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CONTACT: Amy Dudley (Kaine), [202-224-9688](tel:202-224-9688)
Caitlin Conant (Portman) 202-224-5190
Leah Hunter (Baldwin), 202-224-5653

KAINE, BALDWIN, PORTMAN INTRODUCE BIPARTISAN BILL TO IMPROVE CAREER READINESS IN SCHOOLS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senators Tim Kaine (D-VA), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Rob Portman (R-OH), co-chairs of the Senate Career and Technical Education (CTE) Caucus, introduced the *Career Ready Act of 2015*, legislation that would help ensure students are college and career-ready by strengthening school counseling programs and encouraging states to keep track of career readiness factors implemented in school districts.

The *Career Ready Act of 2015* amends the *Elementary and Secondary Schools Act (ESEA)* to encourage states to keep track of school districts' use of "career readiness indicators," which are factors that demonstrate a student's preparedness for postsecondary education and the workforce, such as CTE course completion and the number of students earning postsecondary credentials while in high school. Currently, all 50 states track districts' efforts to instill academic knowledge for college preparation, but less than half of states publicly report on career readiness indicators. By tracking and publishing this data, businesses and workforce leaders will be better-informed about the level of career preparation in a given state or region. Additionally, the bill amends the current Elementary and Secondary School Counseling grant program to fund professional development for school counselors and train them to use information on the workforce needs of the local community to help guide students toward in-demand career paths.

"By keeping track of efforts to prepare students for the careers of the 21st century, we encourage states to place an emphasis on career and technical education because employers will see this data and locate their operations in regions with a high-skilled workforce," **Kaine said.** "While focus on academic knowledge is essential for college preparation, public reporting on the attainment of technical skills, postsecondary credentials and other signs of career readiness demonstrates a commitment to preparing all students for future careers regardless of their postsecondary education plans."

"As the demand for a workforce with highly-technical skills continues to grow, I'm proud to support bipartisan legislation that ensures our students are offered courses that will help prepare them for our 21st century *Made In Wisconsin* economy," **said Baldwin.** "The *Career Ready Act* will allow students to be career-ready on graduation

day with a solid foundation for any further training needed to enter the field of their choice.”

“We can better prepare our students for the jobs of the 21st century by improving links between high school and postsecondary education,” **said Portman**. “While much focus is given to traditional college preparation, career readiness programs are also critical to help students obtain a job in a high-demand career field – and we must do better at encouraging states to highlight these opportunities.”

Today’s legislation to improve career readiness marks one of Kaine’s highest priorities for reauthorization of ESEA. He also recently introduced legislation to [increase access to preschool](#) and to [improve health education](#) by including information on sexual assault and domestic violence prevention.

The *Career Ready Act* has been endorsed by the Alliance for Excellent Education, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the Association for Career and Technical Education, and the National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc).

A full fact sheet on the *Career Ready Act of 2015* can be found below:

Career Ready Act of 2015

Introduced by Senators Tim Kaine, Rob Portman, and Tammy Baldwin

Preparing all students to be college and career-ready upon graduating high school is one of the central promises that public education and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) should fulfill. However, career readiness has all too often taken a back seat to a focus on traditional college preparation. Strong academic skills are essential to college preparation, but it takes much more to be truly ready for a career.

Today, many students graduate high school with little knowledge of the careers available to them and the technical skills needed to meet the demands of the 21st century job market. “Career readiness indicators” are factors that demonstrate a student’s preparedness, including both academic and technical knowledge and skills, for postsecondary education and the workforce. By encouraging school districts to track and report on career readiness indicators, states can send a signal to schools, communities, parents, and students that it’s critical to be prepared for the workforce regardless of postsecondary education plans. A 2014 [report](#) by Achieve and the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium found that 22 states already publicly report on one or more career readiness indicators, such as student participation in career and technical education (CTE) courses and completion of CTE programs of study.

The Career Ready Act of 2015 would expand on these efforts by encouraging more states to report on courses in their school systems that will help students become career-ready. Tracking and publishing this data provides much-needed information for businesses and workforce leaders that is not provided under current law. Further, *the Career Ready Act* would strengthen school counselor professional development by training school counselors to use labor market information that educates students on postsecondary opportunities.

More specifically, the *Career Ready Act* would:

- Encourage states to emphasize the importance of career readiness by reporting on the opportunities they offer, such as work-based learning and postsecondary credentials, to help ensure students can compete for good paying jobs
- Help schools align career exploration course offerings and counseling to the workforce needs of the local community and coordinate with the requirements of the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act and the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act
- Allow states to utilize multiple indicators of career readiness when they report data to the federal government, such as attainment of recognized postsecondary credentials or academic and technical skills including industry-recognized certificates, certifications, licenses, and postsecondary degrees
- Strengthen the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling grant program in current law by
 - Placing an emphasis on career guidance
 - Providing professional development to school counselors by training them to use labor market information that educates students on postsecondary opportunities.
 - Building partnerships with community groups such as local workforce investment boards, businesses, industries, and regional economic development agencies

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