



Maryland



Colorado



Connecticut



Delaware



Illinois



Kansas



Kentucky



Maine



New Mexico



New York



Ohio



Oregon



Virginia



Virgin Islands



Wisconsin



Wyoming

November 23, 2009

The Honorable Arne Duncan
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

As you consider strategies to strengthen the Elementary and Secondary Education Act this Congress, we would like to call to your attention an important bipartisan initiative known as *No Child Left Inside* (NCLI). The NCLI initiative supports environmental education in the nation's elementary and secondary schools to improve student achievement, promote student engagement in learning, and better prepare our children for college and 21st century careers. NCLI initiatives have already been adopted in many states, and federal legislation, known as the *No Child Left Inside Act*, was introduced as H.R. 2054 and S. 866 during the 111th Congress and passed by the House of Representatives as H.R. 3036 during the 110th Congress.

As governors, we view environmental education as critical to the future success of our children. Collectively, the nation's governors have adopted an education policy that states "[i]n today's competitive global economy, our education system must prepare students to be successful in work, in life, and in an ever and rapidly changing world." (ECW-02, last updated 2/24/09). To achieve the goals set forth in this policy, the undersigned governors believe that the Elementary and Secondary Education Act should be amended to make environmental education an integral part of the curriculum and to support state programs that provide these educational programs. The National Science Foundation supports these goals. In 2003, a Foundation panel declared that, "in the coming decades, the public will more frequently be called upon to understand complex environmental issues, assess risk, evaluate proposed environmental plans and understand how individual decisions affect the environment at local and global scales. Creating a scientifically informed citizenry requires a concerted, systemic approach to environmental education..."

Numerous studies have shown that environmental education helps promote student achievement and critical thinking skills, while increasing student interest in science and math. These are precisely the skills and interests that we need to develop in our children in order to prepare them for real world challenges and 21st century jobs – including green jobs. In addition,

environmental education in the field takes children outdoors and contributes to the development of active, healthy lifestyles. Unfortunately, implementation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as currently written, exacerbated by woefully inadequate policy support and funding, has forced many states to reduce or eliminate environmental education programs. This is moving us in the wrong direction. According to international benchmarks measured by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), U.S. students rank near the bottom with respect to environmental literacy when compared to students in other developed countries.

The proposed NCLI Act currently before the Congress is an important piece of bi-partisan legislation that would provide significant new funding to states to expand environmental education in public schools. Modeled on your department's successful Mathematics and Science Partnership Program, the NCLI Act would bolster environmental education programs underway in all of our states. These programs provide classroom instruction about the environment and the opportunity to conduct environmental investigations in an outdoor learning setting, often in state parks. This experience is fundamental to our children and will help them develop a sense of stewardship toward the environment so that they can make informed decisions about our natural resources in the future.

The proposed NCLI Act would provide significant new funding to states for teacher training, curriculum development, and other environmental education initiatives. It is important to note that the legislation does not create any new mandates for the states or define the content of environmental education programs. Rather, it provides states with a financial incentive to create environmental literacy plans that will ensure environmental education programs are fully integrated with other efforts to prepare students for college and the workforce. Many of our states are already developing such plans. Some others have finalized plans, and would welcome support from the federal government in this important area.

There is broad support for the NCLI Act in all 50 states. With a combined membership of more than 50 million advocates, the NCLI Coalition today represents nearly 1,400 organizations, including education, environment, business, health care and religious groups.

As you promote reform of our education system and develop amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, we urge you to incorporate the No Child Left Inside Act and collaborate with the Department of the Interior to identify available resources to facilitate this endeavor. In our view, this should be a top priority.

Sincerely,



Governor Martin O'Malley
Maryland



Governor Bill Ritter, Jr.
Colorado



Governor M. Jodi Rell
Connecticut



Governor Jack Markell
Delaware



Governor Pat Quinn
Illinois



Governor Mark Parkinson
Kansas



Governor Steven L. Beshear
Kentucky



Governor John Baldacci
Maine



Governor Bill Richardson
New Mexico



Governor David A. Paterson
New York



Governor Ted Strickland
Ohio



Governor Theodore R. Kulongoski
Oregon



Governor Timothy M. Kaine
Virginia



Governor John P. deJongh, Jr.
Virgin Islands



Governor Jim Doyle
Wisconsin



Governor Dave Freudenthal
Wyoming

cc: The Honorable Ken Salazar
The Honorable Harry Reid
The Honorable Mitch McConnell
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
The Honorable John Boehner
The Honorable Tom Harkin
The Honorable Michael Enzi
The Honorable George Miller
The Honorable Howard "Buck" McKeon