

American Statistical Association Urges Support of Statistical Literacy Bill

ASA applauds STAT Act of 2011 introduced by Congressman Dave Loebsack

ALEXANDRIA, VA, May 10, 2011 – The American Statistical Association (ASA), the nation's preeminent statistical society, urges members of the House of Representatives to support the Statistics Teaching, Aptitude and Training Act of 2011 (STAT Act of 2011), which was introduced today by Congressman Dave Loebsack (D-Iowa). ASA also is urging its members, as well as all statisticians and mathematicians, to contact their Congressional representatives about supporting this critical bill, which is designed to ensure that current and future generations of students will have the statistical skills to cope in an increasingly data-centric world.

"The ASA commends Congressman Loebsack for his leadership in promoting statistical literacy," said Robert Rodriguez, ASA president-elect. "K-12 statistics education is essential for equipping students with the workforce skills and critical thinking necessary in our data-driven society."

ASA also released the text of a letter to Mr. Loebsack supporting the STAT Act of 2011. The letter is signed by the heads of seven organizations, including ASA, Alliance for Excellent Education, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics, Mathematical Association of America, and American Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges. The letter states, "...statistical literacy complements and enhances math and science education... Because statistics is the understanding and analysis of data, it improves scientific ability. Finally, statistics' heavy use of mathematics reinforces students' math and numeracy skills." The letter adds, "...being statistically literate means being armed with the skills necessary to understand and interpret data and weigh risks and rewards to make decisions in the presence of uncertainty." (The letter is available at <http://www.amstat.org/outreach/pdfs/STATAct2011Support.pdf>.)

The STAT Act of 2011, a copy of which is at http://www.amstat.org/outreach/statliteracy/pdfs/STAT_Act2011.pdf, has five parts. The Findings section includes information on the bill's benefits for a more competitive and better prepared workforce and more effective citizenship. Chapter A specifies the requirements for a state statistical literacy plan and a state statistical literacy advisory panel. Chapter B states the rules for how an "eligible partnership" – a local educational agency (LEA) partnering another LEA, a teaching training department or professional development center of an institution of higher education, or a federal, state or regional statistical agency – can apply for a professional development grant. Chapter C outlines guidance for grants to do one of the following: develop and implement state statistics curriculum frameworks or policy approaches to advancing statistics education; disseminating effective statistic education programs; or studies of statistics education assessment. Chapter D defines statistical literacy and authorizes appropriation.

ASA is conducting a grassroots campaign to gather co-sponsors for the bill and to gain support for a counterpart bill to be introduced in the Senate. Interested parties can join the grassroots campaign at <http://www.amstat.org/outreach/statliteracy/index.cfm>.

About the American Statistical Association

Headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, the American Statistical Association is the world's largest community of statisticians and the second oldest continuously operating professional society in the United States. For 170 years, the ASA has supported excellence in the development, application, and dissemination of statistical science through meetings, publications, membership services, education, accreditation, and advocacy. Its members serve in industry, government, and academia in more than 90 countries, advancing research and promoting sound statistical practice to inform public policy and improve human welfare. For additional information about the American Statistical Association, please visit the ASA web site at <http://www.amstat.org> or call 703.684.1221.

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