

COMMITTEE ON  
**Education and Labor**  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Press Releases



*House Education Committee Approves Bill to Address  
Rising College Prices & Remove Other Barriers to College  
Enrollment*

**Thursday, November 15, 2007**

**WASHINGTON, DC** -- The House Education and Labor Committee voted unanimously today to approve legislation to address the soaring price of college and remove other obstacles that make it harder for qualified students to go to college.

The College Opportunity and Affordability Act of 2007 (H.R. 4137) would reform and strengthen the nation's higher education programs to ensure that they operate in the best interests of students and families.

"Congress has already enacted legislation this year to provide an additional \$20 billion in financial aid for students and families over the next five years," said U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), the chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee. "This legislation will build on that effort by reducing or eliminating many of the obstacles that prevent fully qualified students from going to college."

"The College Opportunity and Affordability Act reflects the bipartisan consensus that has emerged about the need to rein in rising college costs and give students, parents, and taxpayers more and better information about colleges and universities," said the Committee's Senior Republican, U.S. Rep. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon (R-CA). "As this bill moves to the House floor, we will continue working to strengthen its protections for students and taxpayers and enhance its recognition of the changing needs of an increasingly diverse and mobile college population."

"This legislation complements the landmark investment we made in higher education with the College Cost Reduction and Access Act. It will help close the college access and completion gaps for low-income and minority students; improve the financial aid application and delivery system; and improve preparation so that low-income and first-generation college students are ready to succeed in college – academically, financially, and socially," said U.S. Rep. Rubén Hinojosa (D-TX), the chairman of the House Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness. "This bill will help our

system of higher education stay on the cutting edge while opening the doors of opportunity to more students than ever before.”

“Pell Grants are the cornerstone of the federal investment in higher education, opening the doors of opportunity to students who might not otherwise have the chance to pursue a college education. This legislation is the culmination of years of effort to increase and strengthen the Pell Grant program, enhance federal student financial aid, and improve federal higher education programs,” said U.S. Rep. Ric Keller (R-FL), Senior Republican on the Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness Subcommittee. “I’m pleased to have played a role in developing and strengthening this bipartisan legislation, and I look forward to its swift passage.”

A report released by the College Board last month shows that, over the last five years, tuition and fees increased across the board, at public and private colleges and at two-year and four-year colleges. The bill would address these rising prices by encouraging colleges to rein in price increases, ensuring that states maintain their commitments to higher education funding, and providing students and families with consumer friendly information on college pricing and the factors driving tuition increases.

The legislation also strengthens provisions previously approved by the House to avoid conflicts of interest in the student loan programs. The bill’s new provisions also include requiring better consumer disclosures and protections on private student loans.

In addition, the College Opportunity and Affordability Act would:

- Streamline the federal student financial aid application process;
- Make textbook costs more manageable for students by helping them plan for textbook expenses in advance of each semester;
- Allow students to receive year-round Pell Grant scholarships;
- Strengthen college readiness programs;
- Increase college aid and support programs for veterans and military families;
- Improve safety on college campuses and help schools recover and rebuild after a disaster;
- Ensure equal college opportunities and fair learning environments for students with disabilities; and
- Strengthen our nation’s workforce and economic competitiveness by boosting science, technology, and foreign language educational opportunities.

H.R. 4137 is the second of two major higher education bills introduced this year. The first, the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007, was signed into law in September. H.R. 4137 is a comprehensive reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, the primary federal law aimed at expanding college access for low- and middle-income students.

For more information on the College Opportunity and Affordability Act, click [here](#).

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