

COALITION FOR HEALTHIER SCHOOLS

AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT OF 2009 *RENOVATE-REPAIR OUR K-12 SCHOOLS*

TAKE ACTION IN YOUR STATE—TAKE ACTION LOCALLY

BACKGROUND. An exciting 11th hour compromise in Congress allows Governors to dedicate some federal stimulus funds to renovating public school buildings, consistent with accepted green building rating system. In the original bills, those accepted standards were US GBC-LEED, CHPS, Green Globes, and Energy Smart. ARRA also expands federal tax exempt bond financing for school construction, and expands funds going to the state Energy offices that may be available to target school energy retrofits. Use it or lose it!

Education has major gains in ARRA, over \$100 billion, nearly doubling the Education budget. Of the Education funding nationally, some \$53.6 billion is in a **State Fiscal Stabilization Fund** that is sent to the Governors who must send 81.8% to local districts, and can then choose how to spend the remaining 18.2% (\$9.76 billion nationally). In addition, ARRA also provides increases in existing bond financing for school construction, that can include the purchase of land. In NYS, the Stabilization Fund is estimated at \$ 3 billion.



In addition, ARRA makes major investments in **Energy**, including grants to the states. Most state Energy offices have energy audits and related technical assistance services for schools, and those programs are likely to be expanded as well.

To learn more, visit www.recovery.gov. Also see Education allocation tables:

<http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/statetables/09arrastatetables.pdf>

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- ❖ Check the **Fiscal Stabilization Fund** dollar amount available to your state (*see link above, or call the Governor's office*)
- ❖ Check with your **state Energy office** to determine if it has programs for K-12 schools and ARRA funds increasing assistance to schools. *Hint: Governors often direct state energy offices and do not direct Education departments; the two agencies will need to be told to work together.*
- ❖ **Write/call/email or circulate a sign-on letter to your Governor**, urging s/he exercise her/his authority to dedicate available ARRA funds to repairing and renovating K-12 public schools buildings and to ensuring they become healthy high performance buildings for children.

[See sample letter, next page.](#)

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SAMPLE LETTER

Dear Governor _____:

Re: Use ARRA Funds to Help Make K-12 Schools Healthy for Children

We are writing to strongly urge that you exercise your authority to direct **at least \$... (calculate your share)** or more funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to renovate and repair existing K-12 public schools. Funding from the *State Fiscal Stabilization Fund* contains a provision stating that the allocated funds can be spent for these purposes; in addition the state will also see increases in bond financing for school construction. In addition our **(name- state energy office)** should also be able to offer expanded energy consulting and assistance services to schools.

(Name of state) has **....** children enrolled in **....** schools. US EPA has estimated that up to half of all schools have problems with indoor air quality and other environmental problems that are known to significantly impact children's health, learning, and behavior. Asthma is a leading cause of absenteeism and a leading occupational disease of teachers and custodians. According to the National Academy of Sciences, our schools should be 'dry, clean, quiet', have good Indoor Air, control dusts and particulates, and have good lighting and sanitation. Healthy school environments yield significant long-term benefits, reduce asthma and upper respiratory infections, and thus save even more money long-term than years of conventional energy savings.

Therefore, we also urge that the Energy office and the state Education office/education facilities authority work together to fast-track an integrated Indoor Environmental Quality-Energy Audit that will help schools prioritize repairs that will most benefit children. **(Our state)** should also develop a true school facility needs assessment tool that addresses environmental factors such as site remediations; noise abatement; lead, radon asbestos abatements; elimination of PCB's and elemental mercury; chemical clean-outs; safer pest control; use of daylighting; 'green' purchasing for cleaning and instruction; and keeping buildings dry, clean, and quiet.

Children are 100% of our future. Investing in our state's K-12 infrastructure will enhance long-term community assets, create immediate jobs in the construction industry, and can work to provide a healthy, high-performing and safe learning environment for our state's most precious resource - our children. And, happily, school projects could be easily identified with signage that shows how the project will help promote healthy Indoor Air Quality for children.

Yours truly,
(signed)

[See reference materials on following pages](#)

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REFERENCE MATERIALS

ARRA TEXT, Division A file, p 425f

IN GENERAL.-The Governor shall use 18.2 percent of the State's allocation under section 14001 for public safety and other government services, which may include assistance for elementary, and secondary education and public institutions of higher education and for modernization, renovation, or repair of public school facilities and institutions of higher education facilities, including modernization, renovation, and repairs that are consistent with a recognized green building rating system.

RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.-Nothing in this section shall allow a local educational agency to engage in school modernization, renovation, or repair that is inconsistent with State law.

PROHIBITION. A local educational agency may not use funds received under this title for (1) payment of maintenance costs; (2) stadiums or other facilities primarily used for athletic contests or exhibitions or other events for which admission is charged to the general public; (3) purchase or upgrade of vehicles; or (4) improvement of stand-alone facilities whose purpose is not the education of children, including central office administration or operations or logistical support facilities.

Detail on bond financing (courtesy Rebuild America's Schools)

The bill creates a new category of tax credit bonds for the construction, rehabilitation, or repair of public school facilities or for the acquisition of land on which a public school facility will be constructed. There is a national limitation on the amount of qualified school construction bonds that may be issued by State and local governments of \$22 billion (\$11 billion allocated initially in 2009 and the remainder allocated in 2010). There is a national limitation on the amount of qualified school construction bonds that may be issued by Indian tribal governments of \$400 million (\$200 million allocated initially in 2009 and the remainder allocated in 2010). *This proposal is estimated to cost \$9.877 billion over 10 years.*



The bill would allow an additional \$1.4 billion of **QZAB** (Qualified Zone Academy Bond) issuing authority to State and local governments in 2009 and 2010, which can be used to finance renovations, equipment purchases, developing course material, and training teachers and personnel at a qualified zone academy.

In general, a qualified zone academy is any public school (or academic program within a public school) below college level that is located in an empowerment zone or enterprise community and is designed to cooperate with businesses to enhance the academic curriculum and increase graduation and employment rates. QZABs are a form of tax credit bonds which offer the holder a Federal tax credit instead of interest. *This proposal is estimated to cost \$1.045 billion over 10 years.*

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REFERENCE MATERIALS (CONT.)

Student Enrollment, Numbers of Schools, other state data:

See *Lessons Learned*, a national collaborative report (2006), at http://www.healthyschools.org/documents/Lessons_Learned_Rpt.pdf

For data on impacts of facilities, see:

Green Schools: Attributes for Health and Learning, National Research Council of the National Academy of Science, 2006. http://books.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=11756

Greening America's Schools: Costs and Benefits, Gregory Kats, Capital E, October 2006. <http://www.cap-e.com/ewebeditpro/items/O59F9819.pdf>



Protecting occupants during school renovation and construction:

School Renovation and Construction: What You Need to Know to Protect Child and Adult Environmental Health, Healthy Schools Network, 2000. http://www.healthyschools.org/downloads/Renovation_and_Construction_Guide.pdf

Massachusetts Division of Occupational Safety, at www.state.ma.us/dos/iaqdocs/iaq-388.htm

New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, **Design, Construction, Renovation, Commissioning of School Facilities**, at <http://www.state.nj.us/health/healthyschools/design.shtml>

Connecticut Department of Public Health, **Guidelines for Alternation, Renovation, or Construction Activities in Occupied Buildings**, at http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/environmental_health/eoha/pdf/renovation_guidelines.pdf

White House information on the stimulus package:

Overview of all programs and state by state impact estimates, at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/White-House-Releases-State-by-State-NumbersAmerican-Recovery-and-Reinvestment-Act-to-Save-or-Create-35-Million-Jobs/

Copy of the signed bill, at http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=111_cong_bills&docid=f:h1enr.txt.pdf

Copy of the conference report, at http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=111_cong_reports&docid=f:hr016.111.pdf

Department of Education ARRA information:

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009: Excerpts Related to Programs Administered by the U.S. Department of Education, at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/index.html>

- **Whether your school and community receives ARRA facility funds or not, there are STILL important things YOU CAN DO to improve school environments.** Visit the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities for tips and resources: <http://www.ncef.org/school-modernization/#what-can-you-do-now>