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YES ON STUDENT ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PLAN

On July 16, 2013 H.R. 2702 was introduced in the U. S. House of Representatives with 21 cosponsors. It was referred to and as of September 6 remains in the Committee on Education and the Workforce. Concurrently, a companion bill, S. 1306, was introduced in the Senate. The bills are titled “No Child Left Inside Act of 2013.”

The bills contemplate federal grants to states to assist their schools in providing a qualifying “environmental literacy plan” to elementary and secondary school students. In essence, an “environmental literacy plan” is defined as one which prepares students to understand ecological principles, the systems of the natural world and the relationships and interactions between natural and man-made environments. It includes providing students with environmental service learning opportunities.

Since the bills involve federal grants and state compliance with their terms, they will no doubt be controversial. Nevertheless, they embody ideas whose “time has come” and, as a practical matter, will require promotion at the federal level. We Americans cannot continue to allow our natural environment (including our native plants and ecosystems) to be trashed for short term economic gains without inviting disaster down the road. Imparting environmental literacy to our K-12 students and future leaders will be a big step in the right direction.

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