



ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

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CONTACT: Ann Speicher
202-408-7500
ann_speicher@aau.edu

AAU URGES SUPPORT FOR KENNEDY/COLLINS AMMENDMENT

The U.S. Senate today will resume consideration of S. 1042, the FY06 Defense Authorization Bill.

During consideration of the bill, Senators Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Susan Collins (R-ME) are expected to offer an amendment that would authorize additional funding for a new national scholarship and fellowship program aimed at attracting students into science and engineering fields critical for national security. The amendment will also provide additional funds for basic research programs at U.S. universities.

Following is a statement by Nils Hasselmo, president of the Association of American Universities (AAU), concerning the amendment.

AAU strongly endorses and supports the amendment to be offered by Senators Kennedy and Collins. This amendment will build upon the efforts initiated by the Department of Defense, and endorsed earlier this year by AAU, to launch a new National Defense Education Initiative similar to the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) enacted in 1958.

The original NDEA Act of 1958, created in response to the Soviet launch of the Sputnik satellite, inspired generations of U.S. students to pursue studies in fields critical to national security. It spurred the nation to a half-century of global leadership in science and technology for civilian and military purposes.

Today, our nation faces a severe shortage of qualified U.S. citizens with degrees in key areas of science and engineering essential to our national security. There also is growing concern within both academia and industry that our global leadership in science and technology is eroding. These conditions pose a serious threat to national and homeland security, as well as to the nation's long-term economic strength and standard of living.

The Kennedy/Collins amendment recognizes that we need to redouble our support of education and research to enhance U.S. economic and national security. AAU urges Senators to support this important amendment when it is considered on the Senate floor as part of the Defense Authorization Bill.

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The Association of American Universities is an association of 60 U.S. and two Canadian research universities organized to develop and implement effective national and institutional policies supporting research and scholarship, graduate and professional education, undergraduate education, and public service in research universities.