

# We Need the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress to Pass the Teaching Geography is Fundamental Act (“TGIF”)

## TGIF ADDRESSES TWO OF THE MOST CRITICAL ISSUES FACING THE U.S.

### (1) Job Creation/Competitiveness:

- **NATIONAL GOAL:** To create jobs and ensure that the U.S. retains its standing as the world’s largest and most influential economy.
- **ISSUE:** More than 32,000 new skilled jobs in geospatial technology are becoming available each year, but, because so few Americans possess the requisite geography/geospatial technology skills, these jobs are being lost to foreign countries where students receive a more comprehensive geography education.
- **SOLUTION:** We need to provide American students with the necessary expertise to fill and retain the new skilled jobs becoming available in the geospatial technology industry.

### (2) National Security:

- **NATIONAL GOAL:** To make sure our nation can maintain its physical and economic security.
- **ISSUE:** We do not have enough Americans who understand natural hazards, international politics, or the global economy well enough to protect our interests.
- **SOLUTION:** We need to provide all Americans with sufficient geographic understanding to make decisions about our role in international politics and the global economy. We need to train students to use new geotechnologies to predict, respond to, and recover from natural disasters. We need to prepare students with the global understanding and cultural competence to meet the needs of our military, foreign service, and intelligence community.

## THE UNITED STATES NEEDS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION:

- Geography is the only one of the nine core subjects under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) not to have received dedicated federal funding since NCLB went into effect in 2002.
- Until this oversight is rectified, we will continue to jeopardize our global competitiveness and national security.

## FUNDING TEACHER DEVELOPMENT VIA TGIF IS A CRITICAL FIRST STEP:

- Professional development in geography education works. Students of teachers with professional development in geography education have achieved significantly higher scores on relevant portions of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test.
- TGIF will fund research and innovation in professional development to help ensure that all young people acquire the vital geography skills and experience they need.

## WE ASK THE 113<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS TO TAKE ACTION:

- Many Senators and Representatives from both parties have demonstrated their support for geography education by signing on as cosponsors of TGIF. In the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, 118 members of the House and 25 members of the Senate signed onto TGIF as cosponsors.
- In addition to congressional support, all stakeholders (of which there are many) endorse TGIF. These supporters range from the National PTA to Google. **THERE IS NO SUBSTANTIVE OPPOSITION.**
- Given the breadth of support, and for the sake of our Nation, we ask that the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress pass TGIF.

**With your support, we will pass TGIF in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress!**

## We Need Our Government to Support Geography Education

Geography has been recognized as a “core academic subject” in federal education legislation since 1994. However, unlike all the other core academic subjects, including history, civics, economics, foreign languages, and the arts, there is no dedicated federal funding stream to advance geography education. As a result, our nation is facing a crisis in geographic literacy that is jeopardizing our global competitiveness, our national security, and our ability to fill and retain more than 325,000 new geospatial technology jobs over the next decade (DiBiase *et al.* 2010).

The National Geographic Society and other like-minded organizations support the Teaching Geography Is Fundamental Act (“TGIF”), federal legislation which would authorize grants to universities and nonprofit organizations for programs to expand geographic literacy among American students and improve the teaching of geography at the K-12 level.

The Teaching Geography is Fundamental Act is supported in part by:

- **Major Private-Sector Companies:** Google, Esri, CH2M HILL, Sprint Nextel, Toyoto Motor North America, and Nokia.
- **U.S. Secretaries of State:** The Honorable Madeleine K. Albright, the Honorable James A. Baker III, the Honorable Henry A. Kissinger, and the Honorable George P. Schultz.
- **U.S. Secretaries of Defense:** The Honorable William S. Cohen and the Honorable Robert M. Gates.
- **Senior Government Officials:** The Honorable Bill Richardson, the Honorable Timothy E. Wirth, General Charles F. Wald (USAF, Ret.), Vice Admiral Dennis McGinn (USN, Ret.), and Vice Admiral Robert Murrett (USN, Ret.).
- **Governors:** Alabama, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, and West Virginia.

## TGIF FUNDS INNOVATION AND RESEARCH

The Department of Education would make a grant to a national nonprofit geographic education organization or consortium of organizations. The bulk of the funding then would be directed to subgrants for universities, nonprofit organizations, and state and local agencies to support innovative geography education programs at the state and local levels.

In addition, the national nonprofit organizations would undertake geography education research and programs of national significance. The subgrants to the state and local level would specifically support:

- Teacher training programs, including geospatial technologies, international studies/geopolitics, and environment and energy studies;
- Application of Internet and other distance learning technology to the teaching of geography;
- Advancement of viable academic standards and assessment techniques to guide and measure student performance in geography;
- Research in geography education;
- Replication of best practices and model programs; and
- Development and dissemination of effective classroom materials.