



AAUP Government Relations

Monthly Newsletter June/July 2007



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Welcome

Welcome to the June/July edition of the Government Relations newsletter. June was a big month for the AAUP, including our Annual Meeting and Capitol Hill Day here in Washington, D.C. Many thanks to those of you who participated! For information and photos from the meeting, please visit www.aaup.org. In July, AAUP will be holding its annual [Summer Institute](#) in Reno. Several of the workshops are GR-related; click [here](#) for the schedule.

Please note that due to the end of most state legislative sessions and the academic year, there will be two issues of this newsletter instead of three during the summer: June/July and July/August. Monthly issues, as well as the "Note from the Chair" section, will resume in September.

Federal Update

The House Committee on Education and Labor held a hearing on the student loan industry on May 10. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings was the sole witness; [a transcript and webcast](#) are available on the Committee Web site. The student loan issue continues to receive a great deal of Congressional attention. In addition to the cut in interest rates passed by the House earlier this year, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee's version of the Higher Education Act (HEA) cuts lender subsidies in order to expand financial aid programs.

The HELP Committee passed its 534-page version of the HEA ([S. 1642](#)) and a [companion bill](#) on June 20. In addition to the aforementioned boost to Title IV (i.e., student aid) programs, the legislation also speaks directly to the ongoing tug-of-war over accreditation rules between the Department of Education and Congress by forbidding the department to change federal transfer-of-credit regulations. That war appears to be at a truce, as Secretary Spellings indicated that she [will not publish](#) proposed accreditation rules. The secretary's letter comes after very public statements from members of Congress from both parties warning the department not to overstep its bounds by trying to circumvent the role of the legislative branch.

The textbook pricing issue has been taken up by Congress as well. Senator Richard Durbin (D-Ill) introduced [S. 945](#) in March that, among other things, encourages that more information about book pricing be given to faculty and to campus bookstores and opposes bundling by publishers, in which certain textbooks are only available as part of a package of materials. A similar bill is expected to be introduced in the House in the near future.

Of particular interest to our collective bargaining chapters: The Employee Free Choice Act of 2007 ([HR 800](#)) was defeated on the Senate floor on June 26. The vote was a straight party-line vote with the exception of Senator Specter, who voted with the Democrats. The House had

passed the bill on March 1.

[US H 2690](#) was introduced in the House on June 12 to improve college affordability by encouraging institutions and state and federal governments to work together more effectively.

In response to the Virginia Tech tragedy in April, the House on June 13 passed [H.R.2640](#) to strengthen reporting to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System.

NOTE A new section has been added to the GR page of the AAUP Web site. On the sidebar of the page, an area titled “The Hill” has information about legislative hearings and bill markups pertaining to higher education. Please check this section for information about what committees are working on, links to testimony, and more.

Legislator Profile of the Month: Lamar Alexander

When [Senator Lamar Alexander](#) (R-TN) speaks about higher education, his colleagues listen. The senator is a former secretary of education, a former governor, and also served as president of the University of Tennessee. Senator Alexander serves on both the Senate HELP and Appropriations committees. The senator has paid close attention to the accreditation debates in Washington, and released [this statement](#) on May 24. Though some of his statements regarding political indoctrination are areas of concern to the AAUP, we fully support his assertion of the Congressional role and his statements in support of the diversity of institutional missions.

Featured Articles

[“The Senate’s Higher Ed Act Renewal”](#), *Inside Higher Ed*, 6/20/07

[“A Math Lesson on College Loans”](#), *New York Times*, 6/13/07 (subscription required)

[“Sparring with the Secretary”](#) *Inside Higher Ed*, 5/11/07

Nationwide

The issue of textbook prices is in full swing, with multiple states wrestling with legislation and subsequent media attention. The AAUP’s national office was quoted briefly in [this article](#) in the *Christian Science Monitor*. In the past few years, more than thirty states have introduced bills to address the issue, many of them specifically targeting bundling practices by publishers and transparency about retail costs. Most recent is [California’s SB 832](#), which was last amended on June 26. [OR SB 365](#) passed the Oregon state legislature on June 13. [CT HB 5527](#) was signed by the Connecticut governor on June 2.

A number of state legislatures have taken on the issue of guns on campus in response to the Virginia Tech tragedy. In Louisiana, [LA HB 461](#) was considered on May 30 and deferred in committee. South Carolina introduced [SC H 3964](#) to allow concealed weapons on college campuses. In Florida, the governor signed [Executive Order 77](#) to better coordinate administrators, law enforcement, and mental health care professionals. In Utah, though administrations lost their battle with the legislature to ban guns on campuses, the governor signed a law allowing students to select roommates without concealed-carry permits. (This issue had been a matter of debate in Utah prior to the events at Virginia Tech). Additionally, on June 21, the Nevada System of

Higher Education's Board of Regents [approved a plan](#) for some faculty and staff members at four public institutions to become reserve police officers, which would allow them to be armed while on campus. The plan would allow the state's system of higher education to pay for the training.

Despite the winding down of many legislative sessions, there are still several active bills on the issue of working conditions for adjunct faculty. In California, [CA A 591](#) passed out of the appropriations committee to the Assembly, was amended on the floor, and then referred back to committee on June 14. New Jersey's bill [NJ A 4364](#), which aims to have 75% of undergraduate classes at public institutions taught by full-time faculty members, was introduced on June 14. The Florida companion bills [FL HB 1279](#) and [FL SB 2652](#) died in committee. Other bills on the issue will carry over when the legislatures reconvene.

Action of the Month

Read or watch the testimony from the House hearing "International Students and Visiting Scholars" (at time of publication scheduled for June 29 at 9:30am). Then write an e-mail to your representative making the case for the importance of academic freedom and the free movement of scholars for. A wealth of AAUP statements and letters on the topic can be found [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).