NAC 2026 Talking Points

June 23, 2026

PRE MEETING HOMEWORK

- ***What committees does this member serve on? Are they on any of our Key Committees (see list at https://www.mysasa.org/nacmaterials)***
- ***Look up and estimate how many teams are in your particular State and Congressional District(s).***
  - ***When estimating teams in your Congressional District, look up your Representative by name, find their website, and look at the map/cities/areas included in that district.***
  - ***Search the state/area on program websites at:***
    - ***FIRST: https://www.firstinspires.org/team-event-search***
  - ***Include an estimated summary of the number of teams (you can include all levels/ages of teams in this area) and/or schools in your Congressional District (House meetings) or State (Senate meetings).***

- ***Consult your school district's website to determine how much Title IV funding your school district received for the previous fiscal year. All school districts in the United States that receive Federal funds are required to publish this information.***
  - ***Look for the Transparency Report, Financial Report, Audit Report, or another report that details funds your school district received or its budget.***
  - ***The information you are looking for is specifically required by OMB Circular A-133 and some school districts may denote it that way.***
  - ***If you can't find the information, contact your school district's administration or business office (it is public information).***

PLEASE COMPLETE THE SASA Post-Meeting Report ASAP after the meeting:
Scan the QR or go to mysasa.org/meeting

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THIS IS NOT A SCRIPT, IT IS A GUIDE ON HOW TO GO THROUGH THE MEETINGS. THIS IS A CONVERSATION, NOT A PRESENTATION. IT SHOULD BE INTERACTIVE AND CONVERSATIONAL.

START THE MEETING

Facilitator starts the meeting

- EVERYONE introduce themselves (Name, Grade, School, Team, Role on Team)
- Facilitator: We are here representing: <LIST ALL TEAMS AND THEIR SCHOOLS/CITIES>, <*FIRST* Robotics and/or REC Foundation> and the Student Association for STEM Advocacy.
- THANK THEM (at least for meeting with you, but if they've offered past support for our priorities thank them for that as well)

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Ask one or two of these questions if you are meeting with staff

- How long have you worked for the Senator/Member?
- What issues do you handle in the office?
- What is your favorite part of your job?
- How has the past year gone? (if you've met with them previously)

ABOUT SASA

Let's start with some background on the Student Association for STEM Advocacy, or SASA:

- The Student Association for STEM Advocacy was founded in 2020 to EXPAND access to STEM opportunities.
- SASA represents robotics students and teams from the largest extracurricular robotics programs, including *FIRST* and the REC Foundation who have more than a million student participants worldwide each year.

ABOUT FIRST

We have students here from FRC team(s) (high school) and/or FTC team(s) (middle school) teams.

- *FIRST*
  - Started 34 years ago to inspire kids to become STEM professionals.
  - Adopted sports model and has programs for kids aged 4 to 18.

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    - Students design, build, and program robots and compete at events locally and all over the world.
- There are approximately <NUMBER OF TEAMS/SCHOOLS> in your <CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT/STATE> participating in FIRST.

ABOUT REC Foundation

- *REC Foundation*
    - The Robotics Education and Competition Foundation (REC Foundation) supports a variety of robotics tournament platforms including Drones. Students design, build, and program robots to compete in events across the United States and around the world.
- There are approximately <NUMBER OF TEAMS/SCHOOLS> in your <CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT/STATE> participating in REC Foundation programs.

Students say that they have been personally impacted by their participation and some of them would like to tell their personal stories.

PERSONAL STORIES (2 to 5 personal stories for less than 10 minutes total)

- Introduction: What grade are you in? How long were you on the team? What is your role?
- Where did you start: What were you like before the team? Why did you join the team? What were you expecting and is that what you experienced?
- The transformational moment: What experiences did you have on the team and how did they change you? What did you learn?
- Outcomes: How is your future now different? What is your career path or future plan and how was it affected/changed by your experience on the team?

Students share that their personal experiences in FIRST and/or REC Foundation are not unique and that there is data that confirms this.

THE DATA (mention 3 to 5 key data points from online materials [points below are just suggestions] that support your personal stories, less than 2 minutes total on this section)

Our experiences are NOT unique.

- *FIRST* data:
    - Longitudinal Study from Brandeis University based on 10 years of Data say *FIRST* Students:
        - 2.2x more likely to be interested in STEM
        - 2x more likely to major in engineering
        - 81% of *FIRST* Alumni Declare Majors in STEM
        - 87% more interested in doing well in school

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        - 93% increase in conflict resolution skills, 95% in time management skills, 94% in problem solving skills, and 90% in communication skills
        - 75%+ of Alumni are in STEM field as a student or professional
- REC Foundation data:
    - 93% of program participants are more confident in their ability to learn STEM subjects.
    - 90% of program participants are more likely to take elective STEM courses in high school.
    - Students learn valuable programming skills that prepare them to enter the STEM workforce.
        - 90% learn Program Conditional Statements
        - 84% learn Troubleshoot Programs
    - REC Foundation students show an increased interest in STEM careers as a result of their participation in the program.
        - 92% are interested in learning more about engineering design.

Students offer to tell more about the teams represented and key things those teams do or key moments from that team's history.

ABOUT OUR TEAM(s) (if you've met with them before, shorten this or skip this)

Telling them about your team and what your team does *(Customize to your team and program):*

- How your team gets the game challenge and design and build a robot.
- How your team is structured into different subteams (i.e. students can participate in design, manufacturing, electrical, strategy, business, media, or any number of other areas to make this happen).
- Each team then competes at Regional/State Championship/District/Local competitions with their robot and for judged awards hoping to ultimately make it to one of the World Championship events.
- Team trainings (i.e. We hold trainings year-round in engineering, programming, safety, communications, resume writing and about a dozen others).
- Public/Private Partnership for Funding (Does any funding come from school/state? How many different sponsors do you have? What are some of them? Do they provide internships, mentors, financial support, etc.?)
- Year-round outreach events (i.e. summer camps, parades, volunteer activities, community events, robot demos, presentations to sponsors).

We think every student in America should have access to these awesome programs, just like us! This is where we need your help. Robotics teams tend to be in suburban areas, and we need to encourage schools in very urban and very rural areas to start and sustain teams.

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EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT - TITLE IV PARTS A and B

The main current federal program that can help create and sustain robotics teams and STEM in these urban and rural areas is The Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA, Title IV Part A and B:

- ESSA Title IV-A is a flexible block grant program called Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) grants, which was authorized at $1.6 billion when the law passed. Title IV Part A authorizes activities in three broad areas:
  - **Well-rounded education,** including programs in STEM including but not limited to extracurricular robotics.
  - **Safe and healthy** students/schools.
  - **Technology** (professional development, blended learning, and devices).
- School districts (LEA's) can use Title IV-A grants to provide students with a well-rounded education and improve instruction and student engagement in STEM by:
  - Increasing access to STEM;
  - Supporting the participation of students in STEM nonprofit competitions (such as robotics, science research, invention, math, computer science, and technology competitions);
  - Providing hands-on learning opportunities in STEM;
  - Integrating other academic subjects, including the arts, into STEM subject programs;
  - Creating or enhancing STEM specialty schools;
  - Integrating classroom based and afterschool and informal STEM instruction.
- Title IV Part A, student support and academic enrichment grants, was **funded at $1.38B in both FY25 & FY26**.

- Title IV Part B's 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) has been around for over 25 years. These can provide:
  - Hands-on, academically enriching learning experiences
  - Programs and activities focusing on subjects like STEM (and also physical fitness, wellness, drug and violence prevention, nutrition and health education, service learning, youth development, and arts and music)
  - In-demand industry sectors or occupations to reinforce and complement the academic program of students (including financial literacy, career readiness, internships, and apprenticeships)
  - Parental and Family engagement in their children's education
  - 21st CCLC increases engagement in school and reduces chronic absenteeism.
- Title IV, Part B was **funded at $1.329B in FY25 & FY26.**

ESSA Title IV A and B can help grow robotics programs to get more students access and exposure to these programs.

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- We support the increase in funding for these programs as a way to grow STEM education and the expansion of robotics teams.

Can we count on you for your support to continue to fund ESSA Title IV, Part A Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants above the current $1.38 billion and Title IV, Part B 21st Century Community Learning Centers above the current $1.329 billion?

- ***STOP and wait for a response.***

IF SUPPORTIVE (HOUSE):

Thank you for your support on Title IV A and B! We have our letter of support that we've written that we will leave with you, and we would ask your office to follow up with Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro along with Labor-H Chair Aderholt to let them know how important these programs are to your constituents.

IF SUPPORTIVE (SENATE):

Thank you for your support on Title IV A and B! We have our letter of support that we've written that we will leave with you, and we would ask your office to follow up with Chairman Collins and Vice Chair Murray along with Labor-H Chair Capito and Ranking Member Baldwin to let them know how important these programs are to your constituents.

The next idea we would like to bring up is one that can expand STEM participation without costing the Federal Government any more money.

NDAA

This concept impacts the National Defense Authorization Act. Because DoD contractors require so many STEM workers, it makes sense to include the DoD contracting process as a solution to the problem of not having enough STEM workers. We want to involve the DoD contracting process and DoD contractors in supporting the future development and expansion of the workforce pipeline in critical STEM fields.

We have two asks around NDAA.

HOUSE ASK 1– In the current House FY27 NDAA markup, under Title XVIII – Revitalization of the Defense Industrial Base, there is language relating to "Leveraging Regional STEM Ecosystems." America's national security depends on a robust, clearable STEM workforce, but both the DoD and the defense industrial base continue to struggle to attract and retain that talent. Regional STEM ecosystems already exist across the country, bringing together schools, industry, government, and community partners to build talent pipelines tied to local workforce needs, and this language simply

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asks the DoD to assess how to tap into that proven infrastructure rather than build something new from scratch. It is a low-cost, common-sense directive: it requires only a briefing and a recommended pilot, not new spending or a new bureaucracy, while positioning DoD to scale a model that is already working in communities nationwide.

Our ask is to keep this provision in the NDAA as a smart, fiscally responsible step toward closing the defense workforce gap by using assets we already have. Can we count on you to advocate for maintaining this provision in the NDAA?

SENATE ASK 1 – In the current House FY27 NDAA markup, under Title XVIII – Revitalization of the Defense Industrial Base, there is language relating to "Leveraging Regional STEM Ecosystems." America's national security depends on a robust, clearable STEM workforce, but both the DoD and the defense industrial base continue to struggle to attract and retain that talent. Regional STEM ecosystems already exist across the country, bringing together schools, industry, government, and community partners to build talent pipelines tied to local workforce needs, and this language simply asks the DoD to assess how to tap into that proven infrastructure rather than build something new from scratch. It is a low-cost, common-sense directive: it requires only a briefing and a recommended pilot, not new spending or a new bureaucracy, while positioning DoD to scale a model that is already working in communities nationwide. We have the specific provision here we will leave with you.

Our ask is to include this provision in the Senate's NDAA version as a smart, fiscally responsible step toward closing the defense workforce gap by using assets we already have. Can we count on you to push for inclusion of this provision in the NDAA?

HOUSE and SENATE ASK 2 – Our second ask regarding NDAA goes a step further along the same idea of increasing the workforce development pipeline of STEM workers.

In leveraging DoD contracts to require a tiny fraction of those dollars to be used in STEM workforce development, we could begin to grow the pipeline without increasing appropriations.

Congress could require that one quarter of one percent of all DoD contracts must be used to support high-quality STEM education and STEM workforce development. This would ensure the companies needing these workers and currently pointing out the shortfall in skilled STEM workers would be part of the solution.

In FY 25, the DoD awarded $508 billion in contract awards. That could have directed $1.27 billion to ensure a future pipeline of reliable STEM workers.

We are proposing an amendment to NDAA that would require the Secretary of Defense to condition each contract over $10M in size to require the contractor to spend not less than one quarter of one percent on activities that support STEM education and workforce development within the United States.

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This would have a negligible effect on contractors as for every $1 million contract, only $2500 would go towards our future STEM workforce.

Our ask is to offer our language as an amendment to NDAA on the floor. Would you/your boss have any interest in pushing this amendment? Are you supportive of the concept?

[TAKE DETAILED NOTES TO REPORT BACK ON WHAT THEY SAY USING OUR MEETING REPORT FORM]

OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET (OMB) GUIDANCE

The proposed OMB rule, "Regulation for Federal Financial Assistance," would rewrite the government-wide rules for how federal grants are awarded and managed, and it raises real concerns about who controls federal education dollars. The rule would insert political-appointee review into grant decisions before awards are made and would weigh the administration's own priorities in ways that may not match the purposes Congress set when it authorized and appropriated these programs. It also adds new limits on using federal funds where a disparate-impact concern is raised, which could discourage the very investments that help schools serving underserved students close longstanding opportunity gaps. For the programs our students depend on, this risks shifting control over money Congress has already appropriated away from Congress and toward the discretion of the executive branch.

The comment period closes July 13, so the most useful step your office can take right now is to weigh in while the rule is still being shaped.

OUR ASKS:

(1) Submit a comment to the docket (OMB-2026-0034) opposing the provisions that politicize grant decisions and threaten funding for underserved students or sign on to a member comment letter. Would you submit a comment opposing those provisions and/or sign on to a member comment letter?

(2) Support appropriations language in the FY27 Labor-HHS-Education bill blocking implementation of the rule, the same tool Congress has already used to rein in OMB on grant policy. Would you consider introducing/supporting such language?

(3) If the rule is finalized, commit to supporting a Congressional Review Act resolution of disapproval to preserve Congress's power of the purse. Can we count on you to weigh in during the comment period and to help protect the federal grants that underserved students rely on most?

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Closings

- Thank them for their past and continued support on the issues you discussed. Thank them for their time. Offer to be a STEM resource for them.
- Invite Senator or Member to your school/build site. Get the contact information of the district scheduler to make that happen.
- Confirm the best email to follow up with (make sure their email in the scheduling document is the right one to use or get the correct one, LET US KNOW IF THERE IS A NEW EMAIL).
- Leave Behinds
    - LEAVE BEHIND SASA FOLDER - Let them know it includes information on SASA and your team, ESSA, and NDAA.
    - LEAVE RECEPTION INVITE - and personally invite them to the reception:

We are having a reception with robots tonight and you and your entire office staff are invited. We will have some refreshments, a lot of awesome kids like us, and some robots for you to check out. It is from 5pm to 7pm in the Cannon Caucus Room (CHOB 390). Your office received a hardcopy and email invitation as well, and we would really love it if you can stop by to see some robots in action and talk to some awesome kids like us.

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