

106TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2100

To provide for fire sprinkler systems in public and private college and university housing and dormitories, including fraternity and sorority housing and dormitories.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 24, 2000

Mr. EDWARDS (for himself, Mr. LAUTENBERG, and Mr. TORRICELLI) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To provide for fire sprinkler systems in public and private college and university housing and dormitories, including fraternity and sorority housing and dormitories.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “College Fire Preven-

5 tion Act”.

6 **SEC 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

8 (1) On Wednesday, January 19, 2000, a fire

9 occurred at a Seton Hall University dormitory.

1 Three male freshmen, all 18 years of age, died.
2 Fifty-four students, 2 South Orange firefighters,
3 and 2 South Orange police officers were injured.
4 The dormitory was a 6-story, 350-room structure
5 built in 1952, that housed approximately 600 stu-
6 dents. It was equipped with smoke alarms but no
7 fire sprinkler system.

8 (2) On Mother's Day 1996 in Chapel Hill,
9 North Carolina, a fire in the Phi Gamma Delta Fra-
10 ternity House killed 5 college juniors and injured 3.
11 The 3-story plus basement fraternity house was 70
12 years old. The National Fire Protection Association
13 identified several factors that contributed to the
14 tragic fire, including the lack of fire sprinkler pro-
15 tection.

16 (3) It is estimated that in a typical year be-
17 tween 1980 and 1997, there were an average of
18 1,800 fires at dormitories, fraternities, and sorori-
19 ties, involving 1 death, 69 injuries, and \$8,100,000
20 in property damage.

21 (4) Within dormitories the number 1 cause of
22 fires is arson or suspected arson. The second leading
23 cause of college building fires is cooking, while the
24 third leading cause is smoking.

1 (5) The National Fire Protection Association
2 has no record of a fire killing more than 2 people
3 in a completely fire sprinklered public assembly, edu-
4 cational, institutional, or residential building where
5 the sprinkler system was operating properly.

6 (6) New dormitories are generally required to
7 have advanced safety systems such as fire sprinklers.
8 But such requirements are rarely imposed retro-
9 actively on existing buildings.

10 (7) In 1997, over 90 percent of the campus
11 building fires reported to fire departments occurred
12 in buildings where there were smoke alarms present.
13 However, only 28 percent had fire sprinklers
14 present.

15 **SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

16 There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
17 this Act \$100,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2001
18 through 2005.

19 **SEC. 4. GRANTS AUTHORIZED.**

20 (a) PROGRAM AUTHORITY.—The Secretary of Edu-
21 cation, in consultation with the United States Fire Admin-
22 istration, is authorized to award grants, on a competitive
23 basis, to States, private or public colleges or universities,
24 fraternities, or sororities to assist them in providing fire

1 sprinkler systems for their student housing and dor-
 2 mitories.

3 (b) MATCHING FUNDS REQUIREMENT.—The Sec-
 4 retary of Education may not award a grant under this
 5 section unless the entity receiving the grant provides, from
 6 State, local, or private sources, matching funds in an
 7 amount equal to not less than one-half of the cost of the
 8 activities for which assistance is sought.

9 **SEC. 5. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.**

10 (a) AWARD BASIS.—In awarding grants under this
 11 Act the Secretary of Education shall take into consider-
 12 ation various fire safety factors and conditions that the
 13 Secretary determines appropriate.

14 (b) LIMITATION ON ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—
 15 An entity that receives a grant under this Act shall not
 16 use more than 4 percent of the grant funds for administra-
 17 tive expenses.

18 **SEC. 6. DATA AND REPORT.**

19 The Comptroller General shall—

20 (1) gather data on the number of college and
 21 university housing facilities and dormitories that
 22 have and do not have fire sprinkler systems and
 23 other forms of built-in fire protection mechanisms;
 24 and

1 (2) report such data to Congress.

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