

To the office of U.S. Representative Erin Houchin

Re: HR 7890 (119th Congress), Science of Reading Act of 2026 • Latest action (2026-09-17): Received in the Senate and Read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. VFA SI Solution #392 • published 2026-10-12 • <https://www.valuesforamerica.com/solutions/392>
Office of record (Congress.gov): 342 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC • (202) 225-5315

Reading Results and State Control Literacy Grants Act

The measure, as described from the official record: Help more children become strong readers by focusing federal literacy funds on reading instruction backed by research on phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and writing.

THE PROPOSAL

Congress has power to spend for the general welfare under Article I, Section 8, Clause 1, but it has no power to run local schools. The Tenth Amendment reserves control of curriculum to states and local districts. This proposal would therefore work only through voluntary grants, not mandates. The strongest objection is that Washington would dictate how children learn to read. The answer is that no state must apply, and a state that declines keeps full control of its own reading programs.

The Reading Results and State Control Act would keep the federal literacy grant program voluntary and focused on results. States could still choose whether to apply. A state that applies would submit a literacy plan that uses research-based reading instruction, including phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and writing. Grant funds would not support instruction that relies on the three-cueing model as the main way to teach word reading.

The Department of Education would give priority to state plans that direct help to early grades, struggling readers, and high-need schools. States would then award subgrants through open competition to school districts and eligible early childhood programs. Each award would state its goals in simple terms, such as teacher training hours, curriculum support, and student reading growth. No funds would require a school to use one branded product.

To protect fairness and state control, the Department would publish clear review standards before any competition begins. If an application is denied or funds are questioned, the agency must give written reasons and a period to fix the problem. A neutral review officer would hear appeals. Each state would report once per year on spending, training delivered, and reading results, using measures the state already uses where possible.

The program would use only funds already provided for literacy grants, with no new federal mandate on curriculum. It would end after five years unless Congress reviews the results and votes to continue. That review would compare reading progress, costs, and effects on local control before any renewal.

OPERATIVE PROVISIONS (VFA PROPOSAL)

Effective Date	School year beginning after date of enactment, with grant rules issued within 180 days
Enforcement Mechanism	Department of Education grant review and annual audits; funds may be withheld or recovered after written notice and a chance to correct, with appeal to the Department review officer
Funding Amount	No new funds; uses amounts already appropriated for Comprehensive Literacy State Development grants, capped at current authorized levels
Funding Source	Existing federal appropriations for Comprehensive Literacy State Development grants, no new tax or fee
Oversight Body	Department of Education, with state educational agencies administering subgrants and reporting results to Congress
Sunset Years	5 years

CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS

- Article I, Section 8, Clause 1
- Article I, Section 8, Clause 18
- Tenth Amendment
- Fifth Amendment Due Process

Concerns with the measure as written:

- No direct Bill of Rights violation is stated in the official summary, but a federal definition of approved reading methods raises Tenth Amendment concerns if applied as a mandate on states and local schools rather than as a condition on voluntary grants.
 - Due process and clarity concerns arise if grant applicants lose funds based on vague terms, so definitions and review standards must be clear under Fifth Amendment Due Process.
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WHY BOTH SIDES CAN BACK IT (VFA'S ASSESSMENT)

VFA assesses this draft honors Republican priorities for fiscal restraint, state control of schools, and evidence-based use of federal funds by barring federal support for a discredited method and capping costs with a sunset. VFA assesses it honors Democratic priorities for early literacy equity, teacher training, and support for struggling readers by keeping competitive funds focused on proven reading instruction for high-need districts and early childhood programs.

Strongest objection, and the answer: The strongest objection is that Washington would dictate how children learn to read. The answer is that no state must apply, and a state that declines keeps full control of its own reading programs.

CHECK BEFORE RELYING ON THIS

Basis: The Congress.gov summary of H.R. 7890 in the 119th Congress supports the goal, the definition of science of reading, the exclusion of the three-cueing model, the competitive grant structure through state and local agencies, early childhood eligibility, and the Senate referral stage.

The full bill text and current law were not part of the official summary reviewed, so detailed eligibility rules, existing appeal rights, current funding levels, cost effects, and conflicts with state law remain unverified; proposed review and appeal steps described here are new safeguards and readers should verify the official record at [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov) before relying on funding or rights claims.

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