

113TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 370

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

FEBRUARY 14, 2013

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 estimated that the United States
18 geospatial industry generated \$73,000,000,000 in
19 revenue last year, with 500,000 high-wage jobs and
20 that the industry is growing at between 25–30 per-
21 cent per year. This burgeoning industry will not be
22 able to maximize its growth potential without a sus-
23 tained Federal investment in geography education.

24 “(3) A 2012 report by a Council on Foreign
25 Relations task force, U.S. Education Reform and
26 National Security, states that the lack of global

1 awareness among United States citizens increasingly
2 jeopardizes their ability to interact with local and
3 global peers, or participate meaningfully in business,
4 diplomatic, and military situations.

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

10 “(5) The 2010 National Assessment of Edu-
11 cational Progress in geography shows that fewer
12 than 30 percent of students tested in grades 4, 8,
13 and 12 scored at grade-level or above. These scores
14 have stayed the same or gotten worse, since the last
15 time the test was administered in 2001.

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

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

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

1 tent standards, and an increasing number require
2 geography for graduation and include geography in
3 mandated statewide assessments.

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

9 “(10) The National Geographic Society has
10 spent more than 25 years pioneering an extraor-
11 dinary effective national program for improving the
12 teaching of geography by engaging university faculty
13 geographers and highly trained teachers in State Ge-
14 ographic Alliances dedicated to providing high-qual-
15 ity professional development opportunities for kin-
16 dergarten through grade 12 teachers.

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

1 ers whose responsibilities include teaching of geog-
 2 raphy in various formats and grade levels.

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

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

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

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

23 “(1) promote geographic literacy and improved
 24 understanding of global cultures among kindergarten
 25 through grade 12 students by expanding programs

1 that employ the geographic knowledge and expertise
2 of faculty members in institutions of higher edu-
3 cation for the benefit of kindergarten through grade
4 12 teachers; and

5 “(2) otherwise advance geographic literacy.

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

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

12 “(2) To increase the number of highly qualified
13 teachers of United States and world geography and
14 to enable the teachers—

15 “(A) to improve student mastery of geo-
16 graphic principles; and

17 “(B) to increase practical applications of
18 those principles.

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

24 “(4) To assist States in measuring the impact
25 of education in geography.

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

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

5 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary is authorized to
6 award a grant to a national nonprofit education organiza-
7 tion or a consortium of national nonprofit education orga-
8 nizations (referred to in this part as an ‘eligible entity’)
9 that has as its primary purpose the improvement of the
10 quality of student understanding of geography through ef-
11 fective teaching of geography in the Nation’s classrooms.

12 “(b) APPLICATION.—An eligible entity that desires a
13 grant under this part shall submit an application to the
14 Secretary at such time, in such manner, and accompanied
15 by such information as the Secretary may require.

16 **“SEC. 264. USE OF FUNDS.**

17 “(a) DIRECT ACTIVITIES.—An eligible entity that re-
18 ceives a grant under this part shall use not more than
19 25 percent of the funds made available through the grant
20 for a fiscal year to—

21 “(1) strengthen and expand the eligible entity’s
22 relationships with institutions of higher education
23 and with State and local agencies and other public
24 and private organizations with a commitment to ge-

1 ogrophy education and the benefits of geography
2 education;

3 “(2) support and promote research-based train-
4 ing of teachers of geography and related disciplines
5 in kindergarten through grade 12 as a means of
6 broadening student knowledge of the world, includ-
7 ing the dissemination of information on effective
8 practices and research findings concerning the
9 teaching of geography;

10 “(3) support research on effective geography
11 teaching practices and the development of assess-
12 ment instruments and strategies to document stu-
13 dent understanding of geography;

14 “(4) convene national conferences on geography
15 education to assess the current State of geographic
16 literacy and to identify strategies for improvement;
17 and

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

20 “(b) SUBGRANTS.—

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

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

“(A) a State geographic alliance;

“(B) a nonprofit educational organization;

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

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

“(3) ELIGIBLE RECIPIENT APPLICATIONS.—

“(A) SUBMISSION.—An eligible recipient that desires to receive a subgrant under this part shall submit an application to the eligible entity at such time, in such manner, and accompanied by such information as the eligible entity may require.

“(B) REVIEW.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—The eligible entity shall invite individuals described in clause (ii) to review all applications from eligible recipients for a subgrant under this part and to make recommendations to the eligible entity regarding the approval of the applications.

1 “(ii) REVIEWERS.—The individuals
2 the eligible entity shall invite to review ap-
3 plications are the following:

4 “(I) Leaders in the field of geog-
5 raphy education.

6 “(II) Such other individuals as
7 the eligible entity may determine are
8 necessary or desirable.

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

13 “(A) Conducting teacher training pro-
14 grams that use effective and research-based ap-
15 proaches to the teaching of geography at the
16 kindergarten through grade 12 level.

17 “(B) Applying Geographic Information
18 System (GIS) or other geographic technological
19 tools to the teaching of geography.

20 “(C) Applying Internet and other distance
21 learning technology to the teaching of geog-
22 raphy or to the continuing education of teach-
23 ers.

1 “(D) Promoting rigorous academic stand-
2 ards and assessment techniques to guide and
3 measure student performance in geography.

4 “(E) Promoting research in geography
5 education, emphasizing research that leads to
6 improving student achievement.

7 “(F) Carrying out local, field-based activi-
8 ties for teachers and students to improve their
9 knowledge of the concepts and tools of geog-
10 raphy while enhancing understanding of their
11 home region.

12 “(G) Promoting comparative studies of
13 world cultures, economies, and environments.

14 “(H) Encouraging replication of best prac-
15 tices and model programs to promote geo-
16 graphic literacy.

17 “(I) Developing and disseminating effec-
18 tive, research-based geography learning mate-
19 rials.

20 “(J) Convening State-based conferences to
21 assess the state of geographic literacy and to
22 identify strategies for improvement.

23 “(5) MATCHING REQUIREMENTS.—

24 “(A) IN GENERAL.—In order to be eligible
25 to receive a subgrant under this part, an eligi-

1 ble recipient shall provide assurances in the ap-
2 plication submitted under paragraph (3) to pro-
3 vide matching funds as described in subpara-
4 graph (B) towards the costs of the activities as-
5 sisted under the subgrant.

6 “(B) AMOUNT.—An eligible recipient shall
7 provide matching funds in an amount equal to
8 20 percent of the subgrant funds received under
9 this part for the second and each succeeding
10 fiscal year for which subgrant funds are re-
11 ceived.

12 “(C) SOURCE OF MATCHING FUNDS.—
13 Matching funds may be provided in cash or in
14 kind, fairly evaluated, including facilities, staff-
15 ing salaries, and educational materials.

16 **“SEC. 265. ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.**

17 “An eligible entity that receives a grant under this
18 part for a fiscal year, and each eligible recipient receiving
19 a subgrant under this part for a fiscal year, may use not
20 more than 15 percent of the funds made available through
21 the grant or subgrant, respectively, for administrative
22 costs.

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

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

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