

American Statistical Association Urges Support of Statistical Literacy Bill

ASA Lauds STAT Act of 2010 introduced by Congressman Dave Loebsack

ALEXANDRIA, VA, SEPTEMBER 30, 2010 – The American Statistical Association (ASA), the nation's preeminent statistical society, urges members of the House of Representatives to support H.R. 6355, the Statistical Teaching, Aptitude and Training Act of 2010 (STAT Act of 2010), which was introduced yesterday by Congressman Dave Loebsack (D-Iowa) and to sign on as co-sponsors. 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 this 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 foresight in helping to promote statistical literacy through the introduction of this critically important bill," said Sastry Pantula, ASA president. "In a data-driven society such as ours, it is critical that we begin early in the education process to nurture statistical reasoning. Congressman Loebsack's bill will likely require reintroduction in and be taken up during the 112th Congress next year. It is important to promote this bill over the next several months to help ensure its consideration and passage by the next Congress."

Long a supporter of the need to increase statistical literacy beginning in elementary school, ASA last year took its case to Capitol Hill when a focus of its 2009 Congressional visits was statistical literacy. Earlier this year, several prominent ASA members were involved in the writing and reviewing process of the statistics and probability standards for K-12, and several of their recommendations were incorporated into the final version of the Common Core State Standards. ASA members provided substantial input to Loebsack's STAT Act of 2010, especially with regard to the importance of statistical literacy to decisionmaking and dealing with uncertainty and to the value that statistics adds to math and science education.

Wired.com recently published a piece entitled "The seven skills you didn't learn in college;" the first skill on the list is statistical literacy. "You need to know how to swim through the data deluge, optimize your prose for Twitter, and expose statistics that lie," the article stated. Mr. Loebsack's STAT Act addresses this need and proposes a process to enable the teaching of statistical literacy in schools.

The STAT Act of 2010, a summary of which can be viewed at <http://www.amstat.org/outreach/pdfs/BillSummary.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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