

## Castle Introduces Legislation Streamlining the Definition of Graduation Rates -- June 26, 2007

Washington, D.C. -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle, Ranking Member of the House Subcommittee for Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education, today introduced the Reliable and Accurate Graduation Rate Act. The bill streamline the current definition of a graduation rate under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), to capture all student populations. Currently, the graduation rate under NCLB is defined as "the percentage of students who graduate from secondary school with a regular diploma in the standard number of years." This definition has led to inaccurate reporting by states and confusion within schools and school districts. The Reliable and Accurate Graduation Rate Act establishes a four-year graduation rate, while taking into consideration the additional time needed for students with special needs, or limited English proficient students, or those students who are dual enrolled in high school and an institution of higher education. Rep. Castle believes this bill will help states, school districts, and schools account for all students.

"This legislation will allow for the adoption of a reliable and accurate graduation rate and streamline data collection that is comparable through the nation. As Congress begins to reauthorize No Child Left Behind, we must ensure that all children are being accounted for, and one way to ensure this is happening is through a consistent and clear-cut graduation rate definition. We can do this is through creating a single, unified system across the country for monitoring graduation rates," Castle said.

NCLB represents the first real, bipartisan effort to bring true accountability and flexibility to federal education programs. To ensure schools are being held accountable, NCLB helps states, school districts, and individual schools determine if they are meeting expectations, set by the state, in reading and math. In addition to these academic achievement standards, public high schools and school districts must meet graduation targets.

The Reliable and Accurate Graduation Rate Act will establish a clear, precise, and dependable graduation rate for measuring student achievement. This legislation incorporates provisions presented in the Graduation Rate Compact by the National Governors Association (NGA), as well as recommendations from the Business Coalition for Student Achievement.

Rep. Castle's Reliable and Accurate Graduation Rate Act will:

- Set the definition of graduation rate as the number of students receiving a regular diploma in a school or school district divided by a number of first-time ninth-graders enrolled in the school or school districts four years earlier;
- Account for the movement of students transferring in and out of the school or school districts, documented through transcripts over the four-year period;

- Allow for the one time identification of recently arrived Limited English Proficient (LEP) students and early college high school students;
- Take into account the additional time that may be required for special education students with an Individual Educational Program (IEP) to receive a regular high school diploma; and
- Permit for the publication and reporting of additional completion measures for students in alternative settings, such as those students who have dropped out of high school and received a GED or those special education students that complete an educational program, who take more than four years to earn a regular high school diploma.

###