

President Bush Signs Castle's Vocational Education Legislation -- August 14, 2006

Wilmington, DE -- President Bush signed the final version of the "Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006" this Saturday, August 12, authored by Delaware Congressman Mike Castle, Chair of the House Education Reform Subcommittee.

The legislation reauthorizes two critical vocational education programs: The Perkins Act which funds state technical and vocational education programs at high schools, community colleges and technical schools and TechPrep which funds opportunities for articulation agreements between secondary and postsecondary institutions.

"I am extremely pleased by the President's signing of the Perkins Act. This legislation makes significant reforms to academic achievement and accountability to ensure students have the skills necessary to enter the workforce or continue to an institution of higher learning. Vocational or career education plays a vital role in our educational system by working to prepare youth and adults for the future by building their academic and technical skills in preparation for postsecondary education and/or employment. I believe strongly that the reforms we passed go a long way in driving program improvement, and ultimate success for students across the country," said Rep. Mike Castle.

Castle was the lead author of the House version of this legislation and a key negotiator in working out the final agreement. Castle has long fought to ensure an expansion of high school reform does NOT replace vocational education programs and this year led the effort in the House to adequately fund these vocational programs at \$1.3 billion as well.

There are five career and technical high schools in Delaware that enroll a total of 5,500 of the 29,500 total high school students and the Delaware Technical and Community Colleges has four campuses.

A two-page summary of the bill is attached to this press release.

- Emphasizing Student Academic and Career-Technical Achievement:

Focusing on academics: The conference agreement will ensure academic courses for career and technical students are rigorous and challenging. It also supports student achievement in core academic subjects, as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act, and emphasizes math and science education that incorporates the use of technology. To further enhance learning opportunities for students, career and technical education programs can provide entrepreneurial education and activities.

Strengthening the transition from secondary to postsecondary education: The conference agreement ensures states use funds to effectively link secondary and postsecondary academic and career and technical education to increase student academic achievement. By encouraging the development of quality Tech-Prep activities, the conference agreement increases opportunities for articulation agreements between secondary and postsecondary institutions through identified progression of courses that culminate in a postsecondary degree. In addition, the conference agreement encourages dual enrollment opportunities for students to earn both secondary and postsecondary credit.

o Career and Technical Programs of Study: To further enhance coordination between secondary and postsecondary programs, the conference agreement establishes a new provision for state development of career and technical programs of study for career and technical program areas. Programs of study will incorporate both secondary and postsecondary elements, and include rigorous and challenging academic and career and technical content in a coordinated, non-duplicative progression of courses. Programs of study will lead to a degree or credential and may be adopted by local educational agencies and postsecondary institutions as an option for students and their parents. Local recipients will offer at least one career and technical program of study.

- Improving Accountability:

Helping states and local communities improve opportunities for students: To expand opportunities for states and local communities to insist on accountability in career and technical education programs, the conference agreement insists that states make continuous improvement in the academic and career and technical achievement of students, and establishes separate performance indicators appropriate for secondary and postsecondary students.

Focusing on success at the local level: The conference agreement requires local recipients of Perkins funding to establish local adjusted levels of performance, just as states currently develop statewide expected levels of performance for each indicator. It also establishes local improvement plans for local recipients not making progress in achieving local levels of performance, and permits states to apply sanctions to local recipients that, after receiving technical assistance, fail to show improvements after one year of implementing an improvement plan or fail to meet at least ninety percent of the local adjusted levels of performance for three or more consecutive years.

Allowing states and local communities to reward local performance: The conference agreement permits states to award incentive grants to local recipients for exemplary performance in carrying out career and technical education programs.

Encouraging equitable participation for students: The conference agreement permits local recipients to provide for the meaningful participation of secondary students attending nonprofit private schools in career and technical education programs. In addition, it requires local recipients to consult, upon written request, with representatives of nonprofit private schools regarding the participation of their students in career and technical education programs.

- Ensuring Effective Use of Federal Funding:

Increased flexibility for states: The conference agreement gives states the option to combine funding for the Perkins state grant and Tech-Prep programs into one program. If a State decides not to consolidate the two programs, increased accountability measures have been added to the Tech-Prep program to ensure increased student achievement.

Maintaining local control: Because states and local communities should have the final say on how to educate their students, the conference agreement clarifies that nothing in the law shall authorize the federal government to mandate or control a state, local educational agency, or school's instructional content, and curriculum. Furthermore, the conference agreement ensures states are not required to have academic content or student academic achievement standards approved or certified by the federal government in order to receive funds under this law, and ensures a state's refusal to apply for funds under the Perkins Act does not prevent that state from receiving funds under other federal education programs.

- Enhancing Professional Development for Teachers:

Recognizing the importance of teachers in improving academic achievement: To ensure career and technical education teachers are prepared to help students learn and succeed in the knowledge-based economy, the conference agreement emphasizes in-service and pre-service professional development opportunities for career and technical education teachers for the integration and use of academics and technical subjects.

Ensuring teachers have access to quality professional development: The conference agreement ensures professional development programs are high quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom focused and are not one-day or short-term sessions; and supports professional development programs to ensure an increasing number of career and technical education teachers meet teacher certification and licensing requirements, especially in core academic subjects.