



The  
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## *Vermont Legislative Research Shop*

### **Chief State School Officer Selection**

The chief state school officer (CSSO) in the state of Vermont is the Commissioner of Education. The Commissioner of Education is appointed by the State Board of Education with the approval of the Governor. The Commissioner is charged with supervising and managing the Department of Education. This responsibility includes the powers and duties of regulating statewide performance standards, adult basic education programs, regulating and keeping records of attendance, approving independent schools, disbursing funds and ensuring “equal access to quality education” for all Vermont students. The Commissioner is responsible to the State Board of Education. The Vermont State Board of Education is appointed by, and responsible to, the Governor.<sup>1</sup>

### **How Other States Select the Chief State School Officer and Members of the Board of Education**

Table 1 shows the method of selection for CSSOs (vertical) and the method of selection for state school boards (horizontal) in all 50 states. States in which the CSSO and school board are elected are listed in blue. States in which the CSSO and school board are appointed are listed in yellow. States in which the CSSO and school board are selected by different methods (one appointed, one elected) are listed in green.

Of all 50 states, 14 choose the CSSO by election and 36 choose by appointment. Of those states electing the CSSO, six hold a nonpartisan election and eight hold a partisan election. Of those states appointing the CSSO, 24 are appointed by the State School Board and 12 are appointed by the Governor.

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<sup>1</sup> State of Vermont Department of Education. “State board of education,” retrieved February 4, 2008, from <http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/mainboard.html>

**Table 1: Method of Selection of Chief State School Officers and Board of Education**

State board selection		Chief state school officer method of selection			
		<i>By election</i>		<i>By Appointment</i>	
		Nonpartisan (6)	Partisan (8)	State board (24)	Governor (12)
By election (9)	<i>Nonpartisan</i>			Hawaii, Nebraska, Nevada, Utah	
	<i>Partisan</i>			Alabama, Colorado, Kansas, Michigan	Texas
	<i>By local school board members</i>				
Mixed (6)	<i>Both elected and appointed</i>	Washington	Indiana	Louisiana, Ohio	New Mexico, Pennsylvania
By appointment (32)	<i>Governor</i>	California, Idaho, North Dakota, Oregon	Arizona, Georgia, Montana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Wyoming	Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, Vermont, West Virginia	Delaware, Iowa, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia
	<i>Legislature</i>			New York	
	<i>Jointly by governor and legislature</i>		South Carolina	Mississippi, Rhode Island	
None (2)		Wisconsin			Minnesota

Sources: Adapted from Wong, K. K., "The Politics of Education," in V. Gray & R. L. Hanson, Eds., *Politics in the American States*, Eight Edition (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2004) p. 362. Modified with information from: Council of Chief State School Officers, "Chief State School Officers Method of Selection," retrieved February 6, 2008, from <http://www.city-data.com/states/Georgia-State-government.html>; New Hampshire Department of Education, "About the department of education," retrieved February 4, 2008, from <http://www.ed.state.nh.us/education/doe/organization/commissioner.htm>; Mexico Public Education Department, "Secretary of Education," retrieved February 4, 2008, <http://sde.state.nm.us/sec.of.ed/DrGarcia.html>; Washington Secretary of Education, "2004 online voters' guide: statewide offices - candidates detail," retrieved February 4, 2008, from [http://www.secstate.wa.gov/elections/guide/statewide\\_results.aspx?o=XJQkpN3xs8CDKt56o07Cew%3D%3D](http://www.secstate.wa.gov/elections/guide/statewide_results.aspx?o=XJQkpN3xs8CDKt56o07Cew%3D%3D); and, Peabody, Weegie, Louisiana Department of Education, "Members of the state board of elementary and secondary education," retrieved February 4, 2008, from <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/3448.pdf>.

### Chief State School Officer Selection in a Sample of States

#### California – CSSO elected in nonpartisan election

The California State Superintendent of Public Instruction is elected for a four year term in a non-partisan election. The Superintendent oversees the Department of Education, fulfills the needs of office, and is accountable to the people of California. Some of the responsibilities of the California Department of Education are to enforce education law, reform and improve state

schools and educate every Californian to meet state standards. The department works as a partner with local schools to provide leadership, resources, assistance, and oversight.<sup>2</sup>

### **Georgia – CSSO elected in partisan election**

The Georgia State Superintendent and Chief Executive Officer of the State Board of Education is elected for a four-year term in a partisan election. The role of the Superintendent is to oversee the Department of Education, which enforces state and federal education laws, and distributes education funds to the state schools. The role of Chief Executive Officer of the State Board of Education is to oversee the fourteen-member board that provides leadership to schools and helps in the development of educational policies and programs.<sup>3</sup>

### **New Jersey – CSSO appointed by Governor**

The Governor, with the advice and consent of the New Jersey Senate, appoints the Commissioner of Education in New Jersey. The Commissioner is a member of the Governor's cabinet as well and the chief executive school officer for all New Jersey's public schools. Therefore, the Commissioner is accountable to the Governor. The duties of the commissioner are as follows: serve as a link between local districts and the federal government by offering legislative initiatives and changes, put forward rules and regulations for state board consideration; conduct educational research, create code proposals for board discussion, distribute state aid to districts, oversee regulations in regard to students with disabilities, monitor local district adherence to legal and state board requirements, and conduct statewide testing.<sup>4</sup>

## **Effects of Method of Selection**

States use a wide variety of different methods for selecting both a Chief State School Officer and a state school board. Although information is widely available regarding the methods of selection and roles of these offices for given states, we were unable to locate any comparative analysis of the effect of the different methods of selection.

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Compiled at the request of Senator Donald E. Collins by Ike Messmore, Amanda Mitchell, and Kate Sease under the Supervision of Professor Anthony Gierzynski on February 8, 2008.

**Disclaimer:** This report has been prepared by the undergraduate students at the University of Vermont under the supervision of Professor Anthony Gierzynski. The material contained in the reports does not reflect official policy of the University of Vermont.

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<sup>2</sup> California Department of Education. "Executive office," retrieved February 4, 2008, from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/>; California Department of Education. "Role & responsibilities," retrieved February 4, 2008, from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/mn/rr/>.

<sup>3</sup> Georgia Department of Education. "State superintendent of schools," retrieved February 4, 2008, from <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/sup.aspx>; Georgia Department of Education. "State board of education – members and districts," retrieved February 4, 2008, from [http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/pea\\_board.aspx?PageReq=PEABoardMembers](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/pea_board.aspx?PageReq=PEABoardMembers); City-Data.com. "Georgia -state government," retrieved February 4, 2008, from <http://www.city-data.com/states/Georgia-State-government.html>.

<sup>4</sup> State of New Jersey Department of Education. "Office of the commissioner," retrieved February 4, 2008, from: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/genfo/overview/commiss.htm>.