

112TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 434

To improve and expand geographic literacy among kindergarten through grade 12 students in the United States by improving professional development programs for kindergarten through grade 12 teachers offered through institutions of higher education.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 2, 2011

Mr. COCHRAN (for himself and Ms. MIKULSKI) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To improve and expand geographic literacy among kindergarten through grade 12 students in the United States by improving professional development programs for kindergarten through grade 12 teachers offered through institutions of higher education.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Teaching Geography
5 Is Fundamental Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION.**

2 Title II of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20
3 U.S.C. 1021 et seq.) is amended—

4 (1) by redesignating part C (20 U.S.C. 1041)
5 as part D;

6 (2) by redesignating section 261 (20 U.S.C.
7 1041) as section 291; and

8 (3) by inserting after part B (20 U.S.C. 1031
9 et seq.) the following:

10 **“PART C—GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION**

11 **“SEC. 261. FINDINGS.**

12 “Congress makes the following findings:

13 “(1) The economic stature and competitiveness
14 of the United States requires increasingly sophisti-
15 cated levels of geographic knowledge and mastery of
16 geographic tools.

17 “(2) It is important to improve and expand ge-
18 ography education so that students in the United
19 States can attain the necessary expertise to fill and
20 retain the more than 70,000 new skilled jobs that
21 are coming available each year in the geospatial
22 technology industry.

23 “(3) Data from the Department of Labor iden-
24 tifies geotechnology as 1 of the 3 fastest growing
25 employment fields serving industries such as insur-

1 ance, banking, real estate, forestry, and agriculture
2 as well as Federal, State, and local governments.

3 “(4) Geographic literacy is essential to a well
4 prepared citizenry in the 21st century because geo-
5 graphic factors assume greater importance as the
6 world’s economies, societies, and political structures
7 grow more global in scale.

8 “(5) In a recent National Geographic-Roper 9
9 country survey of geographic literacy among young
10 adults aged 18 through 24, students in the United
11 States ranked second to last. Only 13 percent of
12 young adults aged 18 through 24 in the United
13 States were able to correctly identify Iraq on a map
14 of Asia and the Middle East.

15 “(6) The National Academy of Sciences urged
16 creation of a national program to improve the geo-
17 graphic competence of the United States general
18 population and the school age population.

19 “(7) Geography is one of the ‘core academic
20 subjects’ defined under the Elementary and Sec-
21 ondary Education Act of 1965.

22 “(8) A recent National Geographic Society sur-
23 vey found that all 50 States and the District of Co-
24 lumbia recognize geography in their curricula or con-
25 tent standards, and an increasing number require

1 geography for graduation and include geography in
2 mandated statewide assessments.

3 “(9) Seven of 10 educators responding to a Na-
4 tional Geographic survey felt their professional de-
5 velopment opportunities in geography were inad-
6 equate and half believed their schools had inad-
7 equate basic materials for teaching geography.

8 “(10) The National Geographic Society has
9 spent more than 15 years pioneering an extraor-
10 dinary effective national program for improving the
11 teaching of geography by engaging university faculty
12 geographers and highly trained teachers in State Ge-
13 ographic Alliances dedicated to providing high-qual-
14 ity professional development opportunities for kin-
15 dergarten through grade 12 teachers.

16 “(11) More than 60 colleges and universities in
17 all 50 States have received grants from the National
18 Geographic Society to support State Geographic Alli-
19 ances and their professional development programs.
20 Alliance-trained kindergarten through grade 12
21 teachers and their higher education partners conduct
22 workshops, develop localized teaching materials, and
23 facilitate communication among thousands of teach-
24 ers whose responsibilities include teaching of geog-
25 raphy in various formats and grade levels.

1 “(12) A study by Mid-continent Research for
2 Education and Learning that assessed student aca-
3 demic achievement in geography on the National As-
4 sessment of Educational Progress showed that stu-
5 dents taught by Alliance-trained teachers out-
6 performed other students by almost 10 percent.

7 **“SEC. 262. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES.**

8 “(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this part is to—

9 “(1) promote geographic literacy and improved
10 understanding of global cultures among kindergarten
11 through grade 12 students by expanding programs
12 that employ the geographic knowledge and expertise
13 of faculty members in institutions of higher edu-
14 cation for the benefit of kindergarten through grade
15 12 teachers; and

16 “(2) otherwise advance geographic literacy.

17 “(b) OBJECTIVES.—The objectives of this part are
18 the following:

19 “(1) To increase students’ knowledge of, and
20 achievement in, standards-based geography to enable
21 the students to become better informed and more
22 productive citizens.

23 “(2) To increase the number of highly qualified
24 teachers of United States and world geography and
25 to enable the teachers—

1 “(A) to improve student mastery of geo-
2 graphic principles; and

3 “(B) to increase practical applications of
4 those principles.

5 “(3) To encourage geographic education re-
6 search, to develop and disseminate effective instruc-
7 tional materials, and to promote replication of best
8 practices and exemplary programs that foster geo-
9 graphic literacy.

10 “(4) To assist States in measuring the impact
11 of education in geography.

12 “(5) To leverage and expand private and public
13 support for geography education partnerships at na-
14 tional, State, and local levels.

15 **“SEC. 263. GRANT PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.**

16 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary is authorized to
17 award a grant to a national nonprofit education organiza-
18 tion or a consortium of national nonprofit education orga-
19 nizations (referred to in this part as an ‘eligible entity’)
20 that has as its primary purpose the improvement of the
21 quality of student understanding of geography through ef-
22 fective teaching of geography in the Nation’s classrooms.

23 “(b) APPLICATION.—An eligible entity that desires a
24 grant under this part shall submit an application to the

1 Secretary at such time, in such manner, and accompanied
2 by such information as the Secretary may require.

3 **“SEC. 264. USE OF FUNDS.**

4 “(a) DIRECT ACTIVITIES.—An eligible entity that re-
5 ceives a grant under this part shall use not more than
6 25 percent of the funds made available through the grant
7 for a fiscal year to—

8 “(1) strengthen and expand the eligible entity’s
9 relationships with institutions of higher education
10 and with State and local agencies and other public
11 and private organizations with a commitment to ge-
12 ography education and the benefits of geography
13 education;

14 “(2) support and promote research-based train-
15 ing of teachers of geography and related disciplines
16 in kindergarten through grade 12 as a means of
17 broadening student knowledge of the world, includ-
18 ing the dissemination of information on effective
19 practices and research findings concerning the
20 teaching of geography;

21 “(3) support research on effective geography
22 teaching practices and the development of assess-
23 ment instruments and strategies to document stu-
24 dent understanding of geography;

1 “(4) convene national conferences on geography
2 education to assess the current State of geographic
3 literacy and to identify strategies for improvement;
4 and

5 “(5) develop and disseminate appropriate re-
6 search-based materials to foster geographic literacy.

7 “(b) SUBGRANTS.—

8 “(1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity that re-
9 ceives a grant under this part shall use not more
10 than 75 percent of the funds made available through
11 the grant for a fiscal year to award subgrants to eli-
12 gible recipients.

13 “(2) ELIGIBLE RECIPIENT DEFINED.—In this
14 part, the term ‘eligible recipient’ means an institu-
15 tion of higher education associated with—

16 “(A) a State geographic alliance;

17 “(B) a nonprofit educational organization;

18 “(C) a State educational agency or local
19 educational agency; or

20 “(D) a partnership between or among an
21 alliance, organization, or agency described in
22 subparagraph (A), (B) or (C).

23 “(3) ELIGIBLE RECIPIENT APPLICATIONS.—

24 “(A) SUBMISSION.—An eligible recipient
25 that desires to receive a subgrant under this

1 part shall submit an application to the eligible
2 entity at such time, in such manner, and ac-
3 companied by such information as the eligible
4 entity may require.

5 “(B) REVIEW.—

6 “(i) IN GENERAL.—The eligible entity
7 shall invite individuals described in clause
8 (ii) to review all applications from eligible
9 recipients for a subgrant under this part
10 and to make recommendations to the eligi-
11 ble entity regarding the approval of the ap-
12 plications.

13 “(ii) REVIEWERS.—The individuals
14 the eligible entity shall invite to review ap-
15 plications are the following:

16 “(I) Leaders in the field of geog-
17 raphy education.

18 “(II) Such other individuals as
19 the eligible entity may determine are
20 necessary or desirable.

21 “(4) SUBGRANT USES OF FUNDS.—An eligible
22 recipient that receives a subgrant under this part
23 shall use the subgrant funds for 1 or more of the
24 following activities:

1 “(A) Conducting teacher training pro-
2 grams that use effective and research-based ap-
3 proaches to the teaching of geography at the
4 kindergarten through grade 12 level.

5 “(B) Applying Geographic Information
6 System (GIS) or other geographic technological
7 tools to the teaching of geography.

8 “(C) Applying Internet and other distance
9 learning technology to the teaching of geog-
10 raphy or to the continuing education of teach-
11 ers.

12 “(D) Promoting rigorous academic stand-
13 ards and assessment techniques to guide and
14 measure student performance in geography.

15 “(E) Promoting research in geography
16 education, emphasizing research that leads to
17 improving student achievement.

18 “(F) Carrying out local, field-based activi-
19 ties for teachers and students to improve their
20 knowledge of the concepts and tools of geog-
21 raphy while enhancing understanding of their
22 home region.

23 “(G) Promoting comparative studies of
24 world cultures, economies, and environments.

1 “(H) Encouraging replication of best prac-
2 tices and model programs to promote geo-
3 graphic literacy.

4 “(I) Developing and disseminating effec-
5 tive, research-based geography learning mate-
6 rials.

7 “(J) Convening State-based conferences to
8 assess the state of geographic literacy and to
9 identify strategies for improvement.

10 “(5) MATCHING REQUIREMENTS.—

11 “(A) IN GENERAL.—In order to be eligible
12 to receive a subgrant under this part, an eligi-
13 ble recipient shall provide assurances in the ap-
14 plication submitted under paragraph (3) to pro-
15 vide matching funds as described in subpara-
16 graph (B) towards the costs of the activities as-
17 sisted under the subgrant.

18 “(B) AMOUNT.—An eligible recipient shall
19 provide matching funds in an amount equal to
20 20 percent of the subgrant funds received under
21 this part for the second and each succeeding
22 fiscal year for which subgrant funds are re-
23 ceived.

24 “(C) SOURCE OF MATCHING FUNDS.—
25 Matching funds may be provided in cash or in

1 kind, fairly evaluated, including facilities, staff-
2 ing salaries, and educational materials.

3 **“SEC. 265. ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.**

4 “An eligible entity that receives a grant under this
5 part for a fiscal year, and each eligible recipient receiving
6 a subgrant under this part for a fiscal year, may use not
7 more than 15 percent of the funds made available through
8 the grant or subgrant, respectively, for administrative
9 costs.

10 **“SEC. 266. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

11 “There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
12 this part \$15,000,000 for fiscal year 2012 and each of
13 the 4 succeeding fiscal years.”.

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