



Healthy Kids Outdoors Act Supports Strategies to Connect Kids with Nature

Congressman Ron Kind (WI) and Senator Mark Udall (CO) Introduce Legislation to Bolster Outdoor Recreation, Address Childhood Obesity and Strengthen the Economy

WASHINGTON, DC (November 3, 2011) — Congressman Ron Kind (WI) and Senator Mark Udall (CO) introduced the Healthy Kids Outdoors Act today to support state, local and federal strategies to connect youth and families with the natural world, improve children’s health and support future economic growth and conservation efforts.

This legislation will help get Americans active outdoors through natural play; outdoor recreation such as camping, hiking, hunting and fishing; public health initiatives; outdoor learning environments; service learning and other initiatives.

“Children today are spending less time outdoors than any other generation in history,” said Rep. Kind. “To tackle alarming childhood obesity rates and encourage healthy lifestyles, we must encourage our kids to get active, especially outdoors. I am committed to providing access and opportunities for our families to get active in nature and will continue to treasure every chance I get to take advantage of Wisconsin’s abundant natural resources with my two young boys.”

“I introduced the Healthy Kids Outdoors Act, along with my House colleague Rep. Ron Kind, to help Americans, especially kids, connect with healthy, active, outdoor activities,” said Sen. Udall, the chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee’s National Parks Subcommittee and co-chairman of the bipartisan Senate Outdoor Recreation Caucus. “Connecting with the outdoors is an excellent way to promote good physical and mental health and bolster America’s conservation legacy. It also supports our vibrant outdoor economy, which is especially important in Colorado and to our rural mountain communities.”

Today’s children are spending less time in nature than their parents or grandparents. At the same time, one in three American kids is overweight or obese; more than half of all children in the United States are deficient in Vitamin D; instances of attention deficit disorders are on the rise; and stress, anxiety and depression rates among youth are increasing.

The Healthy Kids Outdoors Act would provide incentives to states to develop cross-cutting, five-year strategies to get children and families active in the great outdoors. It would also direct the president to involve federal agencies and national partners to create a similar plan at the national level and support research further documenting the health, conservation and other benefits of active time spent outdoors in the natural world.

“The nature of childhood has changed, and there isn’t much nature in it,” said Larry Schweiger, National Wildlife Federation’s president and CEO. “National Wildlife Federation commends Congressman Ron Kind and Senator Mark Udall for introducing legislation that will strengthen the economy by getting Americans moving through recreation and active outdoor play.”

The Healthy Kids Outdoors Act has the support of the Outdoors Alliance for Kids (OAK), a national strategic partnership of non-profit organizations and corporations from the conservation, health and outdoor recreation sectors with a common interest in expanding opportunities for children, youth and families to connect with nature.

“Providing access to the outdoors is at the heart of our business. We believe in the virtuous cycle--the simple concept based on the idea that if you get people outdoors, they will love that experience. The more they come back, the more they grow to care about protecting our natural playgrounds and living healthy active lives,” said Todd Spaletto, president of The North Face. “We’re excited about our partnership with OAK and support policy solutions like the Health Kids Outdoors Act as it means more opportunities to get people outdoors.”

“At a time when more than one in three children in the US are overweight, we applaud Congressman Ron Kind and Senator Mark Udall for successfully introducing the Healthy Kids Outdoors Act,” said Dave Alberga, CEO at Active Network. “We look forward to continuing our support in getting kids active and participating in outdoor activities.”

"Through our Mission Outdoors programs, we have witnessed shy children grow into leaders from the confidence they gain after hiking up a mountain. We have seen military kids get a much needed break from the daily stress they face when one of their parents deploys by spending a week outdoors at summer camp," said Michael Brune, Executive Director of the Sierra Club. "But, fewer kids are spending time outdoors and many don't have the opportunity to get outdoors. Rep. Kind and Sen. Udall's bill could help reverse this trend, improve our kids' health and open up a new world for them."

Americans are paying a steep price for less time spent outdoors. Obesity not only decreases the quality of life for many Americans – it is straining our nation’s economy through steep increases in healthcare costs. In addition, local and state economies have suffered as the drop in outdoor recreation has translated into less revenue for outdoor retailers, local tourist destinations or “gateway communities,” and state fish and wildlife agencies.

The conditions are right for making lasting changes in the ways youth and families relate to nature. The Healthy Kids Outdoors Act will support the goals of the President’s America’s Great Outdoors initiative and the First Lady’s effort to address childhood obesity through *Let’s Move!*

About the Outdoors Alliance for Kids: OAK is a national strategic partnership of organizations from diverse sectors with the common interest in expanding the number and quality of opportunities for children, youth and families to connect with the outdoors. The alliance was launched by Sierra Club, YMCA of the USA, REI, National Wildlife Federation, Izaak Walton League of America, Outdoor Foundation, Children & Nature Network and the National Recreation and Park Association in June 2010. Since then, OAK’s steering committee has grown to include the National Association of State Park Directors, The North Face and Active Network. [OAK’s membership continues to expand](#) and now includes 35 nonprofit organizations and corporations. Learn more at www.OutdoorsAllianceForKids.org.

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