



Fall Council

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## RECOGNIZING ACCOUNTING AS A STEM PROFESSION

**In the House:** *To cosponsor H.R. 3855, contact Sammi Goldsmith in Rep. Stevens' office at (202) 225-8171 or [Sammi.Goldsmith@mail.house.gov](mailto:Sammi.Goldsmith@mail.house.gov) or Erica Barker in Rep. Spartz's office at (202) 225-2276 or [Erica.Barker@mail.house.gov](mailto:Erica.Barker@mail.house.gov).*

**In the Senate:** *We urge your support and ask that Senators consider introducing this legislation or cosponsoring it when it is introduced.*

### **Background**

The accounting profession has and continues to evolve to serve in the public interest. Certified professional accountants (CPAs) help to provide the capital markets with confidence and assurance in financial reporting. The profession's work impacts workers, retirees, communities, investors, the capital markets, and the global economy. In the words of former U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Chairman Jay Clayton: "The bedrock of our financial system is the audit."

To ensure the profession meets the public's, clients' and employers' needs in a technology-driven marketplace, accountants learn and leverage cutting-edge technology skills. These skills – integrated with quantitative reasoning skills – help accountants make informed decisions, solve complex problems, and enhance the delivery of services throughout the audit, finance, and tax arenas.

There is a clear and logical overlap between accounting and technology: as the profession better utilizes technology to serve in the public interest, CPAs are technology leaders who manage and analyze Big Data, ensure data security, and work alongside Information Technology (IT) professionals.

CPAs utilize technology skills in additional areas that are both integral to the audit function and other services for American businesses, including IT auditing (which demands high-level technology knowledge and skills to evaluate IT infrastructure), artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, data analytics and forensic and predictive accounting and cybersecurity.

As the profession considers its future, finding and retaining qualified staff are consistently among the top issues facing CPA firms of every firm-size segment and among businesses that employ CPAs.



Current data also show that while there has been progress, more work needs to be done to increase racial and ethnic diversity in the accounting profession. The profession is engaged in diversity and inclusion initiatives because it is the right thing to do, and because improved diversity in the accounting workforce is critical to the public interest.

As universities increasingly hear from the profession about the urgent need for tech-savvier CPAs, accounting departments are moving quickly to integrate more technology and data analysis skills into the curriculum and reclassify their programs as STEM fields.

The world's leading business school and accounting accreditor – the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business – has recognized that technology knowledge is a minimum requirement for entry into the accounting profession and now requires all programs seeking accounting program accreditation in addition to business school accreditation to meet this requirement.

### **Issue**

Although the profession has taken a multi-pronged approach to build the CPA pipeline (primary, secondary, and postgraduate initiatives, diversity initiatives, etc.), additional work is required. The profession believes that designating accounting as STEM will increase student engagement with the accounting profession.

Updating accounting to be designated as a STEM curriculum under the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) will also directly benefit international students considering post-graduate work in the United States.

Officially recognizing accounting as a STEM curriculum will also signal to the public markets that the accounting profession is ready and qualified to assess the technological world business are in today.

### **The Profession's Position**

The profession advocates for accounting to be recognized as a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) curriculum under the technology field. The profession believes that STEM recognition for accounting would help diversify and build the pipeline of accountants in the United States.



**Federal Legislation**

The *Accounting STEM Pursuit Act of 2021* essentially recognizes that accounting is a STEM field. The bill adds “activities to promote the development, implementation, and strengthening of programs to teach accounting” to the list of allowable uses of grant funding under the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant program (Title IV, part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) with a focus on increasing access to high-quality accounting courses for students through grade 12 who are members of groups underrepresented in accounting careers.

Representatives Haley Stevens (D-MI) and Victoria Spartz (R-IN) introduced this legislation, H.R. 3855, in early June and are seeking additional cosponsors.

The legislation is supported by the Center for Audit Quality, Diverse Organization of Firms, NAF, National Association of State Boards of Accountancy, National Association of Black Accountants, and National Society of Black CPAs.

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