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Bill Calls on Schools to Report Bullying of Special Needs Pupils

By [Nirvi Shah](#) on March 17, 2011 3:22 PM | [No comments](#) | [No recommendations](#)

A California congresswoman said she will propose a law that would require schools that receive federal money to report incidents of bullying to the federal government—and specify whether they involved children with disabilities.

16

"Bullying and harassment foster a climate of fear and disrespect that can seriously impair the physical and psychological health of its victims and create conditions that negatively affect learning. For special needs students who already face tremendous challenges, adding this extra burden is simply unacceptable," [Jackie Speier](#), a California Democrat, said on Wednesday.

Citing a report [I wrote about last month](#), the representative said "the U.S. is nearly a decade behind other nations when it comes to implementing, legislating, or researching policies regarding bullying and children with special needs. This is a national embarrassment."

Ms. Speier said the legislation would also require that if federal money is used to pay for bullying programs, those programs would have to include content that specifically addresses the bullying of students with special needs.

But if passed, the law could put schools in a difficult position, Neal McCluskey, associate director of the Center for Educational Freedom at the libertarian Cato Institute, told [The Daily Caller](#).

That's because singling out specific groups of students for special consideration could come at the expense of other victims who aren't on a list of protected students.

"So the person who's just a 'nerd' doesn't get the same level of protection because 'nerds' are not identified as a specific group in federal legislation," Mr. McCluskey said.

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