



## Legislative Bulletin.....March 30, 2006

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**H.R. 609**—Amendments to the College Access and Opportunity Act of 2005 (Higher Education Reauthorization)

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H.R. 609, the College Access and Opportunity Act of 2005 (sponsored by Rep. Boehner, OH), is scheduled to be considered on the House floor on Thursday, March 30<sup>th</sup>, subject to a second, structured rule (H.Res. 742). Below are the summaries of the eight amendments made in order under the second rule providing for further consideration, which made in order additional amendments. Amendments are debatable for 10 minutes, unless otherwise noted. Note: summaries are based on RSC staff's review of actual amendment text. For a summary of the underlying bill, see a separate RSC document released earlier this week.

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**1. Biggert (R-IL).** Allows unaccompanied homeless youth to be considered independent students upon verification of their living situation by a McKinney-Vento Act school district liaison, a shelter director, or a financial aid administrator. Under current law, independent students are not required to provide parental income information or a parent signature on their FAFSA form.

**2. Gohmert (R-TX).** Strikes a provision (Sec. 131(f)) from the bill which requires that institutions with a college affordability index of two times the rate of inflation over any three year period are required to report to the Secretary information detailing why there has been an increase of this nature in tuition costs. The amendment also strikes a provision (Sec. 495 (a)(1)) in the underlying bill which allows states to apply to become recognized accrediting agencies.

**3. Kennedy (D-RI) / Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL).** The underlying bill would extend current **loan forgiveness** provisions under FFEL (which presently are applied to early childhood educators) also to nurses, foreign language specialists, librarians, teachers of bilingual educators, first responders in low-income communities, child welfare workers, speech-language pathologists and other professionals, who have been employed full-time for at least five consecutive years, in an area of national need, as defined by this Act. This amendment adds to the list of eligible individuals, child and adolescent mental health professionals.

**4. King (R-IA).** Requires institutions that receive any federal funding whatsoever (including grants and scholarships) to submit to the U.S. Department of Education an annual report answering two questions. First, the report must state whether race, color, or national origin is considered in the student admissions process. If race, color, or nation origin is considered in the student admissions process, then the report must contain a subsequent analysis of how these factors are considered in

the process. For example, the report must state exactly which groups are given special consideration, how much weight is given to the groups, and the process by which it is considered.

**5. Kirk (R-IL) / Larsen (D-WA).** Expresses the sense of Congress that “due to the diplomatic, economic, and military importance of China and the Middle East, international exchange and foreign language education programs under the Higher Education Act of 1965 should focus on the learning of Chinese and Arabic language and culture.”

**6. Souder (R-IN) / Bishop (D-NY).** Current law requires accrediting agencies to confirm certain policies exist within an Institute of Higher Education (IHE) in order to declare that such an institute is accredited. The underlying bill adds to these current requirements, that accrediting agencies must confirm that the IHE has transfer policies (relating to transferring credits) that are publicly disclosed and that do not deny transfer of credit based solely on the accreditation of the sending institution. This amendment strikes the new requirement in the underlying bill (regarding transfer of credit language), and instead requires accrediting agencies “to confirm as a part of its review for accreditation or reaccreditation that the institution has transfer policies that are publicly disclosed and specifically state whether the institution denies a transfer of credit based solely on the accreditation of the institution at which the credit was earned.” According to the sponsor, “Each institution has its own criteria for the kind of academic program it expects its students to have completed. By prohibiting institutions from denying credits based on the accreditation of the sending institution, the federal government would be undermining the authority of colleges and universities to establish their own set of transfer of credit policies that are appropriate to their institution.”

**7. Miller (D-CA) Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute.** Debatable for 30 minutes. Lowers student loan interest rates (from 6.8% to 3.4%), and establishes a **new** Predominantly Black Serving Institution program (this would be in addition to the current direct aid give to Historically Black Colleges and Universities) “to boost college participation rates of low-income, black students.” The following provisions in the substitute amendment were also included in the underlying bill:

- establishes a **new** graduate Hispanic Serving Institution program;
- provides for year-round Pell grants;
- repeals the Single Lender rule; and
- Directs the Secretary to cancel federal student loan debts, under certain circumstances, of spouses or parents of individuals who died or was permanently disabled from the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

**8. McKeon (R-CA).** There is no text available for this amendment. It is a pro-forma amendment, which according to the Committee, is being offered for the purposes of debate for colloquies and closing statements.