

□ 1716

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. RIGELL) at 5 o'clock and 16 minutes p.m.

SIMPLIFYING THE APPLICATION FOR STUDENT AID ACT

Mr. HECK of Nevada. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5528) to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to simplify the FAFSA, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5528

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Simplifying the Application for Student Aid Act".

SEC. 2. USING DATA FROM SECOND PRECEDING YEAR.

Section 480(a)(1)(B) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1087vv(a)(1)(B)) is amended by striking "may" in both places it appears and inserting "shall".

SEC. 3. CALCULATION OF ANNUAL ADJUSTMENT PERCENTAGE FOR FEDERAL PELL GRANTS.

Section 401(b)(7)(C)(iv)(I) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070a(b)(7)(C)(iv)(I)) is amended by striking "calendar year" and inserting "fiscal year".

SEC. 4. FAFSA SIMPLIFICATION.

(a) FAFSA SIMPLIFICATION.—Section 483 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1090) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(3), by adding at the end the following:

"(I) FORMAT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of the Simplifying the Application for Student Aid Act, the Secretary shall make the electronic version of the forms under this paragraph available through a technology tool that can be used on mobile devices. Such technology tool shall, at minimum, enable applicants to—

"(i) save data; and

"(ii) submit their FAFSA to the Secretary through such tool.

"(J) CONSUMER TESTING.—In developing and maintaining the electronic version of the forms under this paragraph and the technology tool for mobile devices under subsection (I), the Secretary shall conduct consumer testing with appropriate persons to ensure the forms and technology tool are designed to be easily usable and understandable by students and families. Such consumer testing shall include—

"(i) current and prospective college students, family members of such students, and other individuals with expertise in student financial assistance application processes;

"(ii) dependent students and independent students meeting the requirements under subsection (b) or (c) of section 479; and

"(iii) dependent students and independent students who do not meet the requirements under subsection (b) or (c) of section 479."; and

(2) by amending subsection (f) to read as follows:

"(f) USE OF INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE DATA RETRIEVAL TOOL TO POPULATE FAFSA.—

"(1) SIMPLIFICATION EFFORTS.—The Secretary shall—

"(A) make every effort to allow applicants to utilize the current data retrieval tool to transfer data available from the Internal Revenue Service to reduce the amount of original data entry by applicants and strengthen the reliability of data used to calculate expected family contributions, including through the use of technology to—

"(i) allow an applicant to automatically populate the electronic version of the forms under this paragraph with data available from the Internal Revenue Service; and

"(ii) direct an applicant to appropriate questions on such forms based on the applicant's answers to previous questions; and

"(B) allow single taxpayers, married taxpayers filing jointly, and married taxpayers filing separately to utilize the current data retrieval tool to its full capacity.

"(2) USE OF TAX RETURN IN APPLICATION PROCESS.—The Secretary shall continue to examine whether data provided by the Internal Revenue Service can be used to generate an expected family contribution without additional action on the part of the student and taxpayer.

"(3) REPORTS ON FAFSA SIMPLIFICATION EFFORTS.—Not less than once every other year, the Secretary shall report to the authorizing committees on the progress of the simplification efforts under this subsection.

"(4) REPORTS ON FAFSA ACCESS.—Not less than once every 10 years, the Secretary shall report to the authorizing committees on the needs of limited English proficient students using the FAFSA."

(b) FUNDING.—

(1) USE OF EXISTING FUNDS.—Of the amount authorized to be appropriated to the Department of Education to maintain the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, \$3,000,000 shall be available to carry out this Act and the amendments made by this Act.

(2) NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS AUTHORIZED.—No funds are authorized by this Act to be appropriated to carry out this Act or the amendments made by this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. HECK) and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. POCAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nevada.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HECK of Nevada. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include any extraneous material on H.R. 5528.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Nevada?

There was no objection.

Mr. HECK of Nevada. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in strong support of H.R. 5528, the Simplifying the Application for Student Aid Act.

Early last year, I held a roundtable on higher education in my district to help better understand the issues facing students, teachers, and higher ed administrators in Nevada. Nearly everyone in attendance raised the issue of the overly complicated student aid process and, specifically, problems with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, better known as the FAFSA.

Like many aspects of the student aid system, the application for aid can be

This is a bipartisan piece of legislation with my good friends, Mr. ALLEN and Ms. BONAMICI. I am glad to be on the floor with my friend, Mr. POCAN, who I believe has a very big university in his district. He is from Madison. I thank him for doing that.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3179, "Empowering Students through Enhanced Financial Counseling Act," which amends the Higher Education Act of 1965 to authorize \$2 million allocated for activities related to student loan counseling.

Financial literacy and consumer awareness is very crucial for all loan borrowers, especially for our youth.

The loan will provide counseling of federal Pell Grant recipients with comprehensive information on the loan terms and conditions, as well as testing these students on their knowledge of this information before accepting the grant.

Students receiving any Federal Loans would be notified of the loan conditions, informing them on the amount, eligibility, exhaustion, and consequences of borrowing the loan.

An important aspect of this procedure includes a requirement for the borrowers to receive the contact information for the institution's financial aid office.

I have college students interning in my office, who have taken out loans for their education and these are the largest sums they have borrowed in their lifetime.

One student did not know that completing the FAFSA would automatically grant her a Federal Stafford Loan, and she did not find out about her loan until she received a job at her institution's financial aid office.

Mr. Speaker, taking this example into account, educated students across the nation are not as familiar with the process and terms of Financial Aid and loans as they should be or as we ought to think they are.

Through H.R. 3179, first-time borrowers will receive statements with interest rates and repayment plan options.

This legislation will educate the individuals seeking an education on how to finance their studies.

This legislation will also create jobs in underserved areas as well.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this legislation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. GUTHRIE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3179, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 4 o'clock and 45 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.