

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12), a professional physicist most of his career, today supported President Obama's announcement of a new campaign to improve science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education. The new science education initiative includes increased community-based collaborations between scientists, engineers, teachers and students.

One component is a National Lab Day tentatively set for early May 2010. Middle and high school students will benefit from hands-on, discovery-based laboratory opportunities. Additionally, National Lab Day will provide schools with an opportunity to assess and upgrade their current lab facilities. Nearly 200 organizations representing STEM professionals and educators are supporting National Lab Day. More information can be found at www.nationalabday.org

"This is a terrific initiative that comes at a time when we need an 'all-hands-on-deck' mentality to provide our children with a first-rate math and science education," Holt said. "Why is this important?"

"We still don't know how to cure cancer or AIDS, or completely ease the suffering of those with mental illnesses. We still have tremendous challenges regarding energy consumption. And we still don't know all we should about our planet and the people who live on it. The answers to these important questions are beginning to be formed in our classrooms with young students who one day may go on to investigate these issues and make advances that will benefit all of us."

Holt, a former educator who sits on the House Committee on Education and Labor, has been a leader in efforts to improve STEM education. He helped establish the TEACH grants program, which provides up to \$16,000 over four years in college aid to students who commit to teaching science, math, and foreign language. He also was a member of the National Commission on Mathematics and Science Teaching for the 21st Century, which published "Before It's Too Late: A Report to the Nation from The National Commission on Mathematics and Science Teaching for the 21st Century."

"The push for improving the public competence in science and mathematics is more than just for reasons of economics, national security, and democracy. It should also be for personal well

being. Mathematics and science bring order, harmony, and balance to our lives. They teach us that our world is intelligible and not capricious. They give us the skill for lifelong learning, for creating progress itself. This initiative recognizes that.”