



H.R. 10—SOAR Reauthorization Act, (Boehner, R-OH)

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FLOOR SCHEDULE:

Scheduled for consideration on October 21, 2015, subject to a structured [rule](#).

TOPLINE SUMMARY:

[H.R. 10](#) would reauthorize the [Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Act \(SOAR\)](#) through September 30, 2021, to give students and parents in the District of Columbia choice in their educations. The bill would continue to use the three-sector approach in funding, authorizing \$60 million in annual funding to be distributed equally between the District of Columbia Public Schools, the District of Columbia public charter schools, and the [District of Columbia Opportunity Scholarship Program](#) (OSP), which gives low-income students access to education opportunities through scholarships to private schools.

COST:

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) [estimates](#) that enacting H.R. 10 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods, beginning in 2026.

CONSERVATIVE CONCERNS:

There are no substantive concerns.

- **Expand the Size and Scope of the Federal Government?** No.
- **Encroach into State or Local Authority?** No.
- **Delegate Any Legislative Authority to the Executive Branch?** No.
- **Contain Earmarks/Limited Tax Benefits/Limited Tariff Benefits?** No.

DETAILED SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS:

H.R. 10 would reauthorize the SOAR Act for five additional years, through September 30, 2021, providing more than \$300 million for education in D.C. This amount would be divided equally amongst D.C. Public Schools, D.C. public charter schools, and the OSP. The Secretary of Education would be permitted to withhold funds from the Mayor of D.C. if the Mayor does not comply with the requirements of this bill and if reasonable notice and opportunity for a hearing was received. The Secretary of Education would be authorized to direct funds to the [Office of the State Superintendent of Education of the District of Columbia](#), who may transfer funds to DC public charter schools, public charter school networks, or relevant non-profits.

The measure would continue to use the three-sector approach to education which was first introduced in the [DC School Choice Incentive Act](#) and was formally adopted in the SOAR Act in 2011. In 2003, when OSP was created, Washington, D.C. public school students had the lowest test scores in the nation. Though D.C. public schools have shown a great deal of improvement, public school students continue to test below national averages. OSP students, conversely, have shown significant improvement in certain subjects over the past decade in comparison to non-OSP students. Graduation rates have also significantly improved for OSP students, leading to higher salaries later in their lives.

Recognizing the successes of the OSP, H.R. 10 would revise the structure for evaluating the OSP. Previously, the OSP was evaluated through a randomized control evaluation by the Secretary of Education, which created a lottery awarding scholarships to some student applicants and keeping others in a “control group,” not receiving scholarships. This practice limited access and participation to the program.

H.R. 10 would recognize the effectiveness of the OSP, and would give all student applicants the same opportunity to participate in the program, moving to a quasi-experimental research design evaluation. H.R. 10 would prohibit the Secretary of Education from limiting a student from participating in the OSP based on where the student previously attended school, including private schools, or whether or not the student received a scholarship in the past. If a greater number of students expresses interest in the program than the program is able to accept, the program administrator would conduct a random selection, with greater weight given to: (1) schools marked for improvement under the [Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965](#); (2) students who were awarded a scholarship in the preceding year; and (3) students with a sibling or child in household already in the OSP.

Under H.R. 10, the OSP would be evaluated by comparing the academic achievement of OSP students with the academic achievement of students with similar backgrounds throughout DC public schools. This allows the evaluation of students who previously received a scholarship and were studied under the former evaluation mechanism. This evaluation would fall in line with the U.S. Department of Education’s [What Works Clearinghouse](#) standards.

The Secretary of Education and the Mayor of D.C. would be required to have the [Institute of Education Sciences](#) (IES) annually evaluate the OSP and to monitor how the distributed funds are contributing to student achievement. The evaluation would include: (1) student achievement; (2) reasons for program participation; (3) a comparison of retention, graduation, college enrollment, college persistence and college graduation; (4) school safety; (5) parent and student school satisfaction; (6) other issues needing evaluation. The IES would evaluate students between grades 3 and 8, and one high school grade.

This legislation would address prior administration concerns with the OSP, including concerns with the OSP [administrator’s internal controls](#) and record-keeping of school [accreditation](#). H.R. 10 would require the OSP administrator to use internal fiscal and quality controls and would require OSP participant schools to gain accreditation within five years of passage of this Act. School employees with unsupervised student interaction would be required to complete a criminal background check.

H.R. 10 would authorize \$2 million to handle administrative functions, to provide parental education and assistance, and to streamline the application. Prior unobligated funds would be used to award new scholarships, with not more than 5% of the funds directed at administration costs, parental assistance, or

tutoring. The bill would also require the Secretary of Education and the Mayor of D.C. to revise their Memorandum of Understanding, to reflect text of the bill, the need to comply with fire code standards, and to ensure DC public and public charter schools adhere to requirements for evaluation.

This legislation would require amendments included to take effect during the 2016-2017 school year, and each subsequent year.

The legislative bulletin for the original SOAR Act in the 112th Congress can be found [here](#). H.R. 471, the SOAR Act passed the 112th Congress by a [vote](#) of 225-195. The Committee report for H.R. 10 can be found [here](#).

AMENDMENTS:

1. [Chaffetz](#) (R-UT) - Managers Amendment – This amendment would make small, technical corrections to the bill.
2. [Norton](#) (D-DC) - This amendment would restore the requirement that the strongest possible research design be used when evaluating the voucher program. This would limit voucher students to no more than 50% of a school’s total enrollment.

OUTSIDE GROUPS:

[Heritage Action \(Key Voting\)](#)
[National Coalition for Parental Choice](#)
[Charter Board Partners](#)
[Archbishop of Washington](#)
[Committee on Catholic Education](#)
[AppleTree](#)
[Lee Montessori Public Charter School](#)
[DC Scholars](#)
[Center City Public Charter Schools](#)
[The Next Step Public Charter School](#)
[Ingenuity Prep](#)
[Parents in Support](#)
[DC Public Charter School Board](#)
[DC Catholic Conference](#)
[KIPP DC](#)
[Washington Latin Public Charter School](#)

COMMITTEE ACTION:

H.R. 10 was introduced on October 5, 2015 and was referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. It was reported out of Committee on October 16, 2015.

ADMINISTRATION POSITION:

A statement of Administration Policy can be found [here](#).

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY:

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following: Article 1, Section 8, clause 1 and Article 1, Section 8, clause 17.

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