



May 6, 2009

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Members of the Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 1.6 million members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), I urge you to vote in favor of the "21st Century Green High-Performing Public School Facilities Act" (H.R. 2187). This legislation would make grants to local educational agencies to construct, modernize, or repair K-12 facilities and annually authorize \$6.4 billion for these purposes. The bill would create jobs, modernize schools, improve learning environments, and save school resources through new efficiency standards.

Children need and deserve appropriate places to learn. When public schools are too old, too crowded, and in disrepair, they impede learning. Evidence demonstrates that quality facilities lead to improved academic performance, reduced truancy and related social problems. In addition, improving facilities by making them more energy efficient and utilizing renewable resources will save valuable resources. H.R. 2187 would provide localities with vitally-needed funds to improve K-12 public school facilities and improve learning conditions for our children. Furthermore, the legislation ensures that local decision-makers will decide how to allocate their funds and which schools should be helped.

These funds are critical to improve schools as recovery act funding will only fill about 40% of the \$350 billion to \$370 billion shortfall that states face in the next two-and-a-half years. Although the recovery package is mitigating states' fiscal problems, no dedicated resources were included for school renovation. Additional state cuts are likely in the coming months as states develop budgets for the fiscal year that begins July 1. Similarly, many counties, cities, localities and school districts are suffering related fiscal problems which have forced them to defer routine school maintenance and delay modernization and capital school projects. For these reasons, these federal funds are vitally needed now and, in the future, will help reduce the capital and modernization backlog afflicting our public schools.

AFSCME strongly urges you to support H.R. 2187 during the Education and Labor committee markup.

Sincerely,

Charles M. Loveless
Director of Legislation