

Prepared statement from Senator Sarkar
February 22, 2012

I am baffled by the fact that an elected body is about to make a decision that may have a substantial negative effect in student preparedness in sciences for many generations to come. Science literacy is critical for a person to be able to fulfill the responsibility of a citizen. Four hours in science as a general education requirement does not prepare students adequate enough to be able to make objective and informed decision on public issues regarding science. These forthcoming issues may range from use of nuclear power, global climate change, stem cell research, use of antibiotics in food production, pesticide use and comprehensive agriculture, to name a few. With America strongly tied to a global economy science literacy is critical.

I have lived in US long time and have seen people voting against their interest on many occasions. If we pass this in its entirety, we will be doing a disservice to the future students and will be voting against national interest.

I praise the collective effort of many people who painstakingly prepared the document and my vote against the proposal is not a reflection against their effort. We have tried to amend it to make 7 required hours, which has failed in 10-13 vote. Therefore I have no other way to stand strong in my conviction that technology is not the same as science and a course in technology should not substitute science. The elevation of technology to substitute a course in science is wrong and simply should not qualify. It will be very much like saying a course in theatre may substitute a required composition course.

I have talked to many students after the last amendment failed and I have heard a very strong voice from each one of them that seven hours should be required in sciences and technology should not be substituted. I am voting for the students with the conviction, "Do no Harm"

I know we are limited by 42 hours but cutting science from 7 to 4 is like cutting essential amino acids and vitamins out of your diet. It should not be done.

I would have voted for the proposal if the seven hours were restored without any talk of substitution of technology. I know we have a technology mission but I do not know what it is and how it is manifested in our programs. Technology is important and it should be integrated in all courses that we offer when possible and when appropriate and when it enhances student learning. I will vote against the entire proposal with the belief that it will go back and seven hours in sciences will be restored. Also an emphasis will be made that technology is integrated throughout the General Education curriculum.