

**Richard W. Riley**

**Influence Index: 82**

**Date of Birth** January 2, 1933

**Education** B.A. Furman University, 1954; J.D. University of South Carolina, 1959

**Current Position** Senior Partner, Nelson, Mullins, Riley, & Scarborough LLP; Chair, Riley Institute Advisory Council



**Career Highlights**

- ❑ Senior Partner, Nelson, Mullins, Riley and Scarborough LLP
- ❑ Chair, Riley Institute Advisory Council
- ❑ U.S. Secretary of Education (1993–2001)
- ❑ Distinguished Senior Professor of Government, Politics, and Public Leadership, Furman University
- ❑ Distinguished University Professor of Education, University of South Carolina
- ❑ Governor of South Carolina (1979-87)
- ❑ State Senator, South Carolina (1967-77)
- ❑ State Representative, South Carolina (1963-66)

**Accomplishments**

- ❑ Recipient of numerous awards, including Public Advocate Inc.'s Voice of Conscience Award (2006), the Citizen of the Carolinas Award (2005), and the James Bryant Conant Award from the Education Commission of the States (1995)
- ❑ Convened the National Reading Summit (1998)
- ❑ Worked to pass the Reading Excellence Act (1995)
- ❑ As Governor of South Carolina, appointed a blue-ribbon commission to study excellence in education (1983)

**Biographical Sketch**

Richard Riley was nominated to be Secretary of Education by President Bill Clinton in December 1992 and served through the administration's two terms. During Clinton's first term, Riley focused on efforts to raise academic standards, improve instruction for the poor and disadvantaged, expand grants and loan programs to help more Americans go to college, prepare young people for the world of work, and improve teaching. He also helped to create the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, which today includes over 4,000 groups.

Prior to his nomination, Riley served two terms as Governor of South Carolina where he lobbied support for his Education Improvement Act, described as the most comprehensive educational reform measure in the country by a RAND Corporation study. Results of the 1984 act could be seen in higher Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores as well as in increases in the proportion of high school graduates continuing on to college.

**Richard Riley on education reform**

*"The issue is not 'good,' 'bad,' or 'rank,' but whether we are changing fast enough to save and educate this generation of young people, whether education has kept up with the fundamental and far-reaching changes in the economic and social structure of this nation."*

From: State of Education Address, February 15, 1994

**Notes**

Information collected from websites of the U.S. Department of Education at [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov), Nelson, Mullins, Riley and Scarborough LLP at [www.nelsonmullins.com](http://www.nelsonmullins.com), CNN at [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com), and the Richard W. Riley Institute at [www.furman.edu](http://www.furman.edu).