

Ronald Reagan Institute to Convene National and State Education Leaders Amid Critical Crossroads for U.S. Education

Ronald Reagan Institute announces RISE 2025 speaker lineup, including U.S. Senator Tim Kaine (VA), Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy, Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt, and top state education officials, scholars, and advocates shaping the future of American learning

Washington, D.C. — August 25, 2025 — The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute today announced its initial slate of speakers and topics for its 8th annual Reagan Institute Summit on Education (RISE), which will take place on September 18, 2025, at the Ronald Reagan Institute's Washington, D.C. headquarters. The day will include conversations with U.S. Senator Tim Kaine of Virginia, Governor Mike Dunleavy of Alaska, Governor Kevin Stitt of Oklahoma, and Kentucky Lt. Governor Jacqueline Coleman.

Today's American education system faces mounting challenges that echo the urgency of President Reagan's "A Nation at Risk" four decades ago: plummeting NAEP scores, waning confidence in the value of higher education, a student well-being crisis, and the demands of a rapidly changing world. This year's RISE, themed "Igniting the Flickering Spark," will convene education stakeholders, policy leaders, scholars, and innovators from a range of viewpoints to address the most pressing issues in education today—from student mental health and academic recovery to higher education reform and the future of work.

"All eyes are on states—not Washington—to chart new paths toward economic opportunity for today's students," said Dr. Ellen Dollarhide McCoy, Associate Director of the Ronald Reagan Institute's Center for Civics, Education, and Opportunity. "President Reagan had an enduring belief in the power of education to unlock opportunity, strengthen civic life, and prepare the next generation. We are bringing together leaders who are doing the hard work of 'igniting the flickering spark of knowledge' to ensure an education system that meets our nation's future."

Additional confirmed speakers include:

- Jeanne Allen, Founder and CEO, Center for Education Reform
- Doug Belkin, Reporter, The Wall Street Journal
- Dr. Ashley Berner, Director, Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy
- Dr. Cade Brumley, Superintendent of Education, State of Louisiana
- Dr. Alexander Cartwright, President, University of Central Florida
- Dr. Carlos Carvalho, President, University of Austin
- Ryan Delk, Founder and CEO, Primer Schools
- Maria Flynn, President and CEO, Jobs for the Future
- Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education, State of Indiana

- Timothy Knowles, President, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
- Dr. Eric Mackey, Superintendent of Education, State of Alabama
- Kerry McDonald, Senior Fellow, Foundation for Economic Education
- Ted Mitchell, President, American Council on Education
- Dr. Jennifer Mnookin, Chancellor, University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Jacob Oliva, Secretary of Education, State of Arkansas
- Mike Petrilli, President, Thomas B. Fordham Institute
- Melissa Avilés Ramos, Chancellor, New York City Public Schools
- Ian Rowe, Senior Fellow, American Enterprise Institute
- Dr. Felicia Cumings Smith, President, National Center for Families Learning
- Greg Toppo, Senior Writer, The74
- Richard Whitmire, Author of *Why Boys Fail: Saving Our Sons from an Educational System That's Leaving Them Behind*
- Theodore Wold, Senior Counselor, Palantir

“Since its inception, RISE has served as a unique forum for bringing together leaders who may differ on the details but are united in the conviction that we must pursue bold policy change to ensure our education system is a pathway to a strong future,” said Roger Zakheim, Director of the Ronald Reagan Institute. “Inspired by President Reagan’s legacy, RISE continues to champion a vision for education that is rigorous, inclusive, and forward-thinking.”

Registration and media inquiries:

In-person attendance at RISE is by invitation only. To request an invitation, visit [here](#) for details and additional agenda updates. For media inquiries, please contact reaganinstitute@reaganfoundation.org.