

Castle Praises Passage of Higher Education Act, Stresses Importance of Addressing Rising Costs of College -- March 30, 2006

Castle's amendment to create national teacher corps part of larger bill

Washington, D.C. -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle today supported passage of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, which encompasses student loans, Pell grants, campus-based aid, teacher education, graduate schools, and international education. The comprehensive legislation also includes Castle's amendment to establish a national teacher corps, similar to Teach for America, for those who commit to teach in low-income communities and become lifelong leaders for education

The College Access & Opportunity Act seeks to expand access to higher education for low- and middle-income students by strengthening Pell Grants, student aid, student access, and minority serving institutions; simplifying the financial aid process; and empowering parents and students with information about college costs. Additionally, the legislation addresses ways to recruit and train highly qualified students in the field of math and science in higher education in the U.S.

"One concern that continues to arise, and has done so since I came to Congress, is the continuously rising cost of a college education. Tuition increases are outpacing the rate of inflation, increases in family income, and even increases in state and federal financial aid, which have grown tremendously in recent years. These cost increases are pricing students and families out of the college market. In a time when we have reports suggesting that for the first time today's high school students recognize the importance of obtaining a college education, these students should not shy away because of skyrocketing costs.

"It is my belief that one of the best things we can do is to talk about the issue, and to force transparency in the process. H.R. 609 does just that. Parents and students, as consumers, deserve the opportunity to understand why tuition is increasing at their universities. As educated consumers, it is my hope that they will in turn have the power to demand more, to demand answers, and ultimately drive down cost. Understanding that there are many moving parts to a solution, transparency is a good step in the right direction," Castle said.

Congressman Castle also wanted to ensure that with the reauthorization, fraud and abuse protections are in place and are working. He spoke about two amendments that were included in the bill, which he offered, to meet this goal. The first would prevent for-profit institutions from competing for federal funds. The second would retain and clarify what is known as the 90/10 rule. Both of these amendments were intended to recognize the evolution of the for-profit industry in higher education, while protecting federal funds.

Yesterday, during Floor Debate, the House unanimously adopted Castle's national teacher corps amendment, which would:

- Grow the number of highly accomplished recent college graduates teaching in underserved urban and rural communities in the United States

- Increase the number of school districts and communities served by a nationally recruited corps
- Build a broader pipeline of talented and experienced future leaders in public education and education reform.