



U.S. House Passes Watershed Education Bill to Sharpen Science Education, Improve Student Readiness to Learn

Vote Expected Soon On Public Lands Service Corps Act To Create Jobs for Youth on Public Lands

WASHINGTON (March 19)—The U.S. House of Representatives today passed a bipartisan bill to promote nature education and advance science literacy in America’s classrooms. The House is also expected to vote as soon as this weekend on the Public Lands Service Corps Act to provide young people with service and job opportunities on public lands.

The Ocean, Coastal and Watershed Education Act (H.R. 3644), passed by a vote of 244-170, empowers teachers to engage students in outdoor learning about local watersheds. Research shows that this type of environmental education improves student readiness to learn, increases standardized tests scores, and piques student interest in **science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM)** learning.

Introduced by Congresswoman Lois Capps (CA - 23) last September, H.R. 3644 will authorize a national Environmental Literacy Grant Program and a regional Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) program at the **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**.

Also expected to be considered as soon as this weekend is the **Public Lands Service Corps Act (H.R. 1612)**, led by Congressman Raul Grijalva (AZ - 7). This legislation supports youth service and employment on public lands that provides on-the-job training and education for young people, especially those from underserved communities. As the youth unemployment rate in America soars to record levels, this bill will create opportunities for green jobs and youth careers in natural resources.

Both bills under consideration will engage young people in healthy, active time outdoors in nature, helping to combat the new phenomenon of the “indoor childhood”. Recent studies show that children today spend on average fewer than 7 minutes each day outside and more than 7 hours a day in front of electronic media.

Kevin Coyle, Vice President of Education and Training at National Wildlife Federation, said today:

“National Wildlife Federation applauds Congresswoman Capps and Congressman Grijalva for their leadership on legislation that connects children with nature, advances science learning, and provides opportunities for young Americans to learn, serve, and work in the growing clean energy economy. Hands-on environmental education gets children outdoors to experience nature

firsthand while improving science skills. It helps students learn about the world around them, a world they will inherit and must learn to take care of.”

Kevin Coyle testified last October in support of H.R. 3644 before the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources’ Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife. To view the complete testimony, click [here](#).

Congresswoman Lois Capps (CA-23), lead sponsor of H.R.3644, said:

“B-WET both brings local watersheds into every classroom, and draws every child out into the watershed in an exciting and meaningful way. I’ve seen firsthand in California how this program successfully provides opportunities for children and teachers to learn about the importance of our coastal and marine environments. Under this legislation, more watershed communities across the nation will be able to replicate the success we’ve experienced on California’s coast.”

Dr. James Elder, Director of the Campaign for Environmental Literacy, said:

“The Campaign for Environmental Literacy, with partner organizations led by NWF, has been working hard to see these two vital education and service programs become formally authorized. The success of Congresswoman Capps' bill expands the focus in America’s classrooms on the critical, symbiotic relationship between the environment and the economy. The legislation that passed in the House of Representatives today will help develop a generation which understands that one cannot be sacrificed for the other—our country must find solutions for ensuring both the environment and the economy are healthy and strong if we are to meet the coming demand for a green economy in the 21st century.”

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