

108TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 620

To amend title VII of the Higher Education Act of 1965 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

MARCH 13, 2003

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

A BILL

To amend title VII of the Higher Education Act of 1965 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. COLLEGE FIRE PREVENTION ASSISTANCE.**

4 Title VII of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20
5 U.S.C. 1133 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end
6 the following:

1 **“PART E—COLLEGE FIRE PREVENTION**
2 **ASSISTANCE**

3 **“SEC. 771. SHORT TITLE.**

4 “This part may be cited as the ‘College Fire Preven-
5 tion Act’.

6 **“SEC 772. FINDINGS.**

7 “Congress makes the following findings:

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

17 “(2) On Mother’s Day 1996 in Chapel Hill,
18 North Carolina, a fire in the Phi Gamma Delta Fra-
19 ternity House killed 5 college juniors and injured 3.
20 The 3-story plus basement fraternity house was 70
21 years old. The National Fire Protection Association
22 identified several factors that contributed to the
23 tragic fire, including the lack of fire sprinkler pro-
24 tection.

25 “(3) It is estimated that between 1980 and
26 1998, an average of 1,800 fires at dormitories, fra-

1 ternities, and sororities, involving 1 death, 70 inju-
2 ries, and \$8,000,000 in property damage were re-
3 ported to public fire departments.

4 “(4) Within dormitories, fraternities, and so-
5 rorities the number 1 cause of fires is arson or sus-
6 pected arson. The second leading cause of college
7 building fires is cooking, while the third leading
8 cause is smoking.

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

13 “(6) In 1998, 93 percent of the campus build-
14 ing fires reported to fire departments occurred in
15 buildings where there were smoke alarms present.
16 However, only 34 percent had fire sprinklers
17 present.

18 **“SEC. 773. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

19 “‘There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
20 this part \$80,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2004
21 through 2008.

22 **“SEC. 774. GRANTS AUTHORIZED.**

23 “(a) PROGRAM AUTHORITY.—The Secretary, in con-
24 sultation with the United States Fire Administration, is
25 authorized to award grants to States, private or public col-

1 leges or universities, fraternities, and sororities to assist
2 them in providing fire sprinkler systems, or other fire sup-
3 pression or prevention technologies, for their student hous-
4 ing and dormitories.

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

11 **“SEC. 775. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.**

12 “(a) APPLICATION.—Each entity desiring a grant
13 under this part shall submit to the Secretary an applica-
14 tion at such time and in such manner as the Secretary
15 may require.

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

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

1 **“SEC. 776. DATA AND REPORT.**

2 “The Comptroller General shall—

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

8 “(2) report such data to Congress.

9 **“SEC. 777. ADMISSIBILITY.**

10 “Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any ap-
11 plication for assistance under this part, any negative de-
12 termination on the part of the Secretary with respect to
13 such application, or any statement of reasons for the de-
14 termination, shall not be admissible as evidence in any
15 proceeding of any court, agency, board, or other entity.”.

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