

# US lawmakers eye plan to compete with Asia on robotics

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US senators unveiled an initiative Monday to try to narrow the US gap with Asian nations more advanced in robotics, proposing exposing American high school students to a curriculum heavier on technology and science.

Democrat Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire sponsored the plan calling for exposing students to heavier doses of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) seen as essential starting points on tracks to the better-paying jobs of the present and future.

The text could end up in a broader education funding bill.

Shaheen argued her case in a Senate hearing room as high school students presented their forward-looking projects outside.

The senator herself later took in the robotics demonstration and even steered one of the machines herself. Some of the robots were entries in a contest held by FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of [Science and Technology](#)) to encourage innovation by kids.

Asked about her ideas for greater youth involvement in robotics, Shaheen told AFP: "I think we need to do a whole variety of things. This is one of the steps we need to do.

"What we know is that young people who participate in these program are much more likely to get excited about theses subjects, science and

math and engineering and [technology](#). They are more likely to go to college to major in these subjects... So this is one of the areas where we need to invest," she said.

Only five percent of US university graduates now major in engineering, according to data included in the bill. In Asia broadly, the figure is 20 percent, and in China is a higher 33 percent.

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