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Education is an expansive topic that has a direct impact on many American citizens lives. Education not only affects those that are directly enrolled at any level of learning, but also their families, teachers, other employees hired by these schools. Beginning with those directly enrolled in school, since 1852 all children ages 6 to 16 must be enrolled in some type of formal schooling. Moving beyond these mandated years, in 2011-2012, the highest high school graduation rate of American students was recorded, 80% ("State High School Graduation Rates By Race, Ethnicity"). 69.2% chose to further their education at either a college or university, and for many of these students, their career will require them to continue on to acquire a master degree ("College Enrollment and Work Activity of 2015 High School Graduates"). With such a large percentage of America affected by education, it would seem that in this upcoming election education should be a priority talking point. However, there has been little mention of either candidate’s educational standpoint, and what each plans to do to further the education of our nation. The future of education becomes increasingly more important, as we realize that the United States is ranked 14th for education worldwide, which seems extremely disproportionate considering the global power that the US holds ("Ranking America"). Due to this, for whichever candidate that is elected it will be of key importance that they have a strong educational policy, ready to boost our nation.

Beginning with Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, much of her platform focuses on developing the educational policy that is already put in place. First, Clinton wants to work on strengthening those that most directly impact the nation’s children, the teachers. Clinton believes that the teaching profession must be elevated by “preparing, supporting, and paying every child’s teacher as if the future of our country is in their hands”. Clinton believes that because much is asked of teacher, much is deserved, and that teacher’s salaries should be raised. In addition to strengthening and supporting teachers, the Democratic educational platform also encompasses both the infrastructure and material taught in schools. Starting with material, in todays technological age Clinton believes that computer science should be available for every student to learn. She plans on providing funding to help grow computer science programs. Externally, Clinton plans on doubling the Build America Bonds funding, as a way to begin to rebuild schools that are falling apart. This will include increasing energy efficiency and upgrading science labs ("Hillary Clinton on K-12 Education").

Additionally, Clinton supports creating a safe learning environment, in which she will “dismantle the school- to- prison pipeline”. To effectively accomplish this, Clinton plans on investing 2 billion dollars to correct the overly harsh correctively policies in schools, and will encourage states to both “reform school disturbance laws” and use the money allotted to them by the federal government to create social and emotional support ("Hillary Clinton on K-12 Education"). Clinton also plans to work on both ends of the educational spectrum, starting with universal preschool, and ending with debt free college. In her college plan, she has delineated that public college should be made free for families that make less than $85,000 dollars a year, and hopes to raise this number to families with an annual income of $125,000 by 2021 (Jackson, Abby). Finally, although not as well known, Clinton supports the Common Core, which is already in place ("Hillary Clinton on Education").

In opposition to Clinton’s multipronged plan to improve the school system, Donald Trump has responded with a platform mainly based on the singular idea of school choice. What this idea entails is the attaching of a certain amount of money to each student, and allowing this money to follow the student to whatever type of school they might choose, private, public, charter, or vocational. Trump plans to add 20 billion dollars towards school choice, which he will accomplish by redirecting federal funds that already exist ("Education"). Opposing the system in place now, which sends federal money directly to schools, Trump plans to send money in block grants to states (Parker, Ashley, and Trip Gabriel). His plan is also reliant on the idea of the states collectively pooling 110 billion dollars together in addition to the 20 billion to allot 12,000 dollars to each student K- 12 (“Education”). Trump has also mentioned possibly cutting the Department of Education, and does not support Common Core as Clinton does ("Donald Trump on Education"). However, Trump agrees with Clinton on the idea that college should be made more affordable, and plans to work with Congress to ensure that college becomes both more affordable and available to access and finish (“Education”).

Similar to Donald Trump’s beliefs, Gary Johnson of the Libertarian party supports an education that is run more locally. As opposed to having the federal government control education, Johnson believes that the Department of Education should be eliminated, along with Common Core and other national standards and requirements set by the national government ("Sign to Support Local Education Efforts!"). Johnson, much like Trump, also supports competition between schools at the public education level by implementing school choice. Johnson’s platform also contains the idea of improving schools by measuring and grading them. In this way, schools can be compared and improved for the following years ("Gary Johnson on Education"). As a whole, Johnson advocates for the idea that there is no role for the federal government in education, and wants to work to make education run more locally.

After viewing each party’s platform, it is obvious that the more radical ideas of change in education come from both Johnson and Trump. While Hillary Clinton’s platform works to strengthen and correct the system that is already in place, both Trump and Johnson call for changes such as cutting programs and creating new ones. This being noted, if Clinton is elected into office, the changes that she made would not be drastic. It would be expected that she would attempt to pass the following ideas through Congress: a change in the school’s curriculum to include computer science, a mandate to raise teacher’s salaries, along with allocating money for rebuilding schools, reforming corrective policies, and reducing college debt for low income families.

On the other hand, if Johnson or Trump was elected into office, the changes that both would make would be more radical. Both would most likely cut the Department of Education, along with the Common Core program. In regards to passing motions through Congress, Trump would create a plan for how the money should be allocated to states for the school choice program, along with a mandate to how much money states would have to pay to fund, as he needs 110 billion collectively in addition to the 2 billion he plans to find in already existing funds. In addition, Trump would also work a plan to pass through Congress to make college more affordable as Clinton would do. Finally, if Johnson was elected President, the ideas he would attempt to pass through Congress would be as follows: a plan for distributing money for school choice and a plan to measure and grade schools.

Collectively, the three candidates, if asked, would most likely agree with the idea that America’s education system needs to be improved. This less than perfect system often favors middle and higher class families, along with students in suburban areas. Because there is much inequality in the education system, ranging from income level to geographic area of the school, it will be a large responsibility for the next President of our country to try to give an equal opportunity for education to all of the nation’s children. However, due to the extreme differences between the three candidates running for president, it is inevitable that their plans for creating this equal opportunity will be different, as outlined above. In addition, although each has presented a platform promoting their education platform, none of these candidates have made education a key talking point in their campaign. This is problematic, as the next generation’s education determines the fate of America. If these candidates truly are trying to do what is best for the nation, they will focus less on trying to play the political game and more on the topics that actually matter, such as education.

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