

(Washington, D.C.) – A bill passed today by the U.S. House of Representatives authorizing \$6.4 billion over five years for school construction includes funding to help schools become more energy efficient. Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12), a member of the Committee, included an initiative in the 21st Century High-Performing Public School Facilities Act to provide schools with federal funding to make energy-efficient upgrades. Holt's initiative would make schools eligible for funding to receive technical assistance from their state to reduce their carbon footprint. The overall legislation would ensure that school districts quickly receive funds for school modernization, renovation, and repairs that create healthier, safer, and more energy-efficient teaching and learning climates. The bill awaits Senate approval.

New Jersey would receive an estimated \$119.5 million in Fiscal Year 2010, if the bill were enacted. Estimates for how much each school district would receive can be found at:

<http://edlabor.house.gov/documents/111/pdf/publications/HR2187estLEAgrants-fy09%20only-20090513.pdf>

“Schools today are hampered in carrying out their missions because of constrained operating budgets, aging infrastructure, and ever increasing energy costs,” Holt said. “I introduced this initiative when I learned that energy bills are the second highest expenditure after personal costs. It doesn't need to be that way, and passage of this bill will help school systems invest in much needed energy-efficient upgrades.”

As was written in Holt's School Building Enhancement Act, the bill provides for state educational agencies to develop a school energy efficiency quality plan and to provide technical assistance to local education agencies for energy efficient school building design, construction, and renovation.

The 21st Century High-Performing Public School Facilities Act would require that funds be used for projects that meet one of three widely recognized green building standards: Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, Energy Star, or Collaborative for High Performance Schools. The bill would allow states to use funds to develop a database of public school facilities in the state and their energy use.

At Holt's request, the bill also would require states to measure and report on the carbon footprint of each school. Schools will be able to set goals for reducing their greenhouse gasses along with their energy use with the eventual goal of becoming carbon neutral. Today, buildings are responsible for over one-third of the greenhouse gas emissions in the United States.

Holt also included language in the legislation to ensure that veteran-owned businesses receive contracting preference for school construction, as is currently the case for small, minority, and women-owned businesses.

A video of Rep. Holt speaking about the legislation on the House floor can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qt1v3QkrSJA>

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