

S. 523 – To coordinate the provision of energy retrofitting assistance to schools

[S. 523](#) was introduced in the U.S. Senate by Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) and was co-sponsored by Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.), among others, on February 12, 2015. Both Sen. Collins and Sen. Warner are Alliance Honorary Board Members. Due in part to this bipartisan support, the provisions in this bill are featured in Section 3131 of [S. 2012](#), the Senate’s comprehensive energy bill. A similar bill ([H.R. 756](#)) was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Rep. Matt Cartwright (D-Pa.) on February 5, 2015. It was co-sponsored by over 50 representatives, including Alliance Honorary Board Members Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) and Rep. Paul Tonko (D-N.Y.), and enjoys broad bipartisan support. Its provisions were incorporated into Section 3131 of [H.R. 8](#), the House’s comprehensive energy bill.

Summary

The bill aims to help schools address their energy consumption through the use of energy efficiency. There are currently a range of opportunities available to schools, but they may be difficult to find or utilize. In order to make the process easier, this bill would create a clearinghouse within the Department of Energy that would compile and disseminate information on all federal programs and financing mechanisms that can be used to complete energy efficiency or renewable energy projects. This clearinghouse would facilitate coordination among agencies to better help schools achieve their energy conservation goals.

Key Provisions

The bill would amend the Energy Policy and Conservation Act to increase energy efficiency in schools. “School” is defined as one of the following:

- an elementary or secondary school
- an institution of higher education
- a school of the defense dependents’ education system
- a school operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs
- a tribally controlled school
- a tribal college or university

The clearinghouse would focus on information from available federal programs and financing mechanisms that may help initiate, develop, and finance energy efficiency, distributed generation, and energy retrofitting projects for schools. The Secretary of Energy would consult and coordinate with relevant agencies to increase and streamline the communication and promotion of available programs and mechanisms. One possible method would involve the creation of a single online resource containing all pertinent contacts, technical assistance, federal programs, and financing mechanisms easily and readily accessible to states, local education agencies, and schools.