

No Child Left Inside Act 2015 Key Messages

Updated 2/26/2015

The Bills

H.R. 882: Sponsored by Congressmen John Sarbanes (MD-3) and Mike Fitzpatrick (PA-8), this bill was introduced in the House of Representatives on February 11, 2015, and has been referred to the House Committee on Education and Workforce. *This same legislation passed the House in 2008.*

S. 492: Sponsored by Senators Jack Reed (RI) and Mark Kirk (IL), this bill was introduced in the Senate on February 11, 2015, and has been referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Text of the bills: [H.R. 882](#) [S. 492](#)

Press Releases

From [Representative Sarbanes](#)

From [Representative Fitzpatrick](#)

From [Senator Reed](#)

From [Senator Kirk](#)

The Issues

- Studies consistently reveal that the U.S. public — and specifically children — suffers from a tremendous “environmental literacy” gap that is increasing rather than decreasing (Charles & Louv, 2009). For example, two-thirds of the public fail even a basic environmental quiz, and a whopping 88 percent of the public fail a quiz about basic energy resources. These same studies found that 45 million Americans think the ocean is a source of fresh water, and 130 million believe that hydropower is America's top energy source.
- Today's youth experience less free and unstructured outdoor playtime in nature than experienced by previous generations; reduced mobility and less range for exploration, including reduction in walking or riding a bike to school; growing fear of strangers and nature itself; and a dramatic rise in obesity as well as vitamin D deficiency and other health issues that may in part be related to low levels of outdoor activity and a sedentary lifestyle. A lack of knowledge of common plant and animal species may also be an indicator of lack of access to or engagement within nature in an increasingly urbanized world (Charles & Louv, 2009).
- The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) — also known as “No Child Left Behind” — was passed in 2001 and has fundamentally changed the way education is delivered in this country. ESEA has defined the core content that all U.S. students must learn to be considered proficient at each grade level. As of 2007, this includes content standards in reading, math, and science. In many school districts, this has translated into teaching and assessing only those subjects.
- Few have recognized the value that alternative and expanded learning environments (such as the outdoors) can have in significantly impacting academic achievement in reading, math, and science — and thus, many schools have completely eliminated environmental education programs from their curricula.

The Solutions Presented in This Bill

The No Child Left Inside Act amends the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to:

- Require states to **develop environmental literacy plans**, approved by the Secretary of Education, for pre-kindergarten through grade twelve that include environmental education standards and teacher training.
- Direct the Secretary of Education to award Environmental Education Professional Development Grants to states and, through them, competitive sub-grants to programs that **partner schools and community organizations (such as camps) together to create activities** involving, among other things, teacher training and the development of more rigorous environmental education curricula that advance the teaching of interdisciplinary courses.
- Authorize the Secretary of Education to award competitive matching grants to programs that **partner schools and community organizations (such as camps) to improve and support environmental education.**

Data Points

- Direct experience in nature is important to a child's intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual, and physical development (Kellert, 2005).
- Experience outside the classroom consistently provides significant gains in both cognitive and affective achievement for all students, for all grade levels, and particularly for minority students and those categorized as "at risk" (Rudman 1994).
- Time spent in the outdoors can mitigate some health threats related to sedentary behavior and attention deficit disorder (Moore & Cooper Marcus, 2008).
- Physical activity, such as outdoor play, has been linked to increases in students' grade point averages and more efficient classroom learning, as well as positive associations with children's physical fitness, concentration, memory, behavior, and school satisfaction (Trudeau & Shephard, 2008).
- Many studies of environmental education programs — including a study of weeklong residential outdoor education programs — have found increases in mastery of science concepts, cooperation and conflict resolution skills, self-esteem, positive environmental behavior, problem solving, motivation to learn, and classroom behavior (American Institutes for Research, 2005).
- Access to nature facilitates self-discipline, peace, and self-control (Kuo & Taylor, 2005; Taylor, Kuo, Spencer, & Blades, 2006; Taylor, Kuo, & Sullivan, 2002). The ability to have self-control, concentration, and other positive qualities can carry over to academic settings, leading to academic achievement.

Call to Action

We will call the community to action in the near future. Sign up for our RSS feed to be the first to hear about all calls to action: www.ACAcamps.org/rss/publicpolicy.xml

References

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For more information, contact the American Camp Association Public Policy Office at: 800-428-2267 or at: www.ACAcamps.org/publicpolicy.