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EDUCATION LEADERS CRAFT FRESH VISION FOR EDUCATION REFORM

Burlington, VT. -- Meeting today in tandem with the National Governors' Association, senior education officials from six states agreed to forge a new alliance that will lead American education toward renewal.

"Business as usual is no longer the way we want to conduct business," said Pennsylvania Education Secretary Eugene W. Hickok. "The people gathered here today recognize that the future of democracy is at stake in the way we educate our children."

The six chief state school officers and individual state board of education members agreed to base their efforts on the following core principles:

- * Education reform must center on the needs and the choices of families;
- * Effective education is generated from within each American community;
- * Education initiatives are weakest when imposed from Washington;
- * True reform will empower parents and teachers to chart the course of children's education.
- * Education has become fixated on dollars, budgets and regulations. Instead, the focus must be on creating rigorous academic standards and ensuring that students achieve them.

"We are committed to changing the terms of the education debate in this nation," said Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction Lisa Graham. "Too often, the best ideas get lost in the way decisions are made and policies are implemented."

The education leaders agreed that there is a need for a forceful voice that truly reflects the views of most Americans about education.

"We are eager to work with others who are equally interested in shaping what can be nothing less than a educational renaissance in this nation," says Virginia Secretary of Education Beverly Sgro.

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Georgia State Superintendent of Schools Linda Schrenko summed up the meeting. "These were just our first discussions and we have already agreed to meet again in the near future to solidify our efforts and broaden our base."

"New Hampshire is among those states which are dedicated to true reform and I know we will be working with this group," said John Root, a member of the New Hampshire State Board of Education.

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