

112TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 885

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 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 2, 2011

Mr. VAN HOLLEN (for himself, Mr. PETRI, and Mr. WALZ of Minnesota) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

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 by adding at the end
4 the following:

5 **“PART D—GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION**

6 **“SEC. 271. FINDINGS.**

7 “Congress makes the following findings:

8 “(1) Geographic literacy is essential to a well-
9 prepared citizenry in the 21st century because geo-
10 graphic factors assume greater importance as the
11 world’s economies, societies, and political structures
12 grow more global in scale.

13 “(2) In a recent National Geographic–Roper 9-
14 country survey of geographic literacy among young
15 adults aged 18 through 24, Americans ranked sec-
16 ond to last. Only 13 percent of young adults ages 18
17 through 24 in the United States were able to cor-
18 rectly identify Iraq on a map of Asia and the Middle
19 East.

20 “(3) The economic stature and competitiveness
21 of the United States requires increasingly sophisti-
22 cated levels of geographic knowledge and mastery of
23 geographic tools.

24 “(4) The Department of Labor data identifies
25 geotechnology as one of the 3 fastest growing em-
26 ployment fields serving industries such as insurance,

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

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

7 “(6) Geography is defined as a ‘core academic
8 subject’ under the Elementary and Secondary Edu-
9 cation Act of 1965.

10 “(7) A recent National Geographic Society sur-
11 vey found that all 50 States and the District of Co-
12 lumbia recognize geography in their curricula or con-
13 tent standards, and an increasing number require
14 geography for graduation and include geography in
15 mandated statewide assessments.

16 “(8) Seven of 10 educators responding to a Na-
17 tional Geographic survey felt their professional de-
18 velopment opportunities in geography were inad-
19 equate and half believed their schools had inad-
20 equate basic materials for teaching geography.

21 “(9) The National Geographic Society has
22 spent over 15 years pioneering an extraordinarily ef-
23 fective national program for improving the teaching
24 of geography by engaging university faculty
25 geographers and highly trained teachers in State Ge-

1 ographic Alliances dedicated to providing high qual-
2 ity professional development opportunities for kin-
3 dergarten through grade 12 teachers.

4 “(10) More than 60 colleges and universities in
5 all 50 States have received grants from the National
6 Geographic Society to support State Geographic Alli-
7 ances and their professional development programs.
8 Alliance-trained kindergarten through grade 12
9 teachers and their higher education partners conduct
10 workshops, develop localized teaching materials, and
11 facilitate communication among thousands of teach-
12 ers whose responsibilities include teaching of geog-
13 raphy in various formats and grade levels.

14 “(11) A study by Mid-Continent Research for
15 Education and Learning that assessed student aca-
16 demic achievement in geography on the National As-
17 sessment of Educational Progress showed that stu-
18 dents taught by Alliance-trained teachers out-
19 performed other students by almost 10 percent.

20 **“SEC. 272. PURPOSES AND OBJECTIVES.**

21 “(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this part is to pro-
22 mote geographic literacy and improved understanding of
23 global cultures among kindergarten through grade 12 stu-
24 dents by expanding programs that employ the geographic
25 knowledge and expertise of faculty members in institutions

1 of higher education for the benefit of kindergarten
2 through grade 12 teachers and to otherwise advance geo-
3 graphic literacy.

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

6 “(1) To increase students knowledge of, and
7 achievement in, standards-based geography to enable
8 the students to become better informed and more
9 productive citizens.

10 “(2) To increase the number of highly qualified
11 teachers of United States and world geography and
12 to enable the teachers to improve student mastery of
13 geographic principles and practical applications of
14 those principles.

15 “(3) To encourage geographic education re-
16 search, to develop and disseminate effective instruc-
17 tional materials, and to promote replication of best
18 practices and exemplary programs that foster geo-
19 graphic literacy.

20 “(4) To assist States in measuring the impact
21 of education in geography.

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

1 **“SEC. 273. GRANT PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.**

2 “The Secretary is authorized to award a grant to a
3 national nonprofit educational organization or a consor-
4 tium of organizations (hereafter in this part referred to
5 as the ‘grantee’) that has as its primary purpose the im-
6 provement of the quality of student understanding of ge-
7 ography through effective teaching of geography in the
8 Nation’s classrooms.

9 **“SEC. 274. USE OF FUNDS.**

10 “(a) DIRECT ACTIVITIES.—The grantee shall use not
11 more than 25 percent of the funds made available through
12 the grant for a fiscal year—

13 “(1) to strengthen and expand the grantee’s re-
14 lationships with institutions of higher education and
15 with State educational agencies and local educational
16 agencies and other public and private organizations
17 with a commitment to geography education and the
18 benefits of geography education;

19 “(2) to support and promote research-based
20 training of teachers of geography and related dis-
21 ciplines in kindergarten through grade 12 as a
22 means of broadening student knowledge of the
23 world, including the dissemination of information on
24 effective practices and research findings concerning
25 the teaching of geography;

1 “(3) to support research on effective geography
2 teaching practices and the development of assess-
3 ment instruments and strategies to document stu-
4 dent understanding of geography;

5 “(4) to convene national conferences on geog-
6 raphy education to assess the current state of geo-
7 graphic literacy and to identify strategies for im-
8 provement; and

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

11 “(b) SUBGRANTS.—

12 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The grantee shall use not
13 more than 75 percent of the funds made available
14 through the grant for a fiscal year to award sub-
15 grants to eligible recipients.

16 “(2) ELIGIBLE RECIPIENT DEFINED.—In this
17 part the term ‘eligible recipient’ means an institution
18 of higher education associated with—

19 “(A) a State geographic alliance;

20 “(B) a nonprofit educational organization;

21 “(C) a State educational agency or local
22 educational agency; or

23 “(D) a partnership between or among an
24 alliance, organization, or agency described in
25 subparagraph (A), (B) or (C).

1 “(3) SUBGRANT USES OF FUNDS.—Eligible re-
2 recipients shall use the subgrant funds for 1 or more
3 of the following purposes:

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

8 “(B) Applying Geographic Information
9 System (GIS) or other geographic technological
10 tools to the teaching of geography.

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

15 “(D) Promoting rigorous academic stand-
16 ards and assessment techniques to guide and
17 measure student performance in geography.

18 “(E) Promoting research in geography
19 education, emphasizing research that leads to
20 improving student achievement.

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

1 “(G) Promoting comparative studies of
2 world cultures, economies, and environments.

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

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

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

12 **“SEC. 275. APPLICATIONS.**

13 “(a) GRANTEE APPLICATIONS.—To be eligible to re-
14 ceive a grant under this part, a grantee shall submit to
15 the Secretary an application at such time, in such manner,
16 and accompanied by such information as the Secretary
17 may require.

18 “(b) ELIGIBLE RECIPIENT APPLICATIONS.—

19 “(1) SUBMISSION.—To be eligible to receive a
20 subgrant under this part, an eligible recipient shall
21 submit an application to a grantee at such time, in
22 such manner and accompanied by such information
23 as the grantee may require.

24 “(2) REVIEW.—

1 “(A) IN GENERAL.—A grantee shall invite
2 individuals described in subparagraph (B) to re-
3 view all applications from eligible recipients for
4 a subgrant under this section and to make rec-
5 ommendations to the grantee regarding the ap-
6 proval of the applications.

7 “(B) REVIEWERS.—The individuals re-
8 ferred to in subparagraph (A) are the following:

9 “(i) Leaders in the field of geography
10 education.

11 “(ii) Such other individuals as the
12 grantee may determine are necessary or
13 desirable.

14 **“SEC. 276. REQUIREMENTS.**

15 “(a) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—A grantee receiving
16 a grant under this part for a fiscal year, and each eligible
17 recipient receiving a subgrant under this part for a fiscal
18 year, may use not more than 15 percent of the funds made
19 available through the grant or subgrant, respectively, for
20 administrative costs.

21 “(b) MATCHING REQUIREMENTS.—

22 “(1) IN GENERAL.—In order to be eligible to
23 receive a subgrant under this part an eligible recipi-
24 ent shall agree in the application submitted under
25 section 275(b) to provide matching funds towards

1 the costs of the activities assisted under the
2 subgrant.

3 “(2) AMOUNT.—An eligible recipient shall pro-
4 vide matching funds in an amount equal to 20 per-
5 cent of the subgrant funds received under this part
6 for the second and each succeeding fiscal year for
7 which subgrant payments are made.

8 “(3) SOURCE OF MATCHING FUNDS.—Matching
9 funds may be provided in cash or in kind, fairly
10 evaluated, including facilities, staffing salaries, and
11 educational materials.

12 **“SEC. 277. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

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

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