

AAG Public Policy Report to GENIP – Sept. 1, 2006

As background, below is a recent piece from the AAG newsletter on the status of the Geography Education bills up on the Hill:

Companion Geography Education Bill Introduced in House

On May 25, a bipartisan group of Representatives introduced the Teaching Geography is Fundamental Act as H.R. 5519. The legislation is identical to the Senate companion (S. 1376 – see previous Washington Monitors for background information) save for the fact that it would allocate the \$50 million specified for geography education programs over six years rather than five.

While it is certainly a promising development that both houses of Congress are now formally considering legislation to support geo ed, it remains likely that the bills will be stalled in Congressional committees for the rest of the year. With the 2006 elections looming, members of Congress plan to spend much of the time between now and November 7 in their districts campaigning. The best hope for the legislation will probably come next year, when the new Congress begins the arduous task of reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, better known as No Child Left Behind. We will keep you apprised of any developments.

As the piece makes clear, next year is going to be a seminal year on the Hill for action on funding for geography education. Given potential changes in the makeup of Congress as a result of the November elections, I've been in touch in recent days with contacts in the Washington education policy community about the best way to reach out to Congress in the coming months. Several of the key election projections are now predicting the Democrats will regain control of the House and have a real shot at pulling even in or gaining control of the Senate.

Accordingly, with the uncertainty of who were going to be dealing with come January, it's my opinion that the best course of action may be to wait until the election results are known. At that point, we can make a real push on the majority sides to get the geo ed bill or something similar placed in the new NCLB draft bill. It will take some concerted effort by each of our groups working together, but I think we can make a real impact.