

107TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 399

To provide for fire sprinkler systems, or other fire suppression or prevention technologies, 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 27, 2001

Mr. EDWARDS (for himself and Mr. DODD) 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, or other fire suppression or prevention technologies, 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:

1 (1) On Wednesday, January 19, 2000, a fire
2 occurred at a Seton Hall University dormitory.
3 Three male freshmen, all 18 years of age, died.
4 Fifty-four students, 2 South Orange firefighters,
5 and 2 South Orange police officers were injured.
6 The dormitory was a 6-story, 350-room structure
7 built in 1952, that housed approximately 600 stu-
8 dents. It was equipped with smoke alarms but no
9 fire sprinkler system.

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

18 (3) It is estimated that between 1980 and
19 1998, an average of 1,800 fires at dormitories, fra-
20 ternities, and sororities, involving 1 death, 70 inju-
21 ries, and \$8,000,000 in property damage were re-
22 ported to public fire departments.

23 (4) Within dormitories, fraternities, and sorori-
24 ties the number 1 cause of fires is arson or sus-
25 pected arson. The second leading cause of college

1 building fires is cooking, while the third leading
2 cause is smoking.

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

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

12 (7) In 1998, 93 percent of the campus building
13 fires reported to fire departments occurred in build-
14 ings where there were smoke alarms present. How-
15 ever, only 34 percent had fire sprinklers present.

16 **SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

17 There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
18 this Act \$100,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2002
19 through 2006.

20 **SEC. 4. GRANTS AUTHORIZED.**

21 (a) PROGRAM AUTHORITY.—The Secretary of Edu-
22 cation, in consultation with the United States Fire Admin-
23 istration, is authorized to award grants to States, private
24 or public colleges or universities, fraternities, and sorori-
25 ties to assist them in providing fire sprinkler systems, or

1 other fire suppression or prevention technologies, for their
2 student housing and dormitories.

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) APPLICATION.—Each entity desiring a grant
11 under this Act shall submit to the Secretary of Education
12 an application at such time and in such manner as the
13 Secretary may require.

14 (b) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this Act,
15 the Secretary shall give priority to applicants that dem-
16 onstrate in the application submitted under subsection (a)
17 the inability to fund the sprinkler system, or other fire
18 suppression or prevention technology, from sources other
19 than funds provided under this Act.

20 (c) LIMITATION ON ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—
21 An entity that receives a grant under this Act shall not
22 use more than 4 percent of the grant funds for administra-
23 tive expenses.

24 **SEC. 6. DATA AND REPORT.**

25 The Comptroller General shall—

1 (1) gather data on the number of college and
2 university housing facilities and dormitories that
3 have and do not have fire sprinkler systems and
4 other fire suppression or prevention technologies;
5 and

6 (2) report such data to Congress.

7 **SEC. 7. ADMISSIBILITY.**

8 Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any ap-
9 plication for assistance under this Act, any negative deter-
10 mination on the part of the Secretary of Education with
11 respect to such application, or any statement of reasons
12 for the determination, shall not be admissible as evidence
13 in any proceeding of any court, agency, board, or other
14 entity.

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