

December 2, 2015

Dear Member of Congress:

As a coalition of national scientific societies that support the physical sciences, we strongly encourage you to **vote yes on the “Every Student Succeeds Act,” the conference agreement to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)**, when it comes to the House floor this afternoon. Given our common interest in improving K-12 science education, we commend the Congress for authoring a bipartisan bill that provides considerable support to states, school districts, schools, and teachers, to improve science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) teaching and learning at the K-12 level.

STEM education at the K-12 level prepares the nation’s students to understand and be curious about the workings of the world around them, while it also lays the foundation for them to succeed economically in today’s increasingly competitive world. Science and mathematics have long been recognized as core academic subjects that are central to a well-rounded education, and a strong base of knowledge in STEM subjects is now more important than ever for America’s future leaders, employees, and citizens.

Whether the dream is to one day be a mechanic, research scientist, accountant, nurse, software developer, or corporate executive, every student needs to have a strong foundation in STEM in order to be hired and to succeed. Based on a list in Forbes magazine, the highest-paying, most in-demand jobs in America are nearly all in STEM fields or require a strong academic background in science, computer science, mathematics, or statistics. The knowledge foundation for that workforce begins with K-12 STEM teaching and learning.

We are backing the ESEA conference agreement because it would help K-12 schools meet student and teacher needs for STEM education in the following ways:

- allowing grant funding to the states (allocated through Titles II & IV) to be spent on
 - STEM education engagement, courses, after-school programs, service-based and field opportunities, and other activities
 - professional development and instructional materials for STEM teachers; and
 - the creation and enhancement of STEM-focused specialty schools
- allowing schools to partner with institutions of higher education for professional development for teachers
- establishing and authorizing funding for a nationwide STEM Master Teacher Corps, a state-led effort to recognize, reward, attract, and retain outstanding STEM teachers, particularly in high-need and rural schools
- retaining the requirement, currently law, that states must test all students in science, once each in elementary, middle and high school; and
- retaining mathematics and science, and adding computer science, as core academic subjects that are part of what constitutes a “well-rounded education.”

As a coalition of physical sciences societies with a national reach, we are pleased that Congress has acknowledged the importance of STEM as a key knowledge base for American children in their K-12 education. The conference agreement embraces STEM education in both spirit and through considerable financial support, and ***in our estimation this bill would contribute to the broader national effort to ensure the U.S. maintains its competitive edge internationally in the STEM fields, which drive innovation and economic growth.***

We respectfully encourage you to vote in favor of the ESEA conference agreement. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The Physical Sciences Education Policy Coalition
American Association of Physics Teachers
American Astronomical Society
American Institute of Physics
American Physical Society
The Optical Society