

The Dodd-Ehlers' Standards to Provide Educational Achievement for All Kids (SPEAK) Act

PURPOSE: To create, adopt, and implement rigorous, voluntary American education content standards in math and science in grades K-12 and incentivize states to adopt them.

FINDINGS:

- America's leadership, economic competitiveness and national security rest on our commitment to educate and prepare our youth to succeed in a global economy. The key to succeeding educationally is to have high expectations for all students.
- Recent international comparisons make clear that American students have significant shortcomings in math and science and many lack the basic math or science skills required for college or the workplace.
- With more than 50 different sets of academic standards, 50 state assessments, and 50 definitions of proficiency under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), there is great variability in the measures, standards and benchmarks for academic achievement in math and science across states.
- As a result of varied standards, assessments and proficiency levels, America's highly mobile student-aged population moves through the nation's schools gaining widely varying levels of knowledge, skills and preparedness.
- In order for the United States to compete in a global economy, the country needs to strengthen its educational expectations for *all* American children.
- Grounded in a real world analysis and international comparisons of what students need to succeed in work and college, rigorous, voluntary, core American standards will keep the United States economically competitive and ensure that American children are given the same opportunity to learn to a high standard no matter where they reside.

WHY AMERICAN EDUCATION STANDARDS?

- To ensure that all American students are given the same opportunity to learn to a high standard no matter where they reside.
- To allow for meaningful comparisons of student academic achievement across states.
- To ensure American students are academically qualified to enter college, or training for the civilian or military workforce.
- To ensure that students are better prepared for the global marketplace and, consequently, maintain America's competitive edge.

WHAT DOES THE BILL DO?

- Tasks the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), in consultation with relevant constituencies and upon review of existing standards, with creating rigorous and voluntary core American education content standards in math and science for grades K-12.
- Ensures that such standards are internationally competitive and comparable to the best standards in the world.
- Requires the standards to be anchored in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) math and science frameworks and achievement levels.
- Ensures that special education students and English Language Learners are considered in development of the standards.
- Establishes the American Standards Incentive Fund as a means to incentivize states to adopt the standards.
- Provides an additional bonus grant to states that successfully meet the requirements of the incentive fund to enhance statewide student-level longitudinal data systems.
- Allows the Secretary to extend the NCLB timeline for participating states.

WHAT DOES THE BILL NOT DO?

- The bill does not establish a national test.
- The bill does not establish a national curriculum.
- The bill does not tell teachers how to teach their subject matter.
- The bill does not establish national standards - participation is voluntary.
- The bill does not limit states to the core standards when developing state academic standards.