

109TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 860

To amend the National Assessment of Educational Progress Authorization Act to require State academic assessments of student achievement in United States history and civics, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 20, 2005

Mr. ALEXANDER (for himself and Mr. KENNEDY) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To amend the National Assessment of Educational Progress Authorization Act to require State academic assessments of student achievement in United States history and civics, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “American History
5 Achievement Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds that—

1 (1) the 2001 National Assessment of Edu-
2 cational Progress assessment in United States his-
3 tory had the largest percentage of students scoring
4 below basic of any subject that was tested, including
5 mathematics, science, and reading;

6 (2) in the 2001 National Assessment of Edu-
7 cational Progress assessment in United States his-
8 tory—

9 (A) 33 percent of students in grade 4
10 scored below basic, 36 percent of students in
11 grade 8 scored below basic, and 57 percent of
12 students in grade 12 scored below basic;

13 (B) 92 percent of students in grade 12
14 could not explain the most important cause of
15 the Great Depression after reading a paragraph
16 delineating 4 significant reasons;

17 (C) 91 percent of students in grade 8
18 could not “list two issues that were important
19 in causing the Civil War” and “list the North-
20 ern and Southern positions on each of these
21 issues”;

22 (D) 95 percent of students in grade 4
23 could not list “two reasons why the people we
24 call ‘pioneers’ moved west across the United
25 States”;

1 (E) 73 percent of students in grade 4
2 could not identify the Constitution from among
3 4 choices as “the document that contains the
4 basic rules used to run the United States gov-
5 ernment”;

6 (F) 75 percent of students in grade 4
7 could not identify “the three parts of the fed-
8 eral (national) government of the United
9 States” out of 4 possible choices;

10 (G) 94 percent of students in grade 8
11 could not “give two reasons why it can be use-
12 ful for a country to have a constitution”; and

13 (H) 91 percent of students in grade 12
14 were unable to “explain two ways that demo-
15 cratic society benefits from citizens actively par-
16 ticipating in the political process”;

17 (3) America’s past encompasses great leaders
18 and great ideas that contribute to our shared herit-
19 age and to the principles of freedom, equality, jus-
20 tice, and opportunity for all;

21 (4) an appreciation for the defining events in
22 our Nation’s history can be a catalyst for civic in-
23 volvement; and

24 (5) the strength of American democracy and
25 our standing in the world depend on ensuring that

1 our children have a strong understanding of our Na-
 2 tion’s past.

3 **SEC. 3. AMENDMENT TO THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF**
 4 **EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS AUTHORIZATION**
 5 **ACT.**

6 Section 303(b) of the National Assessment of Edu-
 7 cational Progress Authorization Act (20 U.S.C. 9622(b))
 8 is amended—

9 (1) in paragraph (2)(D), by inserting “(with a
 10 priority in conducting assessments in history not less
 11 frequently than once every 4 years)” after “subject
 12 matter”; and

13 (2) in paragraph (3)(A)—

14 (A) in clause (iii)—

15 (i) by inserting “except as provided in
 16 clause (iv),” before “may conduct”; and

17 (ii) by striking “and” after the semi-
 18 colon;

19 (B) by redesignating clause (iv) as clause
 20 (v); and

21 (C) by inserting after clause (iii) the fol-
 22 lowing:

23 “(iv) shall conduct trial State aca-
 24 demic assessments of student achievement
 25 in United States history in grades 8 and

1 12 in not less than 10 States representing
 2 geographically diverse regions of the
 3 United States and in civics in grades 8 and
 4 12 in not less than 10 States representing
 5 geographically diverse regions of the
 6 United States (with a priority given to con-
 7 ducting assessments in United States his-
 8 tory); and”.

9 **SEC. 4. NATIONAL ASSESSMENT GOVERNING BOARD.**

10 Section 302(e)(1) of the National Assessment of
 11 Educational Progress Authorization Act (20 U.S.C.
 12 9621(e)(1)) is amended—

13 (1) in subparagraph (I), by striking “and” after
 14 the semicolon;

15 (2) by redesignating subparagraph (J) as sub-
 16 paragraph (K);

17 (3) in the flush matter at the end, by striking
 18 “subparagraph (J)” and inserting “subparagraph
 19 (K)”;

20 (4) by inserting after subparagraph (I) the fol-
 21 lowing:

22 “(J) in consultation with the Commissioner
 23 for Education Statistics, identify and select the
 24 States that will participate in the trial State

1 academic assessments described in section
2 303(b)(3)(A)(iv); and”.

3 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

4 Section 305 of the National Assessment of Edu-
5 cational Progress Authorization Act (20 U.S.C. 9624) is
6 amended—

7 (1) by redesignating subsection (b) as sub-
8 section (c); and

9 (2) by inserting after subsection (a) the fol-
10 lowing:

11 “(b) HISTORY AND CIVICS ASSESSMENTS.—There
12 are authorized to be appropriated—

13 “(1) \$7,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2006
14 and 2007 to carry out sections 303(b)(3)(A)(iv) and
15 302(e)(1), of which not more than \$500,000 for
16 each fiscal year shall be available to carry out sec-
17 tion 302(e)(1); and

18 “(2) such sums as may be necessary to carry
19 out such sections for each succeeding fiscal year.”.

20 **SEC. 6. CONFORMING AMENDMENT.**

21 Section 113(a)(1) of the Education Sciences Reform
22 Act of 2002 (20 U.S.C. 9513(a)(1)) is amended by strik-
23 ing “section 302(e)(1)(J)” and inserting “section
24 302(e)(1)(K)”.

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