House Committe on Education and Labor, Rep. Holt visit more than 50 schools a year.

As a former educator and an employer, Rep. Holt believes it is critical that we make the necessary investments in education and sustain thoseinvestments over the long term. The strength of our community and vitality of our economy both depend on the quality of our schools. Since securing a seat in 1999 on the House Committee on Education and Labor, Rep. Holt has worked to craft comprehensive education policies that improve early childhood education, invest in teacher training, set high standards for our students, and help make college more affordable. As a senior member of the committee, Rep. Holt will take a leading role in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Issues in this section:

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Special Education

School Modernization

Math & Science Education

Rep. Holt has led the effort in Congress to strengthen math and science education, arguing that “without math and science training, we cannot meet society’s needs and compete in a global marketplace.” Since 2002, Rep. Holt has helped increase funding for the Department of Education’s Math and Science Partnerships by more than $150 million. These partnerships improve student achievement in mathematics and science by combining colleges with K-12 school districts in order to support math and science teachers with continued training.

Rep. Holt wrote a number of initiatives in the Higher Education Opportunity Act (H.R. 4137), which was signed into law on August 14, 2008. These provisions included the establishment of loan forgiveness for employees working in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math) fields, and the creation of Science and Technology Advanced Foreign Language Grants, which award funding to college and university programs that encourage students to develop foreign language proficiency as well as science and technological knowledge. Holt also helped establish the Mathematics & Science Scholars Program, which provides grants and loan forgiveness to students who commit to five consecutive years of service in a math or science field after graduation.

With Rep. Holt's support, the Higher Education Opportunity Act also authorized the creation of a National STEM Database to provide students with information on financial assistance for postsecondary and graduate programs in STEM. This important database will help capable students who are interested in STEM careers find scholarships to further their studies.

Foreign Language Education

Rep. Holt also has been a leader in strengthening foreign language education, arguing that bolstering foreign language education for ensuing generations is vital to our nation's economic and national security. As part of the Higher Education Opportunity Act, Rep. Holt included

several important foreign language initiatives. Rep. Holt's provisions helped establish a loan forgiveness program for foreign language specialists, as well as the Science and Technology Advanced Foreign Language Grants program. These grants award funding to institutions of higher education for the creation of programs encouraging students to develop foreign language proficiency as well as science and technological knowledge. The bill also created a Deputy Assistant Secretary for International and Foreign Language Education at the Department of Education. This position will lead and direct efforts aimed at strengthening international and foreign language education.

Rep. Holt has worked to increase funding by more than $35 million for the National Security Education Program aimed at improving critical language and cultural expertise ($8 million in Fiscal Year 2004 to $43 million in Fiscal Year 2008).

Early Childhood Education

Rep. Holt is committed to expanding and improving early childhood education programs because he understands that the tools necessary for academic excellence are best developed at a young age. From his place on the Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education Subcommittee, Rep. Holt has taken part in a number of hearings aimed at examining early learning needs and developing higher quality childhood education. He has been a strong advocate for programs like Head Start, which play an important role in raising children's achievement and enthusiasm for learning. In 2007, Rep. Holt co-sponsored the Improving Head

Start for School Readiness Act (H.R.1429), which President Bush signed into law on December 12, 2007. The bill provides access to Head Start programs for more children, strengthens teacher qualifications, and establishes curriculum requirements that promote the skills needed for long-term school readiness. The legislation also expands and improves Early Head Start programs, which serve children from birth to age three.

Rep. Holt has co-sponsored the Providing Resources Early for Kids (PRE-K) Act of 2009 (H.R.702). This bill would direct the Secretary of Education to award state grants aimed at enhancing state-funded preschool programs. Additionally, Rep. Holt supported inclusion in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of $34 million for the improvement and expansion of early childhood development programs.

Higher Education

As a former educator, Rep. Holt has worked in Congress to invest in higher education to bolter the nation's growth and global competitiveness in the future. He has helped pass legislation to make college education more affordable and accessible and to strengthen the education students receive.

The College Cost Reduction and Access Act , which President Bush signed into law in 2007,

provides the single largest increase in college aid since the GI bill – roughly $20 billion over the next five years. There is no cost for taxpayers, as the law is paid for by cutting excess subsidies paid by the federal government to lenders in the student loan industry. Under the law, 6.8 million students who take out need-based federal student loans each year will see the interest rates on their loans halved, saving the typical borrower (with $13,800 in need-based loan debt) $4,400 over the life of the loan, once fully implemented. Additionally, loan forgiveness was established for nurses, police officers, firefighters, and first responders to make loan payments more manageable, and provide upfront tuition assistance to students who commit to teaching in high-need public schools. Rep. Holt wrote two provisions in the law: creating grants to provide upfront pre-paid tuition assistance of $4,000 for elementary or secondary school math and science teachers and raising the amount that independent students may earn and remain eligible for financial aid.

The Higher Education and Opportunity Act , which President Bush signed into law in 2008, expands Pell Grants, which are need-based grants for undergraduates. This year, Pell Grants will assist 5.3 million students. The law increases the authorized maximum Pell Grant award to $8,000 from the current $5,800. Additionally, the law includes Rep. Holt's provision to allow Pell Grants to be used year round and for certificate programs and part-time students. Click here to read about Rep. Holt's inclusion of math and science initiatives.

In addition to addressing rising college prices, the law helps students manage their textbook costs, cleans up conflicts of interest in the student loan industry, provides vital consumer protections on both federal and private student loans, and simplifies the federal student aid application process.

Special Education

Rep. Holt is a strong supporter of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which has ensured that students with disabilities are better educated than ever before. Under IDEA and its various federally-funded initiatives, these students are educated alongside their non-disabled peers in increasing numbers, and with greater academic success. However, Rep. Holt understands that there is still room for improvement in raising expectations of what students with disabilities are able to accomplish.

Although the federal government is authorized under IDEA to fund up to 40 percent of the costs of educating children with disabilities, it has failed to ever reach that mark. Rep. Holt has advocated for increased attention and funding to special education programs. In 2009, he helped pass the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, which will provide more than $12 billion for IDEA, including $307.4 million for school districts in New Jersey.

School Modernization

In January 2009, Rep. Holt reintroduced the School Building Enhancement Act, legislation that would help schools implement energy saving measures to reduce their energy costs. Energy bills are the second-highest operating expenditure for schools after personnel costs, with the annual spending by schools on energy at $8 billion in 2007.

Holt’s bill would authorize $6.4 billion over five years for school construction including funding to help schools become more energy efficient. On May 14, 2009, the House of Representatives passed Holt’s Green Schools initiative as part of the School Modernization Bill.