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**FORDHAM PRAISES SELECTION OF ARNE DUNCAN AS U.S. SECRETARY OF  
EDUCATION**

*Institute leaders say choice is a positive sign for the education reform community*

Washington, D.C. (December 16, 2008) – President-elect Barack Obama has chosen Chicago Public Schools chief Arne Duncan to be the next education secretary. Education policy experts at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute praised the move and said it indicates the new administration will support real reform in the nation’s schools.

“Arne Duncan is a terrific pick, and not just because he’s close to the President-elect and speaks Chicagoeese,” said Thomas B. Fordham Institute President Chester E. Finn, Jr. “He’s a proven and committed and inventive education reformer, not tethered to the public-school establishment and its infinite interest groups, nor bedazzled by blandishments and commands from Washington. He’s earned his spurs in a huge and challenging school district, is a force for positive change nationally, has navigated Chicago politics, has stood up to Margaret Spellings, and manages, with all that, to be a thoughtful, affable and likeable guy.”

Michael J. Petrilli, Fordham’s Vice President of National Programs and Policy, added that Duncan is unlikely to bring a “one size fits all” approach to Washington. “Arne Duncan has been an effective advocate for the No Child Left Behind Act since its inception, but he also hasn’t been shy in complaining about its lack of flexibility for states and school districts,” Petrilli said. “I don’t get the sense that Duncan thinks he has all of the answers. There’s a decent chance that he could bring a new humility to federal policymaking, which would be very good for the country.”

Finn said he hopes Duncan will be given the freedom to choose the men and women who will work alongside him at the department.

“If he’s also allowed to pick his own team, education (and the Education Department) will be in good hands during a very challenging time,” said Finn. He added, “If he’s undercut by goofuses, ed school ideologues and union goons forced upon him by the Office of Presidential Personnel, however, he’ll have to waste far too much time on internal battles as the fledgling Obama administration figures out which side of the Great Democratic Education Schism it is really on.”