a lower yield than all other school districts. As a result, they need federal funding supplements to provide equitable education opportunities.

Question:

6. Do you support or oppose a federal requirement that each state, as a condition for receiving ESEA funds, submit a plan outlining how the state—over a period of years--will remedy disparities in educational tools, services, opportunities, and resources among districts and schools?

Support
 Oppose

Ensuring the Necessary Financial Resources to Provide Great Public Schools for Every Student

Background:

- Research shows an inextricable link between investment in pre-k through postsecondary education and economic strength. Consistent productive employment reduces dependence on public income-transfer programs and all workers, regardless of education level, earn more when there are more college graduates in the labor force.
- According to the most recent available data, child poverty has reached a level of 20.7 percent – a rate of more than one in five and totaling more than 15.5 million

- According to the most recent available data, child poverty has reached a level of 20.7 percent – a rate of more than one in five and totaling more than 15.5 million children. Without consistent federal resources targeted to those with the greatest needs, these children will not have the supports they need to succeed.
- Ever since its initial enactment in 1975, the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act has included a commitment to pay 40 percent of the average per student cost for every special education student. The current federal share is less than 20 percent.
- Between 1998–99 and 2008–09, prices for undergraduate tuition, room, and board at public institutions rose 32 percent, and prices at private institutions rose 24 percent, after adjustment for inflation.

Questions:

7. What is your position on funding for Title I – which provides additional resources to assist educationally disadvantaged children in high-poverty schools?

Increase funding

Maintain funding – I will support increased funding if we are fully meeting other education funding obligations.

Decrease funding

8. Would you vote for mandatory full federal funding at the promised level (40 percent of the costs of educating students with disabilities) for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)?

Support

Oppose

9. Would you vote to increase the purchasing power of the maximum Pell Grant so that it keeps pace with increases in tuition costs?

Increase to keep pace with inflation

Maintain at the current maximum amount of \$5,500 per student per year

Decrease

Helping Ensure Great Public Schools for All Students by Opposing Private School Vouchers

Background:

- Official evaluations of voucher programs in Milwaukee, Cleveland, and Washington, D.C., have found no statistically significant differences in the academic achievement of voucher students compared to public school students. Public school students have been found to outperform private school students when test scores are weighted to reflect socioeconomic level, race, and disability.
- Vouchers do not improve public schools by creating competition.
- Millions of tax dollars have been lost to private school operators who fraudulently misrepresented enrollment data, failed to provide safe, academically appropriate learning environments, and otherwise gamed the system for personal profit.

Question:

10. Do you support or oppose federal private school voucher programs, including demonstration projects?

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Support
 Oppose

Expanding Access to Higher Education

Background:

- About 65,000 undocumented children who have lived in the United States for five years or longer graduate from high school each year. Although they can legally attend most colleges, they are not eligible for most forms of financial aid. Because of barriers to their continued education and their exclusion from the legal workforce, only between 5 and 10 percent of undocumented high-school graduates go to college.
- Given the opportunity to receive additional education and move into better paying jobs, undocumented students would pay more in taxes and have more money to spend and invest in the U.S. economy.

Question:

11. Do you support or oppose providing a path to legal status for students brought to the U.S. as undocumented children years ago, who have grown up here and remained in school and out of trouble, if they complete at least two years of college or serve in the military?

Support
 Oppose

Ensuring Children's Access to Quality Health-Care

Background:

- Six million children in the United States (8.8 percent) are uninsured. Fifteen percent of children in low-income families were without health insurance in 2009.
- A child's health and ability to participate fully in school depend on access to quality health insurance starting well before birth and continuing throughout early childhood and adolescence.
- Ninety percent of children enrolled in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) have families who earn less than 200% of the Federal Poverty level, yet 92 percent of children enrolled in CHIP have at least one employed parent.
- A trip to the emergency room is 234 percent more costly than a doctor's office visit, yet an uninsured child is 500 percent more likely to use the emergency as a regular place of care than an insured child.

Question:

12. Do you support or oppose cuts to federal health benefits serving children and their families, including Medicaid and CHIP?

Support
 Oppose

Protecting the Middle Class by Opposing Taxation of Employer-Sponsored Health Insurance

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Background:

- Employer-sponsored health benefits have never been taxed in this country. American workers have made financial sacrifices to maintain their health benefits, often forgoing salary increases to ensure that they and their families have the security provided by health insurance.
- Taxing health benefits would disproportionately affect women and older workers. The age and gender composition of a covered group is a major determinant of plan expense. Employer groups that are predominantly women, like educators, will be faced with a higher tax simply because of the gender of their workers.
- Middle class taxes would go up between \$2,000 and \$3,000 per tax return if benefits were taxed.

Question:

13. Do you support or oppose taxation of employer-sponsored health care insurance?

Support
 Oppose

Why?

This would be a new tax on middle and low income workers and it could disproportionately affect workers of one gender or age who are the majority of the covered group.

Ensuring Educators a Voice at the Table

Background:

- The percent of students passing Advanced Placement exams are highest in states where teachers have collective bargaining rights. The top ten states in this category are states where teachers have collective bargaining rights, according to a 2008 study by the College Board.
- Teacher salaries are highest in states where teachers have collective bargaining rights, showing the intersection of bargaining rights, professional pay, and student success. The top ten states for average teacher salary are all states in which teachers have collective bargaining rights.
- Collective bargaining can have a direct positive impact on the learning conditions for students as it has in Helena, MT through the development of their Professional Compensation Alternative Plan and Career Development Plan.
- Many countries that earned top scores in the 2009 Program for International Student Assessment, such as Finland and Canada, are known for their high regard for the teaching profession. They promote high standards and rigorous preparation for entry into the profession, and then they support teachers with ongoing quality professional development. They also have strong teachers' unions, underscoring the fact that unions have an important and positive role in upholding the profession and transforming schools.

Question:

14. Do you support or oppose public education employees' rights to bargain collectively?

Support
 Oppose

Support
 Oppose

Protecting Earned Retirement Benefits

Background:

- The Government Pension Offset reduces or eliminates the Social Security survivor benefits of over 464,000 beneficiaries. Of these individuals, 43 percent are widows/widowers and about 77percent are women.
- There are approximately one million beneficiaries currently affected by the Windfall Elimination Provision – as a result, these public employees lose a significant amount of their earned Social Security benefits.

Question:

15. Do you support or oppose eliminating the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision?

Support
 Oppose

Protecting Retirement Security

Background:

- Making Social Security mandatory would have little impact on any Social Security funding shortfalls, but would be costly to states and localities. The additional payroll taxes would increase California's annual expenditures by more than \$2.3 billion. Ohio would be forced to pay an additional \$1 billion annually, and Texas, Illinois, Colorado, Massachusetts, and Louisiana all would pay hundreds of millions of dollars more each year. Projections suggest that states collectively will need to close over \$125 billion in deficits as they enact their fiscal year 2012 budgets.

Question:

16. Would you vote to support or oppose mandating Social Security coverage for all public employees?

Support
 Oppose

ESSAY QUESTIONS

- Please describe the top three public education priorities (pre-k through higher education) on which you would focus in Congress and why.

Abolish President Bush's No Child Left Behind

Invest in pre-kindergarten/early childhood development so we can avoid costly efforts to correct under-performance later in a child's academic career.

See higher education below.

Finally, I will approach every budget with the mantra: Education is the foundation of our success.

- Please explain how, as a Member of Congress, you would specifically build respect for the education profession in order to help attract and retain the highest quality educators in pre-k through higher education.

respect for the education profession in order to help attract and retain the highest quality educators in pre-k through higher education.

Children cannot adequately learn, however, if we do not provide them with highly-trained teachers. For starters, young, qualified teachers need job security. Too many districts routinely issue pink slips to young teachers every spring. This is unacceptable and not seen in almost any other profession. It's also a deterrent to attracting talented teachers and causes talented teachers to leave the profession early. If we want teachers to teach, we must equip them with not only the skills and technology to do so, but also job security. And if teachers cannot meet fair evaluation standards, we must re-train them.

- . Please explain your position on increasing federal support for public higher education, particularly given the need for global competitiveness?**

I was the first person in my family to go to college, and I understand how difficult it is to afford to attend college. I'm still paying my student loans from college and law school. I support a national college tuition loan program so that every high-school student who wants to invest in their future can receive a federal government *loan* for college or post-secondary education. With tuition costs rising across California and the United States, we need more than ever, a national student tuition loan program that provides full funding for post-secondary tuition.

ENDNOTES