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## House backs removing Arizona schools from No Child Left Behind

**By Howard Fischer**

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PHOENIX — The state House voted Wednesday to withdraw Arizona schools from federal No Child Left Behind regulations — as long as it doesn't cost too much.

On a voice vote, lawmakers gave preliminary approval to withdrawing from the controversial Bush administration program after the 2009-2010 school year.

The move follows lawmaker complaints that No Child Left Behind is federal meddling in a state issue, as well as educators' questioning the validity of the program.

HB 2392, offered by Rep. David Schapira, D-Tempe, would not be automatic.

It first requires the state Department of Education to figure out how much money Arizona schools would lose in federal aid by withdrawing, a figure Schapira puts at more than \$600 million a year.

Some of the lost money could be made up from no longer having to comply with various federal regulations and reporting and testing requirements. Withdrawal from No Child Left Behind would come only when legislators come up with the money to fund the difference.

"I don't think the government should be involved in curriculum issues," Schapira said, adding that the federal government also didn't provide more money to meet the regulations. The \$600 million is not really "new" money but simply a different system of distributing federal money Arizona schools were getting before.

Prior moves to withdraw from the program died in the face of lost federal education dollars. And Schapira acknowledged that the state, with its current \$1.2 billion deficit and anticipated \$1.9 billion in red ink next year, is in no position now to get out. But it might be later.

The bill will go to the Senate after a final roll-call vote in the House.

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