



REAP Reauthorization

The Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) was conceived by AASA in 1998. It was included in the 2001 reauthorization of ESEA and has grown every year in support among members of Congress and numbers of rural schools involved.

In September, 2007, Sens. Conrad (D-N.D.) and Collins (R-Maine) and Reps. Pomeroy (D-N.D.) and Kuhl (R-N.Y.), introduced the Rural Education Achievement Program Reauthorization Act, S 2051 and HR 3545, respectively. These stand-alone bills would make the necessary changes to improve REAP and ensure that school districts are accurately identified to participate in the program. The first change proposed in the reauthorization bills is the transition to new locale codes. Currently, eligibility for the Small and Rural Schools Achievement Program is restricted to school districts located within locale codes 7 and 8, the rural designations. These codes will transition to 41, 42 and 43 (rural fringe, rural distant and rural remote) under the new system. District eligibility under the new codes should be similar to current law, although there is no way to ensure an absolute match between the old and new locale codes.

Eligibility for the Rural and Low-Income Schools Program was previously based on locale codes 6, 7 and 8 (rural and small town designations). Under the reauthorization, eligibility will also be based on 41, 42, and 43 and will also include 32 and 33 (remote town and distant town). Because 32 and 33 are not a direct link to the previous code of 6, there will be some minor adjustments in eligibility.

Under the current law, if you are eligible for both programs, you are automatically enrolled under the Small and Rural Schools Achievement Program. This was done to prevent double dipping. Unfortunately, some schools eligible for the Small and Rural Schools Achievement Program do not receive a financial award due to their current levels of federal funding. The Rural Education Achievement Program Reauthorization Act will allow districts that are eligible for both programs but not receiving additional funding under the Small and Rural Schools Achievement Program to apply under the Rural and Low-Income Schools Program. This will affect approximately 200 school districts across the country.

Another proposed change switches the eligibility poverty measure from 20 percent Census poverty to 40 percent free and reduced-price lunch for those districts under the Rural and Low-Income Schools Program. Census poverty is an inaccurate measure of poverty for school districts, especially in areas where school district borders are not contiguous with county borders. In addition, the Census Bureau questions the accuracy of its poverty measure for any populations below 20,000 people, the size of the communities REAP seeks to target.

The last change the Rural Education Achievement Program Reauthorization Act proposes a shift in the sliding formula from the current \$20,000 to \$60,000 to a new scale of \$25,000 to \$80,000. This shift will help acknowledge changing costs since the program's initial introduction. In addition, it will help school districts with populations from 450 students to 600 students take full advantage of the sliding scale. While this

change will be beneficial for most school districts that receive funding under REAP, we will need to raise the overall funding level first to prevent funding shifts that cause school districts to lose funding. This change in the program will be predicated on REAP funding reaching the \$200 million mark. It is currently at \$172 million, so it is not an enormous leap, but we will need everyone's help.

Senate Threats to REAP

As the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee considers the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, they released their proposals dealing with REAP Reauthorization this past fall. It was disappointing to see that the changes were not inline with the S 2051, the REAP Reauthorization Bill. The Senate discussion draft made no changes in the eligibility requirements for the Small and Rural Schools Achievement Program, except to update the locale code to the newer versions as expected.

The eligibility problems are more apparent in the Rural and Low-Income Schools Program. Current law eligibility requires eligible districts to be in locale codes 6, 7, or 8 (rural or small town designations). However, the Senate discussion draft proposes elimination of any locale code 6 from eligibility. When the Senate updated the locale codes for the Rural and Low-income Schools Program, it only carried over the locale codes for 41, 42, and 43, which are equivalent to codes 7 and 8. Eliminating small towns from eligibility would knock out 662 districts from the Rural and Low-income Schools Program. The Senate's argument is that these districts are not rural. We believe that the districts proposed to be eliminated could argue otherwise.

In addition, the Senate failed to include the use of free-and-reduced-lunch poverty as part of the eligibility criteria. Instead they chose to rely on 20 percent Census poverty, despite its inaccuracy for rural school districts. Luckily the House discussion draft includes the switch to 40 percent free-and-reduced-lunch, so there is still a chance that the Senate version will include this change.

Finally, the Senate failed to increase the sliding scale for the Small and Rural Schools Achievement Program. Failure to address these funding concerns will prevent small rural schools from receiving the resources they so desperately need. Again, the House draft includes the formula change so hopefully we can prevail in the end.

We need to work hard to fight the Senate proposal and make the needed changes.

Talking Points:

1. Ask your Representatives and Senators to respectively cosponsor HR 3545 or S 2051, the Rural Education Achievement Program Reauthorization Act, that would create the necessary improvements in REAP to ensure that rural school districts receive the necessary federal assistance. (See next page for list of sponsors.) Be sure to thank those who have already signed on.
2. Urge your Senator to oppose the proposed harmful changes in the Senate committee draft of ESEA. These proposed changes will hurt rural schools and fail to recognize their unique situations. Without some direct input from around the country, it will be difficult to protect the program from these proposed changes.

H.R.3545

Title: To amend the small rural school achievement program and the rural and low-income school program under part B of title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

Sponsor: [Rep Pomeroy, Earl](#) [ND] (introduced 9/17/2007) [Cosponsors](#) (6)

Related Bills: [S.2051](#)

Latest Major Action: 10/17/2007 Referred to House subcommittee. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education.

COSPONSORS(6), ALPHABETICAL [followed by Cosponsors withdrawn]: (Sort: [by date](#))

[Rep Boozman, John](#) [AR-3] - 12/6/2007 [Rep Emerson, Jo Ann](#) [MO-8] - 10/4/2007

[Rep Hare, Phil](#) [IL-17] - 12/6/2007 [Rep Herseth Sandlin, Stephanie](#) [SD] - 10/25/2007

[Rep Kind, Ron](#) [WI-3] - 10/18/2007 [Rep Kuhl, John R. "Randy", Jr.](#) [NY-29] - 9/17/2007

S.2051

Title: A bill to amend the small rural school achievement program and the rural and low-income school program under part B of title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

Sponsor: [Sen Conrad, Kent](#) [ND] (introduced 9/17/2007) [Cosponsors](#) (14)

Related Bills: [H.R.3545](#)

Latest Major Action: 9/17/2007 Referred to Senate committee. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

COSPONSORS(14), ALPHABETICAL [followed by Cosponsors withdrawn]: (Sort: [by date](#))

[Sen Baucus, Max](#) [MT] - 12/11/2007 [Sen Coleman, Norm](#) [MN] - 10/15/2007

[Sen Collins, Susan M.](#) [ME] - 9/17/2007 [Sen Craig, Larry E.](#) [ID] - 1/22/2008

[Sen Dorgan, Byron L.](#) [ND] - 11/6/2007 [Sen Grassley, Chuck](#) [IA] - 10/3/2007

[Sen Johnson, Tim](#) [SD] - 12/3/2007 [Sen Klobuchar, Amy](#) [MN] - 12/17/2007

[Sen Levin, Carl](#) [MI] - 10/2/2007 [Sen Lincoln, Blanche L.](#) [AR] - 10/15/2007

[Sen Roberts, Pat](#) [KS] - 9/21/2007 [Sen Salazar, Ken](#) [CO] - 7/8/2008

[Sen Stabenow, Debbie](#) [MI] - 4/9/2008 [Sen Tester, Jon](#) [MT] - 11/15/2007