

Fix America's Schools Today (FAST) Act

With approximately 25 million Americans unemployed or underemployed, it is well-past time for Congress to take urgent steps to address the jobs crisis in this country. One critical step we can take to put people back to work is to provide our school districts with resources to make needed improvements to their school facilities. Investing in school facility improvements can create jobs, strengthen the economy, and save school districts utility costs while boosting teacher and student morale and performance.

The average U.S. public school building is 40 years old, and many are much older, with conservative estimates of the needed school maintenance and repair nationwide amounting to at least \$270 billion. Yet, school districts across the country have been delaying such school improvements for years, even as student enrollment levels continue to rise, a problem exacerbated during the Great Recession as state and local governments have been forced to cut budgets and lay off employees.

The *Fix America's Schools Today (FAST) Act* would immediately put people back to work addressing the backlog of deferred maintenance and repair in our nation's schools. Such a national project would create jobs for construction workers and others most hurt by the jobs crisis making improvements to the health and safety of our schools with positive ripple effects throughout the U.S. economy. The legislation would:

Distribute Funding for School Improvements: Provide formula funding to states and school districts, including public charter schools, through Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Districts would be required to use federal funds for deferred maintenance, repairs and component or system replacements to existing facilities or to supplement their current maintenance and repair efforts so that public school buildings and grounds are operated in a healthy and efficient manner.

Focus on Areas in Need: Provides the largest high-need Local Education Agencies (LEAs) a formula amount similar to what it received under Part A of Title I. The remainder goes to State Educational Agencies (SEAs) per a formula amount similar to what remaining districts would have received under Part A of Title I. No district should receive less than \$10,000. SEAs must distribute 100 percent of these funds to LEAs in the form of competitive grants according to eligibility rules based on: the percentage of poor children; need for school repair and renovation; limited LEA fiscal capacity; estimate of new jobs or extra hours created by the project; and estimate of energy savings. No match is required.

Create Good Middle Class Jobs: Every \$1 billion invested in school construction creates up to an estimated 10,000 jobs. The legislation includes Davis-Bacon and Buy America provisions to ensure the jobs created for construction workers, building technicians, boiler repairmen, electrical workers, roofers, plumbers, glaziers, painters, plasterers, laborers, tile setters and others are good paying American jobs.