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# BARACK OBAMA

PRESS RELEASE



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## **Obama, Durbin, Hare Introduce Bill to Improve Student Behavior in Schools**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – U.S. Senators Barack Obama (D-IL) and Dick Durbin (D-IL), and Representative Phil Hare (D-IL) today introduced the *Positive Behavior for Effective Schools Act* (H.R. 3407, S. 2111), which directs resources to innovative programs designed to teach positive behavior as a way to improve school climate and make it easier for students to learn. Positive Behavior Support (PBS) programs define and support appropriate behaviors by explicitly teaching students about good behavior and including it as part of the curriculum.

PBS programs have resulted in improved school climate and more time spent on learning. For example, at Lincoln Elementary School in Chicago Heights, the number of students sent to an administrator's office for fighting dropped by half over the course of a year. At Springfield High School in Springfield, out-of-school suspensions decreased by 38%, allowing students to learn more by reclaiming 180 school days that would otherwise have been lost to suspensions. At Mark Twain Primary School in Kankakee, disciplinary referrals decreased dramatically, from 268 before PBS compared to 38 last year; at the same time, ISAT reading and math scores are at an all-time high.

“America’s teachers deserve our long term commitment so that they can provide students with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed,” **said Senator Obama**. “Positive Behavior Support programs have proven successful in Illinois and throughout the country. They teach good behavior and reduce the need for discipline in the classroom, in turn allowing more time for teachers to teach. We must expand these innovative programs to teach our students about positive behavior. Let's give our teachers this additional tool to support their teaching, and let's give our children the benefit of high expectations and supports for good behavior. These programs would not only strengthen our schools, but would bolster our nation’s competitiveness by providing the best possible learning environments for our next generation of leaders.”

“When students act out, the classroom environment is damaged making it more difficult for students to learn and teachers to teach,” **said Durbin**. “Good behavior is a skill that can be learned and should be taught. Unfortunately, in many cases, children do not receive this lesson at home. Illinois is one state that has developed a system to address this problem in the classroom. These Positive Support Behavior programs can serve as a national model to improve student behavior. The bill that Senator Obama, Congressman Hare and I are introducing today will give teachers the resources they need to improve their classroom environment and allow more time for academic instruction.”

“The old formula of attempting to yield good behavior and academic performance by threatening students with detention or other punishment has run its course,” **Hare said**. “The PBS approach rewards students for doing the

right thing while recognizing that success in school is contagious. My visit to Monmouth-Roseville Junior High in February convinced me that many students in PBS programs are motivating each other to reach new heights. As a member of the Education and Labor Committee, I felt compelled to introduce the Positive Behavior for Effective Schools Act. I look forward to working with Senator Obama and the Illinois PBIS Network to ensure this bill is included in the soon to be reauthorized No Child Left Behind law.”

In PBS schools, the adults act together to set common expectations, not just for learning, but for the behaviors that support learning. In any given school, the problem might be a general lack of discipline, too much bullying, or a loss of instructional time due to suspensions. Schools can address any of these problems, using proven practices, supported by a collaborative network of researchers, schools, and teachers, along with universities and resource centers that work with over 6,700 schools in 38 states. More than 700 schools in Illinois already use PBS.

“Illinois leads the nation in implementing school-wide PBIS with over 700 schools in 179 districts supported by the Illinois PBIS Network,” said **Lucille Eber, Ed.D., State Director of the IL PBIS Network**. “These schools are experiencing decreases in discipline problems, increases in academic achievement, and improved measures of school safety. Additionally, schools that achieve full implementation show greater capacity for success with students who have more serious behavioral/learning needs. More importantly, we have seen these results increase and sustain over the past nine years in Illinois schools.”

### ***Positive Behavior for Effective Schools Act:***

To support PBS efforts, the *Positive Behavior for Effective Schools Act* amends Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to make PBS an allowable use of funds, and proposes an Office of Specialized Instructional Support Services. More specifically, the Act:

- Provides flexibility for use of Title I funds. State agencies may use these funds to provide technical assistance and support to schools as they implement PBS. Schools may use funds to improve school climate and academic achievement.
- Amends the needs assessments for use of Title II funds, so that they may take into account improvement of school climate in awarding subgrants for professional development.
- Amends the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities provision to include support for programs, such as PBS, that improve school climate and reduce discipline problems.
- Amends school counseling provisions, to ensure that applications for grants should include information on the need for behavioral intervention services, such as PBS.
- Amends the *Department of Education Organization Act*, to establish an Office of Specialized Instructional Support Services. This office would coordinate the federal role in supporting counselors, school social workers, and others, who help teachers by providing academic and behavioral support for students.

This legislation is supported by the *American School Counselor Association*, *The Arc of the United States*, *National Association of State Directors of Special Education*, and 23 other organizations.