
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AESA Honors U.S. Senator Tina Smith with Congressional Service Award

National award recognizes Smith's commitment to education, workforce development and strong regional partnerships

September 24, 2026 – The Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESAs) has named U.S. Senator Tina Smith of Minnesota as the recipient of the 2026 AESA Congressional Service Award, recognizing her support for education, workforce development, and the work of Educational Service Agencies (ESAs).

The AESA Congressional Service Award recognizes members of Congress for meritorious support of federal education legislation and ESAs. Smith was nominated by the Southeast Service Cooperative on behalf of the Minnesota STEM Ecosystem and Minnesota Service Cooperatives.

Smith's nomination highlighted her record of investing in regional partnerships that connect education, workforce development, and community needs. In Minnesota, that included federal support that leveraged the state's network of Service Cooperatives to strengthen STEM learning and workforce opportunities.

"Senator Smith's leadership demonstrates the powerful impact federal policymakers can have when they recognize and invest in strong regional education networks," said Joan Wade, Executive Director of AESA. "Her support helped create opportunities that extend well beyond a single program, strengthening partnerships and building capacity to serve students, educators and communities across Minnesota."

The nomination also highlighted Smith's broader work in career and technical education and workforce preparation, including provisions from her 21st Century Workforce Partnerships Act that were incorporated into the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, commonly known as Perkins V.

"Senator Smith understands something that is central to AESA's mission: meaningful change often happens through strong partnerships at the regional and local levels," Wade said. "We are proud to recognize her leadership and commitment to educational opportunity with the 2026 AESA Congressional Service Award."

About the Association of Educational Service Agencies

AESA is the national organization representing Educational Service Agencies and regional educational organizations across the United States.

###

Media Contact:

Claire Sowder, Director of Communications and Marketing | csowder@aesas.us | 515-979-0392