

(Washington, DC) - Today, U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-4), a member of the House Education and Labor Committee, introduced the Educational Advisor and Contractor Integrity Act to address mismanagement and conflicts of interest in the Department of Education's Reading First program and to ensure that the Department's other programs are not similarly mismanaged.

Hearings held by the House Education and Labor Committee in April brought to light conflicts of interest in the Department of Education's Reading First program, an initiative to improve the literacy rates at economically disadvantaged schools. These conflicts were documented in six separate audits conducted between September 2006 and March 2007 by the Department of Education's Inspector General. The audits revealed that Reading First Advisory Board members and Department of Education contractors had financial and personal connections to specific reading products and that these relationships led to the inappropriate promotion of certain products over others.

"These hearings demonstrated the need for Congress to establish clear guidelines for how the Department of Education is to administer Reading First," said Congressman Altmire.

"Federal officials are charged with using public funds responsibly and should not be using taxpayer dollars for their own financial gain. This legislation will help prevent future abuses and will restore the public trust in the Department of Education and its programs."

Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, said, **"Reading First is an important program, and Congress and the public must have confidence that it is being implemented in the best interests of children and taxpayers. Congressman Altmire's bill brings the reforms that are necessary to help restore trust and confidence in the Reading First program and the Department of Education. The bill will help put a stop to the cronyism and conflicts of interest that have plagued the Department of Education over the last several years."**

"International Reading Association (IRA) supports the goals and objectives of the Educational Advisor and Contractor Integrity Act. It is important for all Reading First participants to know what the rules are so they can act and make decisions in the best interest of our neediest children," said Rich Long, Director of Government Relations, IRA.

The Educational Advisor and Contractor Integrity Act will require the Department of Education to establish a screening process to address conflicts of interest for advisory committee members and its contractors. The measure will provide clear guidelines for how these screening processes are to be developed and implemented. These new accountability measures will extend to Reading First, as well as all other programs authorized by the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).