Leaders in the 115th Congress are focused on efforts to advance reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) Act, exploring options to expand the capacity of programs in school districts throughout the country. Last reauthorized in 2006, this law provides states with more than $1 billion annually in federal funding for programs designed to prepare students in technical careers. Since the law expired in 2012, education advocates and business leaders have highlighted the importance of aligning career and technical education programs with current and future workforce demands to help prepare students for both college and careers.

**NSBA Priority**
NSBA urges Congress to provide the necessary support to school districts to ensure that students have access to high-quality career and technical education programs with a strong academic component and credentialing programs. Modernizing CTE will help our nation’s school districts continue efforts to advance curricula that provide 21st Century skills and knowledge to meet the needs of both students and employers and provide practical training through apprenticeships and other opportunities.

**Status**
The House passed the bipartisan *Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act* in September 2016. This legislation is expected to be the premise for reauthorization efforts in 2017. The bill would modernize Career and Technical Education to equip our students with the academic and workforce skills they need to compete for high-skilled, in-demand jobs. The bill would align CTE with provisions for college- and career-readiness in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA); encourage greater public-private partnerships among school districts, employers and institutions of higher education; increase opportunities for apprenticeships and credentialing; retain current formula grant funding; and, strengthen support for career guidance and academic counseling, as well as professional development for educators.

The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP) postponed a mark-up of its respective bill on September 21, 2016, due to concerns with specific provisions, including measures that would have reportedly restricted the authority of the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

The following principles are guiding the reauthorization efforts in Congress:

- Provide greater flexibility for state and local Career and Technical Education programs to serve all students who desire to gain access to CTE coursework, including students with disabilities;
Increase access to, and support of, career counseling for all CTE students;
Maintain CTE as a formula program;
Align with ESSA [the Every Student Succeeds Act] and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (where applicable) to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the education and workforce development programs;
Support the expansion of public/private collaborations with secondary and postsecondary programs, including alignment with state or locally determined in-demand industries and occupations;
Support efforts to integrate into and strengthen career pathways at the state and local levels;
Address unfunded programs (such as programs to increase participation in STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics] related programs of study); and,
Improve evaluation and research to support innovation and best practices.

As Congress moves forward to modernize CTE, NSBA advocates for priorities to align skills with the 21st Century economy, facilitate partnerships with industry and other stakeholders, strengthen accountability, and promote innovation.

Research
NSBA’s Center for Public Education has published research about CTE and the opportunities provided to students in a series titled “The Path Least Taken: Preparing Non-College Goers for Success.” Findings show that advanced courses with an occupational focus make a difference in student outcomes.

In the second report of the series, the Center found that what students do in high school can be as important for non-college goers as it is for college goers: At age 26, college goers, on average, are more likely than non-college goers to have a good job and engage in society. But a more rigorous high school preparation that includes high-level math and vocational courses in an occupational concentration improves those chances considerably for non-college goers. Add professional certification to the mix and non-college goers are more likely to be employed and earn good wages than the average college-goer; and, they are as likely to vote.

This series also examined credentials that matter most for non-college goers, and found that students who have achieved the following are more prepared for success in careers:

- Completed Algebra 2 as highest math course and Advanced Biology as highest science;
- Earned a cumulative GPA between 2.51 and 3.0;
- Completed an occupational concentration in high school (three or more vocational courses in a specific labor market area); and,
- Earned a professional certification or license.

This research series is available online at www.centerforpubliceducation.org.