



Dear SCPTA Member:

The Students of South Carolina Need Your Help

Please contact your State Senator before Tuesday, May 13 and urge him/her to vote in favor of a Special Order debate on H.4662 - the Education Accountability Act (EAA) Reform Bill - and to pass the bill THIS YEAR as amended by the Senate Education Committee. You can find your senator's contact information on the SC Statehouse Senate Web page <http://www.scstatehouse.net/html-pages/senate2.html>. If you do not know who your state senator is, go the South Carolina School Boards Association's Elected Officials Web page http://www.scsba.org/advocacy_electedoff.htm, click on the "District Lookup" link under the heading "Other", type in your home address and zip code and the names of your elected representative and senator will appear.

Background Information on the EAA Reform Bill

H.4662, which would replace the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) starting next school year and provide other needed changes, is currently stalled in the SC Senate and we need your help to get it moving and passed THIS YEAR. (The bill has the support of every SC public educational organizations.) The bill has passed the House and the Senate Education Committee and should have gone to the full Senate for debate and passage. However, due to a technical maneuver, an objection was placed on the bill and cannot be sent to the floor unless the Senate votes in favor of doing so – what they call "Special Order Debate". Two leading senators are willing to make the Special Order motion, but needs us (public education parents, teachers, supporters) to pressure our senators to support the move. The following is a summary of the bill:

- Replaces PACT with EMSAP and administering the new test beginning in 2009. (The bill as passed by the House calls for the EMSAP to be administered beginning in 2010.)
- Changes the test grades from Advanced, Proficient, Basic, and Below Basic to Exemplary, Met and Not Met. (The bill as passed by the House includes this change.)
- Adds a group of broad-based stakeholders to work with the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) and the State Board of Education (SBE) in reviewing the accountability system every five years. (The bill passed by the House did not include this change.)
- Adds a group of broad-based stakeholders to work with the EOC and the SBE in determining the criteria for calculating school and district ratings. (The bill passed by the House did not include this change.)
- Reduces the annual school and district report cards that are sent home to parents to a two-page executive summary of the most pertinent accountability information and providing all other information upon request and on each district's Web site. (A budget proviso passed by the House includes this change.)
- Deletes old law language and makes permanent the changes annually approved by the General Assembly through budget. (The bill passed by the House did not include this change.)

Sample Message From You To Your Senator

Subject: Pass EAA Reform NOW

Dear Senator [name]:

As a public school [parent, grandparent, supporter] and member of the [name of school] PTA, I urge you to take up the Education Accountability Act Reform Bill (H.4662) this session and not delay the positive changes this bill would make to help our schools and students. Please vote in favor of a Special Order debate on H.4662. The current PACT system is ineffective for improving student learning and academic achievement and needs to be replaced now and not later. The senators blocking the bill have stated that this bill is not needed. However, failure to pass the bill will leave intact provisions in the current state testing law (the Education Accountability Act) that need to be removed or improved. House Bill 4662 as amended by the Senate Education Committee provides the comprehensive improvements that are needed. Our children and teachers deserve these changes now. Thank you.

Sincerely,
[Your name]
[Home Address]