



Immediate Release

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Sessions/Murray Bill Offers More Schools a Chance to Help Striving Readers

NEWARK, DELAWARE, USA— Legislation introduced by Senators Jeff Sessions (R-AL) and Patty Murray (D-WA) will vastly expand the capacity of schools to help older students who struggle with reading, according to Alan Farstrup, IRA executive director. The Striving Readers Act of 2007, introduced on March 22, authorizes \$200 million for FY2007 for adolescent literacy programs directed at students in 4th through 12th grade. Initially, states will receive funds based on a poverty formula and 8th grade NAEP scores, expanding after FY2011 to include programs in all states.

As Tim Shanahan, IRA's president, points out, "Enhanced primary grade reading instruction is effective, but insufficient. The number of older students who struggle with reading—particularly boys and language minority youth—is troubling. An inability to read well affects everyone: students pay a high cost for missed opportunities personally and professionally, and national productivity is hurt when the workforce is not competitive. This legislation sends a positive message that it is not too late for older students. Many studies have been conducted on how to teach older students to read better. It is time to apply this research to improve reading achievement for our teens and preteens."

The current striving readers initiative, launched in 2004, funds only eight grants. The Striving Readers Act of 2007 will make funding available to implement school-wide adolescent literacy programs, support statewide initiatives, and allow data collection and rigorous evaluation to document program success. In addition, the Sessions/Murray bill will prepare teachers to incorporate literacy strategies in core academic classes, and will assist parents by training them to support their children's literacy development.

The International Reading Association, along with the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the Alliance for Excellent Education, endorse expanded services for adolescent readers and support the Striving Readers Act of 2007, introduced by Senators Sessions and Murray.

For additional information about adolescent literacy initiatives, contact Rich Long at rlong@reading.org, Donna Ewigleben at dewigleben@reading.org, or visit IRA's website, www.reading.org.