

## **The INSPIRES Act**

The Inspiring New STEM Professionals by Investing in Renovation of Education Spaces Act

**The future of the U.S. economy depends on STEM skills:** Over the past decade, the growth in jobs requiring science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills was three times faster than growth in non-STEM jobs. A wide range of jobs across all sectors—including manufacturing, agriculture, natural resources management, and health care—increasingly call for significant STEM knowledge. However, there is a projected gap between STEM jobs available and well equipped employees.

**School STEM facilities are in need of upgrades:** This includes clean and safe classrooms and laboratory spaces, up-to-date technology, and broadband access.

**The STEM education gap disadvantages rural, remote, and underserved communities in preparing for our future economy:** STEM skills acquisition requires laboratory experience, hands-on learning, and practical applications. Fulfilling the demand for STEM workers requires all hands on deck, leveraging both public and, according to a 2015 report, the roughly \$2 billion private dollars donated yearly to K-12 education. We all must invest in schools to harness the potential of students, schools and communities that may need additional support to overcome geographic isolation, poor internet access, inadequate technological infrastructure or other barriers to high-quality STEM learning.

**Bill summary:** The INSPIRES Act would establish two competitive grant programs for schools to build, modernize, renovate, or repair STEM classrooms and labs:

- 1) Funds for **6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade-serving public schools** in rural and Native communities.
  - States and local education agencies will match 25% of the funds.
  - Indian tribes and tribal organizations will supplement the funds with a 10% match.
  - All groups are encouraged to form public-private partnerships to source their match funds.
- 2) Funds for special colleges and universities, including **career and technical education programs, community colleges, and Tribal Colleges and Universities.**
  - All groups are encouraged to form public-private partnerships to source their match funds.

### **Example projects to modernize, renovate, and repair school STEM facilities:**

- Providing access to high-speed internet for a STEM classroom or laboratory to link a school to resources and leverage capacity;
- Improving air and water quality for student and faculty health and safety; and
- Encouraging better cost/energy efficiency of STEM/CTE facilities to promote sustainability.

**Endorsing organizations:** 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Fund, American Association of Community Colleges, American Association of Physics Teachers, American Chemical Society, American Federation of Teachers, American Indian Higher Education Consortium, The American Indian Science and Engineering Society, American Institute of Biological Sciences, American Society of Civil Engineers, Association of American Colleges and Universities, Hawaii Science Teachers Association, National 4-H Council, National Association of Counties, National Indian Education Association, National Science Teachers Association, National Society of Professional Engineers, Out in STEM, Rebuild America's Schools Coalition, Society for Advancement of Chicanos/ Hispanics and Native Americans in Science

If you have questions or your boss would like to cosponsor, please email Trelaine Ito ([Trelaine\\_Ito@schatz.senate.gov](mailto:Trelaine_Ito@schatz.senate.gov)) or Bijan Verlin ([Bijan\\_Verlin@schatz.senate.gov](mailto:Bijan_Verlin@schatz.senate.gov)).