

113TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 822

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

FEBRUARY 26, 2013

Mr. VAN HOLLEN (for himself, Mr. PETRI, and Mr. WALZ) 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) The economic stature and competitiveness
9 of the United States requires increasingly sophisti-
10 cated levels of geographic knowledge and mastery of
11 geographic tools.

12 “(2) It is estimated that the United States
13 geospatial industry generated \$73,000,000,000 in
14 revenue last year, with half a million high-wage jobs,
15 and that the industry is growing at between 25-30
16 percent per year. This burgeoning industry will not
17 be able to maximize its growth potential without a
18 sustained Federal investment in geography edu-
19 cation.

20 “(3) A 2012 report by a Council on Foreign
21 Relations task force, United States Education Re-
22 form and National Security, states that the lack of
23 global awareness among American citizens increas-
24 ingly jeopardizes their ability to interact with local
25 and global peers or participate meaningfully in busi-
26 ness, diplomatic, and military situations.

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

6 “(5) The 2010 National Assessment of Edu-
7 cational Progress in geography shows that fewer
8 than 30 percent of students tested in grades four,
9 eight, and twelve scored at grade-level or above.
10 These scores have stayed the same or gotten worse
11 since the last time the test was administered in
12 2001.

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

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

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

1 “(9) Seven of ten educators responding to a
2 National Geographic survey felt their professional
3 development opportunities in geography were inad-
4 equate and half believed their schools had inad-
5 equate basic materials for teaching geography.

6 “(10) The National Geographic Society has
7 spent more than 25 years pioneering an extraor-
8 dinarly effective national program for improving the
9 teaching of geography by engaging university fac-
10 ulty, geographers, and highly trained teachers in
11 State Geographic Alliances dedicated to providing
12 high-quality professional development opportunities
13 for kindergarten through grade 12 teachers.

14 “(11) More than 80 colleges and universities in
15 all 50 States have received grants from the National
16 Geographic Society to support State Geographic Alli-
17 ances and their professional development programs.
18 Alliance-trained kindergarten through grade 12
19 teachers and their higher education partners conduct
20 workshops, develop localized teaching materials, and
21 facilitate communication among thousands of teach-
22 ers whose responsibilities include teaching of geog-
23 raphy in various formats and grade levels.

24 “(12) A study by Mid-continent Research for
25 Education and Learning that assessed student aca-

1 demic achievement in geography on the National As-
2 sessment of Educational Progress showed that stu-
3 dents taught by Alliance-trained teachers out-per-
4 formed other students by almost 10 percent.

5 “(13) We live in a changing world with multiple
6 and evolving threats to national security, including
7 terrorism, asymmetrical warfare, and social unrest.
8 As the nature of the threat evolves, so do the tools,
9 knowledge, and skills needed to respond. A 2013
10 National Academies report states that it is likely
11 that qualified Geography Information Systems and
12 remote sensing experts are already hard to find.
13 Long before 2030, competition and a small number
14 of graduates will likely result in shortages in all
15 emerging areas and in the core areas of cartography,
16 photogrammetry, and geodesy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

17 “(4) To assist States in measuring the impact
18 of education in geography.

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

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

23 “The Secretary is authorized to award a grant to a
24 national nonprofit educational organization or a consor-
25 tium of organizations (hereafter in this part referred to

1 as the ‘grantee’) that has as its primary purpose the im-
2 provement of the quality of student understanding of ge-
3 ography through effective teaching of geography in the
4 Nation’s classrooms.

5 **“SEC. 274. USE OF FUNDS.**

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 “(b) SUBGRANTS.—

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

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

15 “(A) a State geographic alliance;

16 “(B) a nonprofit educational organization;

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

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

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

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 **“SEC. 275. APPLICATIONS.**

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

16 “(b) ELIGIBLE RECIPIENT APPLICATIONS.—

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

22 “(2) REVIEW.—

23 “(A) IN GENERAL.—A grantee shall invite
24 individuals described in subparagraph (B) to re-
25 view all applications from eligible recipients for

1 a subgrant under this section and to make rec-
2 ommendations to the grantee regarding the ap-
3 proval of the applications.

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

6 “(i) Leaders in the field of geography
7 education.

8 “(ii) Such other individuals as the
9 grantee may determine are necessary or
10 desirable.

11 **“SEC. 276. REQUIREMENTS.**

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

18 “(b) MATCHING REQUIREMENTS.—

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

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

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

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

11 “‘There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
12 this part \$15,000,000 for fiscal year 2014 and each of
13 the 4 succeeding fiscal years.’”.

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