



For Immediate Release
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Rep. Scott Introduces Legislation to Improve High School Graduation Rates

Washington, DC - Today Congressman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (D-VA-03) introduced legislation that would dramatically improve high school graduation rates across the nation.

“The current high school accountability system is failing our students and our future as a nation,” said Rep. Scott. “Almost one-third of all high school students in the United States fail to graduate with their peers – about 1.2 million every year – and the numbers are worse for minorities as compared to non-minority students,” Scott reported. “I am introducing the Every Student Counts Act to bring meaningful accountability to high schools and help reduce the high school dropout rate.”

Rep. Rubén Hinojosa, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness and an original cosponsor of the bill, commented: “I applaud Rep. Scott for all the work he has done to combat our nation’s alarmingly low high school graduation rates. In our accountability system, the standard must be that every student graduates, prepared for a postsecondary education and a career – otherwise, we, as a country, have failed. The Every Student Counts Act will ensure that we are well on our way toward achieving that goal.”

The Every Student Counts Act builds on the National Governors Association’s Graduation Rate Compact, which was signed by all 50 of the nation’s governors in 2005. The legislation would ensure that schools are held accountable for graduating students by creating a single, accurate, and consistent measurement for reporting and accountability of high school graduation rates. It would require high schools to increase their graduation rates by meeting annual, research-based benchmarks with the long-term goal of reaching a 90 percent graduation rate. The bill would also require the disaggregation of graduation data by subgroup to ensure that schools are held accountable for increasing the graduation rate for all types of students. Finally, the bill would give schools credit for graduating students who need extra time by allowing students who graduate in five years to count toward a school’s successful graduation rate.

“It is my hope that with this bill, we can make great strides toward graduating more of America’s students and preparing them to succeed in college and in life. We need to ensure that all students are not only provided the opportunity to graduate with a high school degree, but are encouraged to do so,” concluded Rep. Scott.

Original cosponsors also include Reps. Danny K. Davis, Bennie G. Thompson, Corinne Brown, Elijah E. Cummings, Chaka Fattah, William L. Jefferson, Raul M. Grijalva, Linda T. Sanchez, Barbara Lee, Julia Carson, Al Green, Loretta Sanchez, Edolphus Towns, Keith Ellison, Phil Hare, and Carolyn C. Kilpatrick.

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H.R. 2955, the Every Student Counts Act Support Efforts to Increase the High School Graduation Rate Across the United States

In 2001, Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) with bipartisan support in order to close the achievement gaps that existed between students of differing racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. NCLB held the promise of ending what was coined “the soft bigotry of low expectations” and would hold schools, districts and States accountable for the success of all students.

Unfortunately, achievement gaps are still prevalent in our nation’s high schools. Approximately one-third of our students leave high school without a diploma -- 1.23 million each year or 7,000 each school day. Only about 50 percent of black and American Indian students and 60 percent of Hispanic students graduate on time with a regular diploma, compared with more than 75 percent of their white and Asian counterparts.

Graduation rates are a fundamental indicator of whether or not the nation’s public school system is doing what it is intended to do: enroll, engage, and educate youth to be productive members of society. In today’s increasingly competitive global economy, graduating from high school is more critical than ever to securing a good job and a promising future. An estimated 85 percent of current jobs and almost 90 percent of the fastest-growing and best-paying jobs now require some postsecondary education. This means that now, more than ever, a high school diploma is essential for success in college and the workplace. In contrast, high school dropouts often have trouble finding stable, well-paying jobs. They have more health problems, shorter life spans, and often become parents at an early age. They are also more at risk of becoming embroiled in the criminal justice system or needing social welfare assistance.

Schools, districts, and States have a responsibility to educate our students in a manner that will prepare them for college and the workplace. Unfortunately, unacceptably low graduation rates have been obscured and accepted for far too long due to inaccurate data, misleading calculations and reporting, and flawed accountability systems. In addition, NCLB as written has the unintended consequence of giving schools a perverse incentive to “push out” low-performing students in order to produce higher average test scores and meet AYP.

The Every Student Counts Act is intended to hold schools accountable in a meaningful way for increasing the graduation rates of **ALL** students. In order to do this, the legislation:

- builds on the National Governors Association’s Graduation Rate Compact, originally signed in 2005 by all fifty of the nation’s governors, to ensure the use of accurate and consistent measurements for high school graduation for reporting and accountability purposes;
- gives schools credit for graduating students who need extra time by allowing increases in both the four-year and five-year graduation rates to count towards achieving AYP;
- ensures that schools are held accountable for increasing the graduation rates of all students by requiring graduation rates to be disaggregated for both reporting and accountability purposes;
- mirrors the mounting support for “growth models” of accountability by setting annual benchmarks based on a school’s own starting point; and
- reflects existing research by setting meaningful annual goals based on rates of improvement that have been achieved in successful high schools.

Every student deserves a chance to succeed. The Every Student Counts Act will ensure that all students are not only provided the opportunity to graduate with a high school degree, but encouraged to do so. For more information, please contact Ilana Fisher in the office of Bobby Scott at 202-225-8351 or ilana.fisher@mail.house.gov.

Cosponsors as of July 23, 2007: Rubén Hinojosa, Danny K. Davis, Bennie G. Thompson, Corinne Brown, Elijah E. Cummings, Chaka Fattah, William L. Jefferson, Raul M. Grijalva, Linda T. Sanchez, Barbara Lee, Julia Carson, Al Green, Loretta Sanchez, Edolphus Towns, Keith Ellison, Phil Hare, Carolyn C. Kilpatrick, Sheila Jackson Lee, Donald M. Payne and Yvette D. Clarke.