

## Call to Action: Professional Development in History Needs Your Voice

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For the first time since 2011, there is a glimmer of hope that the federal government will once again support the professional development of teachers of United States history. On April 7 Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Chair Lamar Alexander (R-Tennessee) and Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-Washington) announced agreement on a bipartisan bill to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The Every Child Achieves Act of 2015 not only conspicuously avoids any mention of No Child Left Behind, it erodes NCLB by strengthening state and local control, ending federal test-based accountability, and reaffirms the role of states in determining education standards.

Section 2003 of Title II is of particular interest to history teachers, as it authorizes a program of competitive grants to local education agencies "to improve (1) the quality of American history, civics, and government education ... and (2) the quality of teaching American history, civics, and government in elementary schools and secondary schools, including the teaching of traditional American history." (Section 2301) As much as 85% of the appropriated funds would be reserved "(1) **to carry out activities to promote the teaching of traditional American history in elementary schools and secondary schools** as a separate academic subject (not as a component of social studies); and (2) for the development, implementation, and strengthening of programs to teach traditional American history as a separate academic subject (not as a component of social studies) within elementary school and secondary school curricula, including the implementation of activities (A) to improve the quality of instruction; and (B) **to provide professional development and teacher education activities with respect to American history.**" (Section 2302)

This is exciting news, but at this point the Every Child Achieves Act of 2015 is still far removed from becoming a law. On April 14 the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee will begin to debate - and possibly amend or rewrite - the bill, with a vote by the full Senate expected by late summer. The House of Representatives will then need to act on the measure as well.

Contact your [senators](#), your Congressional [representative](#), and members of the relevant [Senate](#) and [House](#) committees to advocate for the Every Child Achieves Act of 2015.

If the efficacy of your teaching improved as a result of your participation in a Teaching American History grant, testify to that. Tell how your students benefited as well, or better yet, document it. If you have been short-changed on professional development because your district has focused almost exclusively on STEM, mention that. However you choose to make the case, please take this opportunity to support history education. Politicians pay attention to phone calls; they take note of the letters they receive on issues. The National Council for History Education urges you to help ensure that Section 2003 of Title II of the Every Child Achieves Act of 2015 survives intact and becomes law.

Click [here](#) to view the bill in its entirety. See pages 283-292 for "Part C: American History and Civics Education."

Best,  
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Executive Director  
NCHE

