

Bill Would Also Create Over 9,400 Jobs in New York by Reviving a Struggling Construction Industry While Fighting Global Warming

Washington, D.C.—U.S. Congressman Steve Israel (D-NY) today praised House passage of legislation that would help renovate and modernize public schools by providing funds for schools to “go green.” Israel has been a leading voice in Congress for the need to reduce property taxes and our dependence on foreign oil by greening our schools.

"Many schools were built when energy prices were low. This aging infrastructure is blowing tax dollars out the windows," said Congressman Israel, a Member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water, which sets funding levels for federal energy spending. "By incentivizing schools to retrofit with energy efficient technologies and renewable resources, we can save tax dollars, create new energy markets, and reduce our dependence on foreign oil. That's why today's passage of the 21st Century Green High-Performing Public School Facilities Act is so monumental."

The House passed the 21st Century Green High-Performing Public School Facilities Act (H.R. 3021), which provides funding to states and school districts to help ensure that school facilities and learning environments are safe, healthy, energy-efficient, environmentally friendly, and technologically advanced. The bill includes over \$557 million for physical improvement projects for New York's schools, creating over 9,400 jobs across the state.

According to recent estimates, America's public schools are hundreds of billions of dollars short of the funding needed to bring them into good condition. While Congress provided \$1.2 billion in funding for emergency school repairs in 2001, and provided additional resources for schools devastated by Hurricane Katrina and Rita, the Bush administration has not provided direct funding for general school construction in any of its budgets over the last eight years. As a result, schools have been forced to rely mostly on state and local funding for any repair or renovation projects.

Overall, H.R. 3021 would authorize \$6.4 billion for school renovation and modernization projects for fiscal year 2009, and would ensure that school districts quickly receive funds for projects that improve schools' teaching and learning climates, health and safety, and energy efficiency. To further encourage energy efficiency and the use of renewable resources in schools, the bill would require that the majority of funds for school improvement projects meet widely recognized green building standards and would provide states with funds to help schools track their facilities' needs, energy use, and carbon footprints, among other things.

Congressman Israel has been leading the fight in Congress to spur federal investment in renovating and greening schools. Last year, Congressman Israel joined the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) and the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) to host the state's first Green Schools Summit at Farmingdale State University in his

district. The New York State Education Department (SED) and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) discuss their new guidelines to encourage the use of energy efficient design when building and renovating schools. These voluntary guidelines, known as the "Collaborative for High Performance Schools" (NY-CHPS), were created through a joint effort of SED and NYSERDA. NY-CHPS will help schools develop and maintain learning environments that contribute to improved academic achievement while reducing operating costs and protecting and conserving our natural resources.

At the summit, Congressman Israel announced federal legislation he authored to provide federal matching funds (up to 50% of a project's total cost) to school district implementing state guidelines through investment in energy efficiency upgrades and the use of renewable energy technology. The legislation passed today represents an expanded version of this proposal by providing formula funding for schools to engage in green building projects.

The 21st Century Green High-Performing Public School Facilities Act is supported by a broad coalition of organizations, including the AFL-CIO, the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, the American Federation of Teachers, the American Association of School Administrators, the Building and Construction Trades Department of the AFL-CIO, the California Small School Districts Association, Californians for School Facilities, the Council of the Great City Schools, the Green Building Initiative, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers, the International Union of Operating Engineers, the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, the Mason Contractors Association of America, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Education Association, the National School Boards Association, the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada, the Parent Teacher Association, the Rebuild America's Schools Coalition, and the U.S. Green Building Council.