

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.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Teaching Geography Is Fundamental Act”.

SEC. 2. GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION.

Title II of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1021 et seq.) is amended—

(1) by redesignating part C (20 U.S.C. 1041) as part D;

(2) by redesignating section 261 (20 U.S.C. 1041) as section 291; and

(3) by inserting after part B (20 U.S.C. 1031 et seq.) the following:

“PART C—GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION

“SEC. 261. FINDINGS.

“Congress makes the following findings:

“(1) The economic stature and competitiveness of the United States requires increasingly sophisticated levels of geographic knowledge and mastery of geographic tools.

“(2) It is estimated that the United States geospatial industry generated \$73,000,000,000 in revenue last year, with 500,000 high-wage jobs and that the industry is growing at between 25–30 percent per year. This burgeoning industry will not be able to maximize its growth potential without a sustained Federal investment in geography education.

“(3) A 2012 report by a Council on Foreign Relations task force, U.S. Education Reform and National Security, states that the lack of global awareness among United States citizens increasingly jeopardizes their ability to interact with local and global peers, or participate meaningfully in business, diplomatic, and military situations.

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

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

“(6) The National Academy of Sciences urged creation of a national program to improve the geographic competence of the United States general population and the school age population.

“(7) Geography is one of the ‘core academic subjects’ defined under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

“(8) A recent National Geographic Society survey found that all 50 States and the District of Columbia recognize geography in their curricula or content standards, and an increasing number require geography for graduation and include geography in mandated statewide assessments.

“(9) Seven of 10 educators responding to a National Geographic survey felt their professional development opportunities in geography were inadequate and half believed their schools had inadequate basic materials for teaching geography.

“(10) The National Geographic Society has spent more than 25 years pioneering an extraordinarily effective national program for improving the teaching of geography by engaging university faculty geographers and highly trained teachers in State Geographic Alliances dedicated to providing high-quality professional development opportunities for kindergarten through grade 12 teachers.

“(11) More than 80 colleges and universities in all 50 States have received grants from the National Geographic Society to support State Geographic Alliances and their professional development programs. Alliance-trained kindergarten through grade 12 teachers and their higher education partners conduct workshops, develop localized teaching materials, and facilitate communication among thousands of teachers whose responsibilities include teaching of geography in various formats and grade levels.

“(12) A study by Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning that assessed student academic achievement in geography on the National Assessment of Educational Progress showed that students taught by Alliance-trained teachers outperformed other students by almost 10 percent.

“(13) We live in a changing world with multiple and evolving threats to national security, including terrorism, asymmetrical warfare, and social unrest. As the nature of the threat evolves, so do the tools, knowledge, and skills needed to respond. A 2013 National Academies report states that it is likely that qualified GIS (Geography Information Systems) and remote

sensing experts are already hard to find. Long before 2030, competition and a small number of graduates will likely result in shortages in all emerging areas and in the core areas of cartography, photogrammetry, and geodesy.

“SEC. 262. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES.

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

“(1) promote geographic literacy and improved understanding of global cultures among kindergarten through grade 12 students by expanding programs that employ the geographic knowledge and expertise of faculty members in institutions of higher education for the benefit of kindergarten through grade 12 teachers; and

“(2) otherwise advance geographic literacy.

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

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

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

“(A) to improve student mastery of geographic principles; and

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

“(3) To encourage geographic education research, to develop and disseminate effective instructional materials, and to promote replication of best practices and exemplary programs that foster geographic literacy.

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

“(5) To leverage and expand private and public support for geography education partnerships at national, State, and local levels.

“SEC. 263. GRANT PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary is authorized to award a grant to a national nonprofit education organization or a consortium of national nonprofit education organizations (referred to in this part as an ‘eligible entity’) that has as its primary purpose the improvement of the quality of student understanding of geography through effective teaching of geography in the Nation’s classrooms.

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

“SEC. 264. USE OF FUNDS.

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

“(1) strengthen and expand the eligible entity’s relationships with institutions of higher education and with State and local agencies and other public and private organizations with a commitment to geography education and the benefits of geography education;

“(2) support and promote research-based training of teachers of geography and related disciplines in kindergarten through grade 12 as a means of broadening student knowledge of the world, including the dissemination of information on effective practices and research findings concerning the teaching of geography;

“(3) support research on effective geography teaching practices and the development of assessment instruments and strategies to document student understanding of geography;

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

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

“(b) SUBGRANTS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity that receives a grant under this part shall use not more than 75 percent of the funds made available through the grant for a fiscal year to award subgrants to eligible 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.

“(ii) REVIEWERS.—The individuals the eligible entity shall invite to review applications are the following:

“(I) Leaders in the field of geography education.

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

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

“(A) Conducting teacher training programs that use effective and research-based approaches to the teaching of geography at the kindergarten through grade 12 level.

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

“(C) Applying Internet and other distance learning technology to the teaching of geography or to the continuing education of teachers.

“(D) Promoting rigorous academic standards and assessment techniques to guide and measure student performance in geography.

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

“(F) Carrying out local, field-based activities for teachers and students to improve their knowledge of the concepts and tools of geography while enhancing understanding of their home region.

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

“(H) Encouraging replication of best practices and model programs to promote geographic literacy.

“(I) Developing and disseminating effective, research-based geography learning materials.

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

“(5) MATCHING REQUIREMENTS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—In order to be eligible to receive a subgrant under this part, an eligible recipient shall provide assurances in the

application submitted under paragraph (3) to provide matching funds as described in subparagraph (B) towards the costs of the activities assisted under the subgrant.

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

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

“SEC. 265. ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.

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

“SEC. 266. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

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