

PERMISSION TO OFFER AMENDMENTS OUT OF ORDER DURING CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 609, COLLEGE ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 2005

Mr. McKEON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that during consideration of H.R. 609 pursuant to House Resolution 741, the following amendments be permitted to be offered out of the specified order:

Amendment No. 9 by Mr. FOSSELLA;
Amendment No. 12 by Mr. PORTER;
Amendment No. 14 by Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico;
Amendment No. 15 by Miss McMORRIS.

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

There was no objection.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. McKEON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 609.

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

There was no objection.

COLLEGE ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 2005

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 741 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 609.

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IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 609) to amend and extend the Higher Education Act of 1965, with Mr. BISHOP of Utah in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from California (Mr. McKEON) and the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. McKEON. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of this bill to reform, reauthorize and strengthen programs under the Higher Education Act. I want to thank my former chairman and our current majority leader, Mr. BOEHNER, for working with me to craft this legislation.

It has been a long process, but the bill that we are bringing to the floor today is a good one, one worthy of healthy debate and bipartisan support.

I would like to thank the new chairman of the 21st Century Subcommittee, Representative RIC KELLER from Florida, for his work on key elements of this legislation, notably the improvements we make on the Pell Grant program.

I would also like to take a moment to recognize Representatives KILDEE and MILLER for their continued work on college access issues.

In addition to the strong underlying bill we have before us today, the legislation also incorporates a manager's amendment which is the product of substantial bipartisan negotiations. Through our work together over the past several weeks and months, we have drafted a manager's amendment that addresses many concerns.

Those concerns include some of those of my friends across the aisle. For example, the manager's amendment eliminates an Inspector General's rule as part of the college affordability index provisions.

It clarifies that a State cannot require an institution to be accredited by that same State and also makes clear that schools can continue to choose their own accreditor. It adds a new post-secondary institution to the list of historically black graduate institutions. It increases the minimum grant for tribally controlled colleges and universities. It enhances coordination within the TRIO and GEAR UP programs to better serve foster care students, and it allows the U.S. Department of Education to reserve funds within the high school equivalency program, college assistance, migrant program for technical assistance activities.

Often this type of bipartisan work does not come easily, and I am pleased that we were able to find common ground on issues important to Members on both sides of the aisle. At the outset of this debate today, I am hopeful that the spirit of bipartisanship can carry on. If we disagree, we should not be disagreeable, and above all, our consideration of this important bill should not turn into an election-year fight led by those who may seek to play fast and loose with the facts about what the bill does and does not do.

Mr. Chairman, we cannot lose sight of the fact that each year American taxpayers invest tens of billions of dollars in aid to college students and funding for U.S. institutions of higher education, as you can see on the chart here.

Our Federal commitment to student aid is great, and gets greater with each passing year. More than four decades ago, when the Higher Education Act was enacted, the purpose of this hefty investment was clear, to expand college access to all people.

However, today, faced with an increasingly competitive global economy, in which post-secondary education is more necessary than ever, ensuring that Federal dollars are spent effectively and efficiently is a bottom-

line issue for students, parents and taxpayers alike, again, as you can see from this chart.

Mr. Chairman, costs at both private and public colleges are spiraling upward and fast. Indeed, consistent increases in college costs have made it clear that colleges and universities must remain accountable to consumers of higher education. At the same time, students, parents and taxpayers have the right to know that Federal dollars are being invested in ways that respond to a changing marketplace, expanding college access and protecting students' interest. The College Access and Opportunity Act does just that. I urge my colleagues to join with me in supporting that.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE).

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Chairman, after a highly contentious debate over a \$12 billion raid on student aid, I was hoping to build some bridges and work together with the rest of the higher education reauthorization. Unfortunately, after countless hours of negotiations, we reached an impasse, and we are considering another bill that falls short of my hopes.

We were able to reach agreement on year-round Pell Grants pilot program, student aid application simplification, loan forgiveness in areas of national need and minimum grants for tribal colleges. I am pleased that Chairman McKEON was willing to work with me on these important improvements, but my concerns in the bill still outweigh these improvements.

Additionally, it is incumbent upon me to both lead and serve the members of my committee, and my Democratic colleagues on the Education and Workforce Committee have spoken loud and clear. They cannot support this bill. They, too, are pleased with the modifications I mentioned, but it just is not enough to call this a bipartisan bill.

In truth, H.R. 609 does little to help make college more affordable for students and families already struggling to pay increasing tuition costs.

H.R. 609 does not increase student aid; does not lower interest rates to make loans more manageable; does not promote greater State investment in higher education. It freezes the authorized level of the maximum Pell Grant scholarship, at just \$200 above current levels, through 2013 and it does not include any mandatory increase in Pell.

H.R. 609 establishes a troublesome standard for transfer of credit, creating an unprecedented Federal role in college curriculum standards which discourages schools from setting high academic standards.

At a time when America's workforce is facing fierce global competition, the Federal Government should not be encouraging our colleges to reduce their academic standards.