



For Immediate Release

Contact: Sarah Bodor, Director of Policy, 410-991-3340

Every Student Succeeds Act Includes Historic Gains for Environmental Education

The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) applauds the Senate passage of the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act, which replaces No Child Left Behind. The much-anticipated bill includes language that, for the first time, supports opportunities to provide students with environmental education and hands-on, field-based learning experiences. A companion bill overwhelmingly passed the House last week.

“The inclusion of environmental education language in the Every Student Succeeds Act signifies an important step forward for teachers and school systems who know what a rich and engaging context the local environment is for learning,” said Judy Braus, Executive Director of NAAEE. “We congratulate Congressional leaders for recognizing the role that environmental education can play in providing students with a well-rounded, 21st century education and preparing them for a lifetime of success.”

Under Title IV of the new bill, environmental education would be eligible for funding through grants to states for “programs and activities that support access to a well-rounded education.” Environmental literacy programs are now also included among eligible programs for funding through 21st Century Community Learning Center grants. Additionally, the inclusion of Title IV funds for hands-on, field-based, or service learning to enhance understanding of science, technology, engineering and math subjects provides a potential boost for environmental science education programs.

The gains for environmental education come as a result of years-long work by champions of the bipartisan *No Child Left Inside (NCLI) Act*, which sought to secure federal dollars to support states’ efforts to implement environmental literacy plans in K-12 public schools.

“Environmental education can have a positive impact on kids’ health, academic achievement, and understanding of the natural world. This bill represents a major step forward, giving schools new opportunities to engage students through environmental education. I first introduced NCLI back in 2007, and since that time, thanks to the advocacy of coalitions and organizations like NAAEE, we’ve made real progress in elevating the importance of environmental education and getting more schools to develop outdoor, hands on learning as part of their curriculum. And that

has a tremendous benefit for students and our communities,” stated U.S. Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), the chief Senate sponsor of the NCLI Act.

Congressman John Sarbanes (MD-3) has sponsored NCLI in the House. “ESSA is a tremendous victory for advocates of environmental education who’ve fought long and hard to inspire the next generation of environmental stewards with outdoor, hands-on learning programs,” said Congressman Sarbanes. “I commend my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for passing a comprehensive education reform package that has immense benefits for students, teachers and schools across the country.”

NAAEE serves as the backbone organization for the field of environmental education and is dedicated to advancing environmental literacy and civic engagement through the power of education. NAAEE supports a network of more than 20,000 educators, researchers, and organizational members in more than 30 countries through direct membership and 50 state, provincial, and regional affiliate organizations. Through community networks, publications, signature programs, NAAEE provides leadership, professional development, and resources for professionals working in all areas of the field. For more information, visit www.naaee.net.