American Library Association
Washington Office Newsline

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Urgent Action Needed on SKILLs Act

On Thursday, August 2, Representatives Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) and Vernon Ehlers (R-MI) sent a Dear Colleague letter asking Members of Congress to co-sponsor H.R. 2864, The Strengthening Kids' Interest in Learning and Libraries or SKILLs Act.

The SKILLs Act

- Requires school districts, to the extent feasible, to ensure that every school within the district employs at least one highly qualified school library media specialist in each school library;
- Defines highly qualified school library media specialists as those who have a bachelor's degree and have obtained full state certification as a school library media specialist or passed the state teacher licensing examination, with state certification in library media in such state;
- Establishes as a state goal that there be at least one highly qualified school library media specialist in every public school no later than the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year;
- Broadens the focus of training, professional development, and recruitment activities to include school library media specialists;
- Ensures that funds will serve elementary, middle, and high school students; and
- Requires books and materials to be appropriate for and engage the interest of students in all grade levels and students with special learning needs, including English language learners.

Urgent Action needed: This legislation is critical to the future of school library media specialists. Please contact your Representative immediately and ask them to co-sponsor the SKILLs Act.

Talking Points

- Multiple studies have affirmed that there is a clear link between school library media programs that are staffed by a school library media specialist and student academic achievement. Across the United States, research has shown that students in schools with good school libraries learn more, get better grades, and score higher on standardized test scores than their peers in schools without libraries.
Long regarded as the cornerstone of the school community, school libraries are no longer just for books. Instead, they have become sophisticated 21st century learning environments offering a full range of print and electronic resources that provide equal learning opportunities to all students, regardless of the socio-economic or education levels of the community – but only when they are staffed by school library media specialists trained to collaborate with teachers and engage students meaningfully with information that matters to them both in the classroom and in the real world.

- Only about 60 percent of our school libraries have a full-time, state-certified school library media specialist on staff.
- With limited funding and an increased focus on school performance, administrators are trying to stretch dollars and cut funds across various programs to ensure that maximum resources are dedicated to improving student academic achievement.
- Because NCLB does not highlight the direct correlation between school library media specialists and increased student academic achievement, library resource budgets are increasingly being used to mitigate the effects of budgetary shortfalls.

August 1, 2007

SUPPORT A HIGHLY QUALIFIED LIBRARIAN FOR EVERY SCHOOL

Cosponsor HR 2864, the Strengthening Kids' Interest in Learning and Libraries Act

Dear Colleague:

Please join us in cosponsoring HR 2864, The Strengthening Kids' Interest in Learning and Libraries or SKILLs Act. This bill guarantees that students across America will be served by highly qualified, state-certified school library media specialists and the library resources they need to succeed.

Study after study proves that students in schools with well-stocked libraries and highly qualified, state-certified school librarians learn more, get better grades and score higher on standardized tests than students who do not have the same benefits.

Today, only 60 percent of school libraries have full-time, state-certified school library media specialists on staff. With limited resources, school administrators are struggling to stretch dollars, and library resource budgets are increasingly being used to make up for shortfalls in other areas.

The SKILLs Act ensures that desperately-needed library funds will be available to serve students in elementary, middle and high schools throughout the nation; that appropriate books and materials will be available for students at all grade levels, including those with special learning needs.
and those learning English as a second language; and that highly qualified school library media specialists will be available to assist and support all our students with their learning needs.

School libraries are no longer just for books. Instead, they have become sophisticated 21st century learning environments offering a full range of print and electronic resources that provide equal learning opportunities to all students, regardless of the socio-economic or education levels of the community.

The Alliance for Excellent Education and the National Commission for Library Information Sciences support the bill.

If you have any questions please contact alethea.scally@mail.house.gov in Rep. Grijalva's office or rachel.post@mail.house.gov in Rep. Ehlers' office.

Sincerely,

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Vernon J. Ehlers
Member of Congress

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