



News from

Congressman Ron Kind

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S THIRD
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

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Kind Acts to Improve Head Start

Kind Amendment to Stop Inappropriate Testing of 4-Year-Olds Included in Final Bill

Washington, DC – U.S. Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI) today joined a bipartisan majority in the House to pass H.R. 1429, the Improving Head Start Act of 2007, which reauthorizes and improves the Head Start program through 2012.

“Getting off to the right start can have a huge impact on a young person later in life,” Rep. Kind said. “Head Start provides an essential service to the youngest and neediest children in the country, and this bill will help us make it even better – with better teachers, more research-based practices, and new accountability measures.”

Also included in the bill was an amendment authored by Rep. Kind to end the use of the National Reporting System (NRS) – a badly flawed and misconceived testing mechanism that since 2003 has assessed more than 500,000 4-year-olds in the Head Start program.

“Testing young children is extremely challenging and if not done properly, can do more harm than good,” Rep. Kind said. “Current NRS assessments have not been proven effective, and I am pleased this bill will end the inappropriate testing of 4-year olds.”

The program was due to be reauthorized in 2003, but because of a stalemate, the 108th and 109th Congresses failed to complete a final Head Start authorization bill to send to the President’s desk. This bill will help more children arrive at kindergarten ready to succeed by improving program quality and expanding access to more children. The bill will:

- **Increase teacher qualifications** by requiring that 50% of Head Start teachers have a minimum of a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education or a related field by 2013 and by providing new funds to increase teacher salaries and a loan forgiveness program for Head Start teachers.
- **Expands access** by providing \$450 million in new funding next year, which will provide access to the program for up to 10,000 more children.
- **Strengthens focus on school readiness** by requiring that all programs use research-based practices and that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services consults with experts to update the program’s early learning standards.
- **Increases accountability** by tightening fiscal controls at both the federal and local levels to better ensure funds are used appropriately and efficiently and by requiring underperforming programs to re-compete for their grants.

Head Start is a highly successful, research-based, comprehensive child development and early education program for both low-income children and their families. Research finds that children who attend Head Start enter school better prepared than low-income children who do not attend the program. There is also research showing that Head Start students are less likely to need special education services, repeat a grade, or commit crimes in adolescence, and are more likely to graduate from high school.