



News from

Congressman Ron Kind

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S THIRD
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

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Kind Calls for Writing Physical Education into No Child Left Behind Core Curriculum

Washington, DC – Today U.S. Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI) joined U.S. Rep. Zach Wamp (R-TN) and fitness leader Richard Simmons to announce the “Strengthening Physical Education Act of 2007,” legislation that would put physical education next to math, reading, and science in the core curriculum of the No Child Left Behind Act, up for reauthorization this year. The bill was introduced today.

“As studies show that physical fitness strengthens academic performance and improves overall health, many schools are cutting back on physical education programs because of budget concerns and the demand for stronger academic standards in math, reading, and science,” Rep. Kind said. “That is why this bill is so important. It will strengthen our physical education programs and make them a priority. We can’t afford the societal and economic costs of childhood obesity.”

According to a 2005 GAO report, in the last 30 years, the rate of childhood obesity has more than tripled for children between the ages of 6 and 11. A troubling consequence of this trend is the growing number of children experiencing chronic illnesses and other health problems, such as Type II diabetes, hypertension, coronary heart disease, stroke, respiratory problems, and some cancers. The rise in obesity-related health conditions has high economic costs and has greatly increased health care spending, now amounting to \$100 billion annually just in obesity-related health care costs.

“Ensuring that our schools are providing comprehensive physical education gives every child an opportunity – regardless of their background – to learn healthy habits, and get moving,” Rep Kind said. “We will see the benefits in their math and reading test scores, and our health care costs by preventing chronic illnesses. The statistics on childhood obesity are staggering, and we need to reverse this troubling trend. This bill is a way to get to the root of this fast-growing problem, and get kids on a healthy path early in life.”

The “Strengthening Physical Education Act of 2007” would make physical education part of the core curriculum under the “No Child Left Behind” Act (NCLB). The bill would amend NCLB to provide a national guideline for minimum standards for health and fitness in our schools. Currently, schools in the United States are not required by federal law to implement a physical education program in their schools. The bill also requires physical education academic assessments, beginning in the 2009-2010 school year. Just as students are required to be assessed on their knowledge and skills relating to reading, math, and science, this provision will also require them to complete annual assessments for physical education.

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In addition, the legislation would create a clearinghouse of best practices for schools through the Department of Education and authorize a competitive grants program to provide State education agencies with funding to establish and revise their standards for physical education, develop assessment tools, and support school districts' development of model programs.