Support the Rebuild America’s Schools Act of 2019

“If we’re committed to helping every child fulfill his or her potential, then we have to provide safe and modern learning environments for every student.” — Carolyn Smith Evans, Teacher, Salem-Keizer School District, Oregon

POOR CONDITIONS UNDERMINE STUDENT LEARNING

▶ According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the average public school building in the United States is 44 years old.

▶ The 2017 Infrastructure Report Card of the American Society of Civil Engineers gives the condition of America’s 100,000 public school buildings an overall grade of D+. Twenty-four percent of schools in permanent buildings and 31 percent of schools in temporary buildings are in “fair” or “poor” condition.

▶ The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency attributes poor indoor air quality in more than 60,000 schools to cockroaches, rodents, dust mites, fungi, and respiratory irritants from sources of formaldehyde and nitrogen dioxide.

▶ A 2017 EducationSuperHighway report found that over 19,000 schools serving 11.6 million students “are without the minimum connectivity necessary for digital learning.”

INVEST IN SCHOOL MODERNIZATION AND CONSTRUCTION

▶ The U.S. Department of Education estimates that it would cost about $4.5 million per school — a total of $197 billion — to make the repairs and renovations necessary to ensure that all our public schools are in good condition.

▶ The Rebuild America’s Schools Act of 2019 would:
  ◆ Create a $70 billion grant program and $30 billion tax-credit bond program that targets high-poverty schools whose facilities pose health and safety risks to students and staff.
  ◆ Restore Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZABs), which were eliminated by the 2017 GOP tax bill, and permanently increase the national limit to $1.4 billion per year.
    ○ QZABs allow qualifying schools to finance renovations, repairs, and investments in technology at below-market rates — sometimes, as low as zero. School districts pay back the amount of money borrowed initially, but do not have to pay any interest — typically, about half the cost of renovating a school.
    ○ Financial institutions holding QZABs receive tax credits in lieu of interest.
  ◆ Leverage existing public programs or public-private partnerships to expand access to high-speed broadband sufficient for digital learning.
  ◆ Create over 1.9 million jobs (based on an Economic Policy Institute analysis that found each $1 billion spent on construction creates 17,785 jobs).