

## March 15, 2006: Sanchez Introduces Bill to Alleviate School Overcrowding

Sanchez Introduces "Expand and Rebuild America's Schools Act"

to Alleviate School Overcrowding

Bill would create new bond class to increase local control of school construction

WASHINGTON-Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (D-CA) has introduced H.R. 4945, the "Expand and Rebuild America's Schools Act." The bill would establish a new class of bonds to provide interest-free financing for school districts, and a tax exemption for participating financial institutions.

As states mandate smaller class sizes and student enrollment increases, many school districts have been forced to use temporary classrooms and other creative teaching strategies to accommodate overcrowded schools, including resorting to year-round schedules.

H.R. 4945 would allow the Department of Education to bypass state agencies to offer federal interest subsidies directly to local school districts, many of which have had difficulty securing financing for facility construction and renovation, particularly in states that require a 2/3 majority approval for the passage of local bond initiatives. At the same time, this bill would create business incentives to support local school infrastructure improvement efforts.

Research has shown a direct correlation between the condition of school facilities and student achievement, with students assigned to schools in poor condition falling 10.9 percentage points below those in buildings in excellent condition. Similar studies have demonstrated up to 20 percent improvement in test scores when students were moved to new educational facilities.

Sanchez made the following statement about the introduction of H.R. 4945 on the Floor of the House of Representatives:

"Mr. Speaker, today I rise today to reintroduce the 'Expand and Rebuild America's School Act.' This important piece of legislation would create a class of bonds that would provide for much-needed construction of new schools. The bonds would be targeted to help overcrowded, high-growth rate schools that are struggling to provide a learning space for students.

"To be eligible to participate in the program, schools must be able to fulfill certain requirements:

- Schools must seek out more assistance from local, private businesses and corporations through public-private partnerships
- They must demonstrate that programs to alleviate over-crowding have already been implemented
- They must have high growth rates and high student-teacher ratios

"My bill would help schools with limited financial resources combat major overcrowding problems, and help curb the continuing infrastructure crisis being faced by our schools. If passed, this bill will provide local school districts with a real incentive to pass local school construction bonds.

"I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting new school construction by cosponsoring the