

No Child Left Inside Legislation Approved by Senate Committee

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The U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions tonight approved key elements of the No Child Left Inside Act (NCLI) as part of its reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. By including NCLI in the nation's new plan for education, the committee endorsed in bi-partisan fashion the idea that a well-rounded student is environmentally literate.

"If members of Congress can agree on one thing it's that every child deserves the best education. Part of that education must be an understanding of the natural world and environmental issues. An environmental literate child is more likely to achieve academically, be more motivated, and have a better chance at a job in the emerging green economy," said Don Baugh, director of the No Child Left Inside Coalition. "We thank Maryland Sen. Barbara Mikulski and others on the committee for their bi-partisan support."

Many exemplary environmental education programs exist in some schools across the country, but not all students have access to these programs. Such inconsistency can occur when schools feel compelled to emphasize math and reading instruction over science and other subjects because of the 2002 federal No Child Left Behind law. Some schools also lack funding for staff development in environmental education. The provisions of the No Child Left Inside Act approved by committee today would provide financial support to states to implement environmental literacy programs.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (formerly known as "No Child Left Behind") sets federal accountability standards for schools. The reauthorization of the law makes a number of changes in the original legislation. The Senate committee action tonight is the first step in the reauthorization process in Congress.

Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island and Congressman John Sarbanes of Maryland introduced the NCLI Act earlier this year in both houses. The Senate education committee tonight chose to conceptually embed the No Child Left Inside Act in the larger education bill.

Studies show environmental education has a measurable, positive impact on student achievement not only in science but in math, reading, and social studies. Business leaders also increasingly believe an environmentally literate workforce is critical in a burgeoning green economy.

The No Child Left Inside Coalition is a national partnership of over 2,000 business, health, youth, faith, recreational, environmental, and educational groups representing over 50 million Americans.

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