



H.R. 5259, Investing for Tomorrow's Schools Act of 2014

Rep. Jared Huffman (CA-02)

What the Bill Does:

The *Investing for Tomorrow's Schools Act of 2014*, H.R. 5259, provides schools and public libraries a new funding stream to pay for construction and repair of their facilities, including the repair of leaking roofs, crumbling walls, poor ventilation, asbestos removal, energy efficiency improvements, and reducing fossil fuel use.

The bill requires that all new projects be “green-certified,” ensuring that the facilities use less energy and less water, saving money and helping the environment.

The legislation also includes funding for broadband infrastructure for schools, libraries, and community learning centers.



Petaluma High School's solar installations, Petaluma, CA

Why the Bill Is Needed:

[According to a March 2013 report by the U.S. Green Building Council](#), schools across the country are currently facing a \$271 billion deferred maintenance cost just to bring buildings up to working order—approximately \$5,450 per student. The report also estimates that the cost to both bring schools into good repair and address modernization needs is \$542 billion over the next 10 years for pre- K-12 school buildings.

[The Department of Energy's EnergySmart Schools reports that K-12 schools spend more than \\$8 billion annually on energy](#), making energy the second highest operating expenditure for schools after personnel costs.

[On average, green schools use 33% less energy and 32% less water than conventionally constructed schools.](#)

The typical green school saves \$100,000 per year on operating costs; enough to hire at least one new teacher, buy 200 new computers, or purchase 5,000 textbooks

What Specifically Is Achieved:

The *Investing for Tomorrow's Schools Act* was previously introduced by Sen. Tom Harkin (IA), Sen. Hillary Clinton (NY), Rep. Ellen Tauscher (CA), and Rep. Heath Schuler (NC). H.R. 5259, as introduced by Congressman Huffman would:

- Requires borrowers to use green construction or renovation practices that are consistent with: (1) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green building rating standards, (2) Living Building Challenge, (3) Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS), or (4) state equivalent or more stringent standards.
- Allows the Secretary of the Treasury to work with states to establish state and multistate infrastructure banks that make loans to local educational agencies, public libraries, charter schools, and community learning centers to construct or renovate facilities.
- Makes eligible for loans projects to repair of leaking roofs, crumbling walls, poor ventilation, asbestos removal, energy efficiency improvements, reducing fossil fuel use, and environmental noise, among others.
- Allows funds to be used to connect or improve existing connections of schools, libraries, and community learning centers to broadband services.



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How the funding works:

Under H.R. 5259, State Infrastructure Banks would offer school districts low-interest loans to finance these needed projects, a mechanism used by the Clinton Administration to help states finance transportation projects. Under this system, California created the California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank, which has broad authority to issue bonds and loans to municipalities and businesses. H.R. 5259 would expand the authority of states to fund school and library projects through existing State Infrastructure Banks, as well as encourage additional states to develop such banks. The bill also requires states to contribute from nonfederal sources at least 25% of the amount of each federal capitalization grant made to the state for use by the bank.

Supporters of the Bill:

- American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
- National Education Association (NEA)
- U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC)
- Rebuild America's Schools, Californians for School Facilities
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
- National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS)

“The Investing for Tomorrow’s Schools Act of 2014 is an important step toward closing this deferred maintenance gap and bringing our children the quality education they deserve. We applaud Congressman Huffman’s leadership to promote efficient school buildings that cost less to operate and provide healthier, more productive learning spaces for our students.”

—Rachel Gutter, Director, Center for Green Schools at U.S. Green Building Council