King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Lampson
Latham
LaTourette
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
Mica
Michaud
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pence
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Sestak
Shadegg
Shays
Shuster
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Souder
Stearns
Sullivan
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—29

Bishop (UT)
Boyd (FL)
Carson
Carter
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Ellsworth
Gilchrest
Hastert
Holden
Hooley
Jindal
Johnson, Sam
Jones (OH)
McMorris Rodgers
Myrick
Pallone
Paul
Pearce
Pickering
Reichert
Royce
Sanchez, Loretta
Shimkus
Tancredo
Walsh (NY)
Watson
Weller
Young (AK)

□ 1111

Messrs. DEAL of Georgia, BAKER, McCARTHY of California, CALVERT and CAMPBELL of California changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

Messrs. KILDEE, GALLEGLY and TAYLOR changed their vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2669, COLLEGE COST REDUCTION AND ACCESS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on adoption of House Resolution 637, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 220, nays 185, not voting 27, as follows:

[Roll No. 861]

YEAS—220

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Barrow
Bean
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holt
Honda
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Kucinich
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Richardson
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NAYS—185

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Broun (GA)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gilchrest
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Kaptur
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
LaTourette
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pence
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Stearns
Sullivan
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—27

Boyd (FL)
Carson
Carter
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Davis, Lincoln
Ellsworth
Hastert
Holden
Hooley
Jindal
Johnson, Sam
Jones (OH)
Myrick
Pallone
Paul
Pearce
Pickering
Reichert
Royce
Sanchez, Loretta
Shimkus
Tancredo
Walsh (NY)
Watson
Weller
Young (AK)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised 2 minutes remain in this vote.

□ 1120

So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate agrees to the report of the committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 2669) ''An Act to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 601 of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2008.''.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2669, COLLEGE COST REDUCTION AND ACCESS ACT

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 637, I call up the conference report on the bill (H.R. 2669) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 601 of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2008.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. SOLIS). Pursuant to House Resolution 637, the conference report is considered read.

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of September 6, 2007 at page H10168.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE

MILLER) and the gentleman from California (Mr. MCKEON) will each control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER).

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of the conference report on H.R. 2669, the College Cost Reduction and Access Act, legislation that provides for cutting the interest rates on subsidized student loans from 6.8 to 3.4 percent over the next 5 years; that calls for the biggest increase in the Pell Grant in the history of the program, $1,000 new dollars over the next 5 years; that provides for an income-contingent payment plan where people will not have to pay more than 15 percent of their income on student loans; and if they go to public service, that loan can be forgiven for 10 years; and provides major support for the minority-serving institutions of this country. This is all done within the PAYGO rules because of the $20 billion in excessive subsidies that were being paid to lenders in this field, and so we comply with the Budget Act.

I rise in support of the conference report to H.R. 2669, the College Cost Reduction and Access Act.

Yesterday, we held a rally to highlight the benefits of this legislation for out nation's students and families. It is clear from listening to the students at the rally that one of the greatest challenges facing them today is the rising cost of college and high student loan debt.

With students returning to campuses, I can think of no better back to school gift than passing a bill that represents the greatest effort to help students and families pay for college since the GI Bill was passed more than fifty years ago. This is no ordinary gift. This is real money we are providing for students and families which translates into real relief.

As we have mentioned since the beginning of this process, these historic investments in education are being done in a fiscally responsible way. This conference report will fully comply with new House rules that require all federal spending to meet tough pay-as-you-go budget rules.

Additionally, the conference report will set aside $750 million in budget deficit reduction, demonstrating that with smart policy, we can be fiscally responsible and be responsive to the concerns of the American people. This conference agreement significantly increases the Pell Grant scholarship over the next five years to a maximum of $5,400. This investment—almost double the investment in the House bill, and the largest increase in the scholarship's history—will greatly restore the purchasing power of the scholarship for students with the most financial need, meet the President's 2008 budget request, and also address concerns raised by Mr. MCKEON during House consideration of this measure.

This agreement also: Cuts interest rates in half for need-based student loans from 6.8% to 3.4% over 4 years. When fully phased in it will save the typical student $4,400 over the life of the loan. This measure was overwhelmingly supported by this body in January; makes new investments in Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and other minority serving schools—to ensure that students will not only enter college, but remain and graduate; makes debt more manageable for students through an Income Based Repayment program; provides loan forgiveness and loan repayment options for those providing a public service; and ensures that we place a highly qualified teacher in every classroom through the creation of TEACH grants.

As mentioned before, this bill is fully paid for with cuts to lender subsidies.

It builds on proposals we passed in H.R. 5 and on proposals outlined by the President in his 2008 budget.

We believe the reasonable offsets in the final package meet our goal to ensure the continued participation by the lenders in the FFEL program as anticipated by the Congressional Budget Office. While a challenge, we believe this final package balances our commitment to minimizing the burden placed on lenders with our commitment to helping students.

As you can see, this conference agreement is a remarkable step forward in our efforts to help every qualified student go to college. This is a foundation we will continue to build on. As I mentioned at the conference meeting, I am committed to continuing these efforts when the House considers the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act this year.

Given that we have addressed many of the concerns raised by the Administration, I received confirmation yesterday from Secretary Spellings that the President is expected to sign the final bill.

I hope that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will follow the lead of the White House and the Senate—who overwhelmingly passed this legislation not too long ago—and vote in favor of this carefully crafted compromise.

Rather than stand between our nation's students and their ability to access much needed financial relief, I urge all members to vote in favor of the conference report on the College Cost Reduction and Access Act.

Today this body is voting to do what is right for students, our economy, and our nation's future. Together we are putting the American Dream back within reach of every family in this country.

Madam Speaker, I now yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT), the chairman of the Budget Committee.

Mr. SPRATT. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of the conference agreement on H.R. 2669. I am proud to say that this is a reconciliation bill which originated with the budget resolution for fiscal year 2008.

This is also a happy occasion where good policy for education is also good for the budget's bottom line. This bill will reduce the budget deficit. That's right, it will reduce the budget deficit over 5 years by $750 million at the same time that it invests in human capital and makes colleges more affordable for millions of students.

I am proud to see this outcome, proud to have gotten the ball rolling in the Budget Committee to start the process, and I commend the chairman who has taken this bill from January to September, passing it step by step through the House, through the Senate, conferencing it, in no small part due to the reconciliation status it enjoyed in the Senate, and I hope that the whole House will note the support that it has gotten. This is a solid, substantive bill for college students. I hope the conference report will pass handily in both Chambers and I hope the President will take note and sign this bill into law.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of the conference agreement on H.R. 2669, the College Cost Reduction and Access Act. I am proud to say that this is a reconciliation bill, which originated with the budget resolution for fiscal 2008. This is also a happy occasion where good policy is good for the budget's bottom line. This bill will reduce the budget deficit at the same time that it invests in human capital and helps make college more affordable for millions of students.

The conference agreement complies with our budget resolution for fiscal year 2008, which instructed the House Committee on Education and Labor to cut spending under its jurisdiction by $750 million by 2012. By passing this measure, the House maintains the tough pay-as-you-go rule and the rule barring reconciliation bills that increase the deficit, a rule the House instituted for the 110th Congress in January. These budget rules require Congress to make tough choices to meet priorities while restoring the budget to balance, and the House has insisted on enforcing these rules in every case.

This reconciliation bill is a stark contrast from those enacted by Republican-controlled Congresses. Every Republican reconciliation directive since 1994 has resulted in reconciliation packages consisting primarily of huge tax cuts that increased the deficit. In contrast, this reconciliation bill is better than budget-neutral; over fiscal years 2007 through 2012, it results in budgetary savings of $752 million.

In addition to making a net reduction in the deficit, this bill makes improvements in student loans and grants, paid for by cuts in subsidies to student loan lenders. It provides more than $20 billion in new resources to make college more affordable by lowering the cost of student loans or by increasing the grant available. For example, by 2012 the bill increases the maximum Pell grant to $5,400, a 33 percent increase over what the maximum grant was when the 110th Congress was sworn in. The bill also cuts by 50 percent the interest rate that students pay on subsidized student loans.

To offset the cost of these student benefits, the bill reduces subsidies that the government pays to banks. These reductions are similar to those in H.R. 5, which passed the House in January by a bipartisan vote of 356–71, and to the subsidy cuts in the President's 2008 budget proposal.

I commend the committee, and its able chairman, Mr. MILLER, for moving this bill step by step from January to September, passing it in the House and conferencing it. I hope that this bill will pass handily in both bodies, and I hope that the President will take note, and sign this bill into law immediately.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCKEON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I rise in opposition to this conference report which is the product of both a flawed policy and a flawed process.

The conference report was made available to Republicans for the first time less than 24 hours before it reached the Rules Committee. Unfortunately, that was just the latest in a series of disappointments we have endured throughout the process. But perhaps my greatest disappointment is the sinking reality that this conference agreement could have done more to help low-income students gain access to college. Instead, I fear we have squandered a tremendous opportunity.

College Cost Reduction, the name of this act, really is not a part of this bill. It is a huge spending bill. There is one element of this conference report worthy of praise, and I would like to begin there.

This conference agreement will invest approximately $11 billion in Pell Grants, which I believe are the single most effective tool to help open the doors of higher education to low-income students.

The gentleman from Florida (Mr. KELLER), the senior Republican of the Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness, deserves great credit for the Pell Grant increases that have been provided over the last several years. Mr. KELLER is a champion for the Pell Grant program, having founded the Congressional Pell Grant Caucus to advocate for this critical program. The recipient of a Pell Grant himself, Mr. KELLER has shined a spotlight on the importance of targeting the Federal investment in higher education to serve low-income students.

If I had been in the room when this agreement was reached, I would have preferred to invest even more in Pell Grants. In fact, I advocated a straightforward approach to reform that would have saved billions of dollars by making the student loan program more efficient and plowed those resources directly into Pell Grants. It is an approach that I continue to believe would have received strong bipartisan support in both the House and the Senate. Instead, the Democrats opted to jeopardize the stability of the Federal Financial Education Loan program by imposing excessive cuts, created an unnecessary complex and cumbersome auction scheme that will deny parents a choice of loan providers, imposed an impossible timeline for implementation that sets students up for confusion and program participants up for failure, and created massive new entitlement programs.

I harbor serious concerns about this conference report when it is simply taken at face value. Unfortunately, I fear that when we consider the long-term ramifications, these concerns grow much more serious.

First, the conference report creates new entitlement programs, but only provides short-term funding. Every single person in this room knows that once created, an entitlement will not die. That means in 5 years we will be forced to make additional cuts to fund these new entitlements.

□ 1130

Second, the conference report includes the misguided plan to temporarily reduce interest rates. What once was a campaign promise has become a trap that will ensnare either students or taxpayers, and possibly both. The plan would temporarily phase down interest rates over the next 4 years, and just as soon as the rate gets down to half the level it is today, as Democrats promised during the campaign, it will jump back to its current level. The choice then becomes whether we break the promise to students and allow the rates to rise or break the promise to taxpayers that this legislation is paid for and stick them with an additional 20 to $30 billion to pay for those cuts over the next 5 years.

The third consequence of this proposal, which I believe the majority has not considered, is the undue burden that will be caused by its hasty implementation. The conference report presumes that complex technological and service changes will be implemented in a matter of weeks. It seems almost inevitable that this unrealistic timeline will create chaos within these programs for students, program participants and the Department of Education.

And, finally, let me be perfectly clear. I have absolutely no confidence in the Department of Education's ability to implement the changes outlined in this conference report, particularly with the timeline it sets. It gives me no pleasure to point out this obvious fact, particularly in a Republican administration, but it's true, and sadly, we will all be watching this failure play out in the weeks, months and years ahead.

There's another issue that bears mentioning, and it's what this conference report unfortunately does not do. Despite its lofty name, this legislation does nothing at all to reduce the cost of college. It didn't have to be this way. In fact, the bill that passed the House contained provisions that I championed to make college cost increases more transparent to students and parents. These commonsense reforms were stripped away, leaving consumers with nothing.

The majority will tell you these college cost provisions were removed because they did not meet the stringent rules applied to a budget reconciliation package. That may well be true. If so, I consider it further proof that by abusing the reconciliation process we missed key opportunities to help students.

While this conference agreement is unmistakably a product of the Democratic Congress, I cannot help but express my disappointment in the administration for their role in this process. The fiscal year 2008 budget request proposed excessive cuts to the student loan programs, cuts that I believe may ultimately destabilize the largest source of Federal financial assistance. And when the bill left this House, the administration promised to veto the bill if some of these egregious measures were left in the bill. They are still there, and I now understand the President will sign the bill.

This conference agreement makes a significant investment in the Pell Grant Program. For that, I'm appreciative. I only wish it had done more. I wish that we could have seized upon the opportunity, worked together in a bipartisan fashion, and produced a conference report that lived up to its name.

Madam Speaker, I am deeply disappointed in the conference report we are considering and the process that was used to get here, and so I must oppose final passage.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I yield 1¼ minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) who has worked very hard on this legislation. Thank you for that.

Mr. EMANUEL. Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank my colleague from California for his leadership on this legislation. We will pass this legislation, and now the President's agreed to sign the most aggressive college student aid package since the GI bill 60 years ago. In an era where you earn what you learn, this bill will ensure that more Americans have access to a college education.

Today, the average student graduating from college graduates with $19,000 of debt. So, on graduation day, you get a diploma on one side and you get a $19,000 bill on the other side. This legislation will ensure that more and more Americans have the access to a college education. Not one of us would be here if it wasn't for the fact that we had had access to a college education and the ability to make something of ourselves.

This will ensure that middle-class families and their children do not suffer under the burden of the cost of rising costs of a college education.

I remember when I was running for office and I met a family in Chicago, Illinois. He was a police officer for 11 years. His wife was a teacher in a parochial school. They had two kids in high school, and they looked at me on their doorstep, and they had to make a decision: a third job among them, a second mortgage on their home, or burdening their children with $19,000 of additional debt.

This legislation ensures they are both good parents and their children have access to a great college education.

And I again want to compliment the leadership from my colleague Congressman MILLER for producing this legislation in such a speedy time.

Mr. McKEON. Madam Speaker, I am happy to yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from Indiana, a member of the committee, Mr. SOUDER.

Mr. SOUDER. Madam Speaker, I thank the distinguished ranking member, and I stand up in opposition to this bill, not because I don't want to control tuition costs. This bill doesn't control tuition costs. This is a fundamental disagreement about the direction of our government.

Do we believe in markets or do we believe in the Federal Government? This is a remnant of the battle where we moved from direct lending over to free-market lending, that this bill, in fact, does nothing to control costs. Inevitably it will lead to the government taking over in direct lending and government having to try to fix costs of lending and then to fix the tuition costs, because there's nothing in here that balances tuition costs.

Previously, students and parents, if they had to factor in rising tuition costs and they couldn't get affordable loans, the pressure of the market would come on universities and colleges and alternative forums, and the market would respond, but this bill releases the market pressure.

Furthermore, in this bill there are other things that, instead of putting the money for those students who are highest risk and have the least income in Pell Grants, we've expanded into the middle class where the only hopeful pressure for tuition costs would come from. Students who could achieve academic scholarship in most universities can get into the highest universities if they can achieve the scholarship level. Let's look at this debate where it really is. It's in the middle class. It's about does the private sector manage loans better than the public sector and how does that triangle work with the universities.

For example, under private sector lending, bad debts have gone down. Why? Because you get financial counseling. There's a private sector incentive to make a profit that results in counseling of saying, will your degree match up your ability to repay or we won't give you the loan. They also put the pressure on the institutions, even with a small portion of the student loan being actual private sector.

But there's a provision in this bill, and I don't use this in a pejorative term, I use it in actual dictionary term, is the most socialist provision that I have seen in a bill, and it's the income-based repayment plan. It says that you only take 15 percent of your discretionary income to repay the interest, which then gets capitalized into the capital. Let me use my own personal example.

My father, we came from a nice middle-class family but middle class at best, in retailing. My dad told me he would either pay my way through grad school or undergrad. If I wanted to go to grad school, the college of my choice, he had saved a certain amount of money. I would have to live at home and go undergraduate. I got a great education at Indiana Purdue University in Fort Wayne, and then went to the University of Notre Dame. My father would have had no incentive under this bill to do so because in furniture retailing, followed by being a congressional staffer, I did not make enough money that I could have repaid my loan to Notre Dame or my undergraduate loan, and I would have had that loan excused at 25 years. I would have never paid, probably based on my salary, based on inflation adjustment, not a dime on the principal. There would have been no market management on my dad to save the money or on me.

This bill, by undermining both the lending premise of the private sector and the personal responsibility of parents and students to balance this, is a purist government takeover of a project that will not reduce the cost of student loans but will expand the power of government and the inefficiencies of government and ultimately damage students of America.

No matter how good and tempting it sounds, no matter what the campaign commercials sound like, it is a terrible, terrible bill.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA), who is the subcommittee Chair of the Higher Education Subcommittee and who has just been so instrumental in the success of this legislation.

(Mr. HINOJOSA asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HINOJOSA. Madam Speaker, I strongly urge all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this conference report.

Today, the payoff for investing in education is even greater and the stakes are higher. The College Cost Reduction and Access Act will open the doors of higher ed to a new generation of students. This is our moment to take a stand for our future competitiveness and prosperity. Investment in Pell Grants is increased significantly.

It supports college success for first generation, low-income students by dedicating additional resources to Upward Bound and College Access Challenge grants. It invests in our public servants and in our teachers.

I am particularly proud of our work to strengthen the institutions that are the gateway of access to higher ed for minority students.

Through this legislation, we will increase funding over several years by $510 million in HSIs, HBCUs, tribal colleges, Native Hawaiian institutions and newly designated predominantly black institutions, as well as institutions serving Asian Americans.

I commend Chairman MILLER, Senator KENNEDY and all my House colleagues on both sides of the aisle on the Education and Labor Committee for their hard work and leadership in crafting the College Cost Reduction and Access Act. It has been my privilege to work on this legislation.

This conference report has already been passed in the Senate, and I'm very happy about that. I urge my colleagues to support this conference report.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this conference report. H.R. 2669, the College Cost Reduction and Access Act, represents the largest investment in college access since the GI bill. Over the next 5 years, we will increase our federal support for higher education by $20 billion. This is a once in a generation opportunity.

I can still remember when, college was not even in the realm of possibility for people who came from communities like mine. That was until the GI bill opened our college campuses to our returning veterans—rich, poor, black, Hispanic—they all had a shot at the American Dream of a college education. Our nation became smarter, stronger and richer as a result of this egalitarian investment in education.

Today, the pay off for investing in education is even greater and the stakes are higher. The College Cost Reduction and Access Act will open the doors of higher education to a new generation of students. This is our moment to take a stand for our future competitiveness and prosperity. Investment in "Pell Grants" is increased significantly! The College Cost Reduction and Access Act is a strategic package of investments to expand higher education opportunities. It guarantees a minimum increase of $1090 in the maximum Pell grant over the next 5 years—reversing the last five years of stagnant funding.

It supports college success for first-generation, low-income students by dedicating additional resources to Upward Bound and College Access Challenge grants. It invests in our public servants and in our teachers.

I am particularly proud of our work to strengthen the institutions that are the gateways of access to higher education for minority students. Through this legislation, we will increase funding over several years by $510 million dollars in HSIs, HBCUs, tribal colleges; Native Hawaiian Institutions, and newly designated predominantly Black Institutions; and Institutions serving Asian Americans.

Some on the other side will say that we are investing in institutions at the expense of students. This argument reflects a fundamental lack of understanding of the communities that will fuel the growth in our workforce and the need to develop their capacity to provide higher education opportunities.

The 2007 Condition of Education reports that 42 percent of our public school children are racial or ethnic minorities—one in five is Hispanic. HSIs, HBCUs, and other minority-serving institutions are only going to grow in their importance for ensuring that our nation continues to have enough college graduates to fill the jobs in our knowledge-based economy. They are a worthy investment.

I commend Chairman MILLER, Senator KENNEDY and all of my House colleagues on the Education and Labor Committee for their hard work and leadership in crafting the "College Cost Reduction and Access Act". It has been my privilege to work on this legislation. This conference report has already passed in the Senate!

I urge my colleagues to support this conference report.

Mr. MCKEON. Madam Speaker, I am happy to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA).

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for yielding.

I come to the floor today opposed to this bill. This budget reconciliation conference report before us today creates five new entitlement programs and abuses the protection of the reconciliation procedures.

A number of programs that were a part of discretionary spending, that depended as to whether the money was available in the budget or not and whether we had the money available to fund those programs, determined exactly how much money would be spent on those programs, but now they will be moved into entitlement status. More money, rather than going through a process where we review the spending every year, is on automatic pilot. And sure, the bill says that these programs will sunset, but those of us that have been here for a while know that entitlement programs never sunset. They just grow larger and larger and larger. And the Federal Government and this Congress loses control over that spending.

The discussion about the student loan interest, cutting it in half, it goes down and scales down over a period of 4 or 5 years and in the 5th year it comes back to its full amount. Why? Because we can't afford it or the other side hasn't been able to find the 20 to $30 billion that's estimated would actually be necessary to continue this program in the past. Will they find it in the future? Probably. It will be called deficit spending.

This bill is a massive attack on the private sector. There are significant increases in new Federal mandatory spending. It grows government one more time. It puts the Federal Government in control of more parts of the education sector, the education process, squeezing out the private sector, squeezing out parents and inserting big brother and big government in the process.

But under this administration, when it comes to education, why am I not surprised that we're talking about more government and less parental involvement?

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS).

(Mr. ANDREWS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ANDREWS. Madam Speaker, I thank and congratulate my chairman and friend for this excellent piece of work.

When middle-class people, when police officers and real estate agents and computer programmers sit down to fill out the forms at the kitchen table and apply for financial aid, they end the process very frustrated because they quickly conclude there's nothing in there for them. After hours and hours of putting their tax returns forward, filling out forms, there's nothing in the financial aid laws for middle-class people. That's the way people feel.

This bill changes that. For the first time in a long time, there is aid to middle-class students under this bill, and here's the way it works.

□ 1145

When your son or daughter borrows money, and we wish there were less borrowing and more scholarships, but the reality is, given the fiscal constraints we have, there is going to be borrowing. When your son or daughter borrows money, their repayment of that loan will rise as their income does. So when they are new, they have their first apartment, their first car payment, other issues in their life, their payments will be low. But as their incomes rise, their payments will rise to pay their loans back.

This is a loan repayment program that works the way life does. You start out with a low income and a lot of obligations, and hopefully your income grows. When it does, your payments do; but if it doesn't, then your payments stay reasonable.

This is the way life works. This is the way the student loan program ought to work, and I commend the chairman for his leadership in making this happen and urge a ''yes'' vote for this bill.

Mr. MCKEON. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE), a member of the committee.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I thank my good friend from California for his wonderful and diligent work in this area, an area that we ought to have had a bipartisan bill.

Madam Speaker, this bill is interesting and a curious work product of this House, one that I believe will be troubling to the Nation. What the Democrat majority has done is brought together the ingredients in a huge recipe for bad policy.

So far, the new majority has kept the Republicans out of the process. Not a single House Republican, not one, was involved in the conference committee report or signed it. They have manipulated the recommendations of the administration to serve their ulterior motives, and they have disregarded input from key stakeholders and students and parents across this Nation.

As a result of this recipe, the Congress has a final product that distorts the reconciliation and puts at risk expanding college access for students over the long term.

We predicted, during the debate of the budget resolution, that the ''savings,'' ''savings'' in the reconciliation process were a fig leaf. Today the House is debating a bill which spends nearly $22 billion more in new entitlement spending just to get $750 million in savings. That's fuzzy math.

Fact, entitlement growth, automatic spending is unsustainable and consumes more than half the entire Federal budget. It is also fact that if left on autopilot, by 2030 that automatic spending will consume the entire Federal budget.

Without true spending reform, entitlements will crowd out all other spending. This bill, H.R. 2669, makes a major mistake of magnifying the problem by adding new entitlement monies.

In fact, the conference agreement dedicates $1.17 billion to new automatic spending programs. At a time of run-away spending, the Democratic majority is intent on creating these massive new spending programs instead of dedicating the savings to deficit reduction. Such an approach continues us down the path to fiscal irresponsibility.

Now, all of that might be okay if, if the changes offered would truly help students, but they don't. The Democrats have decided to favor a Washington-run bureaucrat student-lending system rather than a flexible, responsive free market alternative. This bill cuts over $22 billion in the Federal Family Education Loan program. The only conceivable reason to do that is to paralyze it and put it at a disadvantage to the direct government loan program or Washington-run program.

This is unfortunate because that Federal Family Education Loan program has proven to be far more successful, does a better job of providing student loans. This is reflected in the fact that for nearly every government loan, there are four loans by the Federal Family Education Loan.

In the end, Democrats want to cripple this program because they favor a centralized governmental approach to this Nation's challenges. All these drastic cuts do is put at risk the need for students and the access that they will have to a college education over time.

For these reasons, I strongly urge my colleagues to oppose the bill on the floor.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCKEON. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the Republican leader, former chairman of the Education and Workforce Committee, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER).

Mr. BOEHNER. I thank my colleague for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I express my disappointment in having to oppose the gentleman's bill.

I know Members on both sides of the aisle have worked hard over the last few years, including efforts on my own behalf when I was chairman of the Education and Workforce Committee, to help make college more affordable for more of America's students.

Most of us wouldn't be here had it not been for a chance at a decent education and a college education to allow us the opportunity to be all that we can be here in America.

I think all of us agree that we want these opportunities for all students.

That's why 18 months ago, when we passed the Deficit Reduction Act, we fundamentally reformed the college loan system and saved some $16 billion.

In that same bill we offered benefits for students, low-income students who would enter into an agreement to study math and science at 4-year institutions. I thought this was a sound bill, and we made sound efforts.

When I look at the bill before us, there are a number of concerns that I have. First is that the cuts to the private sector loan program that are involved in this bill, I think, will cripple the private sector loan program.

When you look at what the private sector has brought to students and their parents across the country, they have brought a lot of innovation. They have brought new ideas, new techniques to help more students and their families be able to afford a college education.

To cripple that, in my view, is an effort to drive more of those families and students to the direct loan program, this government-run program that, in my view, is misguided. I didn't support it, as my friend from California well knows, didn't support it when it happened some 16 years ago.

As we look at the direct loan program, it looked like a government-run program, with very few benefits for students and, clearly, not very cost-effective as well. That's my first concern.

My second concern is that we all around here, over the 17 years that I have been here, pledged fiscal responsibility. We have got to be careful about how we spend the taxpayers' funds.

When we look at the bill before us, we create five new entitlement programs. These are the programs that get put on automatic pilot. While they may be paid for here in the first 4 or 5 years, some of the provisions in this bill will cost 10 to $20 billion over the next 10 years that's not paid for. That's according to the CBO.

While we pledge fiscal responsibility, at the end of the day, we have to stand up and do it. You know, the American people send us here to make decisions on their behalf, and fiscal decisions on their behalf.

We ought to make those real decisions. But when you look at the real long-term cost of this program, I think it's not paid for, it's fiscally irresponsible. At a time when we are trying to balance the Federal budget, this is a step in the wrong direction.

I applaud my colleague from California, the chairman of the committee and my friend. We have worked together for a long time on these issues. I applaud him for his tenacity in putting this bill together.

There is no surprise to him nor me that we would disagree about the benefits of this bill. He sees his glass as half full; I see it as half empty. I really see it empty when it comes to the issue of being fiscally responsible and standing up to do the right things that the American people sent us here to do.

I would ask my colleagues, these are the hard decisions, well-meaning bill, well meaning, well intentioned, but, long term, I think it's a real mistake for students and taxpayers here in America.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCKEON. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Utah, a member of the committee, Mr. BISHOP.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. I thank the ranking member from California.

Madam Speaker, I stand, I guess, to oppose the reconciliation bill that doesn't reconcile much. In this particular bill, it encourages direct loan programs, programs that are paid for and controlled by the Federal Government, and whether intentionally or not, a tax to discourage programs like FFEL, which are public-private partnerships where the government actually provides funds, but they are not administered by the government.

In a clumsy way of verbiage, by lumping not-for-profit programs, and not-for-profit program lenders in the same category as for-profit lenders, it creates an unintended consequence that does harm to college students in my State.

My State has a higher education authority program. It's a not-for-profit-program administered by the State that provides students who have loans under this program with deductions. It's 1¼ percent automatic deduction if you have an automatic payment program. It's a 2 percent deduction on the rate after 48 consecutive payments have been on time, which means for a kid on this program on a standard $15,000 Stafford loan, he could actually save $2,000 over the cost of that loan and over what would happen in a direct pay program. Perhaps I am a little bit sensitive to this because I still have four kids in college, and I know what the expense of college actually means.

In this reconciliation bill, by lumping the not-for-profit programs with profit programs, the margins that they have in these not-for-profit programs are so small that these deductions will no longer be available, if, indeed, the program can survive by itself.

It will force students in my State either to pay the full government rate without any deductions or go to the full rate of a for-profit lender.

I know the intention of this bill is not to hurt kids. The intention of this bill is perhaps to rid FFEL programs; but in so doing, it actually does, in fact, hurt real kids who have programs right now or who may be having programs in the future.

Oftentimes when we fiddle around education, we have unintended consequences; but our actions here, because it is at such a gross level, have unintended consequences of hurting real live people. This bill does that. Not intentionally, but it still does that.

It would have been far better for us to do the program that the ranking member was always talking about, encouraging and expanding Pell Grants. That would do more to help kids than all the other restructuring we are doing in this particular reconciliation bill.

For those reasons, because it does hurt kids in my State, I have to oppose the reconciliation bill.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCKEON. I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. RYAN), the ranking member on the Budget Committee.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to this bill, and I choose my words carefully when I say this, but this bill really, in my opinion, is a cynical attempt to make a campaign promise good. When I say that, I mean it's three things: number one, in the guise of budget reconciliation, the reason this bill is here so quickly to the floor, through conference so fast, out of the other body is they brought it to the floor through budget reconciliation.

What is budget reconciliation? It's a way of reducing the deficit, $752 million of savings for over $20 billion of spending. That's a cynical attempt to exploit the budget deficit reduction process to create a brand-new government program and an avalanche of new spending.

Why else is it cynical? It cuts student rates in half for 6 months, and then it doubles it 6 months later to try and shoehorn this bill into compliance with the majority's PAYGO. To try and say that they are paying for this bill, they give students, graduates, not students, graduates a cut in their interest rates for 6 months in half and then double it 6 months later.

It also, cynically, creates five new entitlement programs. What are entitlement programs? Entitlement programs are spending programs that go on autopilot. It has sunsets in these programs, but the most permanent thing in Washington is a temporary government program, especially a temporary entitlement program.

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Take all this together, and assume that Congress, down the road, will not eliminate these five new entitlement programs once they've been established. Assume they won't just cut interest rates for graduates for only 6 months, but for longer, and you've got another 20 to $30 billion of spending out the door.

And lastly, Madam Speaker, this takes from the private sector and gives to the government. This puts onto the taxpayers' liability these liabilities. This says, instead of private firms that are out there processing loans right now that worked really well, my student loans came from these sources, this says, no, we want the taxpayer to bear the burden. We want the taxpayer to be on the hook for these loans if they default.

Look, we have problems with loans all over. We have this meltdown in the mortgage markets with sub-prime loans, and we're saying, now, in Congress, let's put more liability on the taxpayer books? If it ain't broken, don't fix it. We have a system that works well. We have a system that helps students.

This bill does nothing to address the high cost of tuition. It cynically attempts to make it appear as though it makes borrowing a little less expensive for people after they graduate, and then it doubles the interest rate 6 months later.

For all of those reasons, Madam Speaker, the abuse of the budget reconciliation process, the increase of taxpayer liability, and the creation, irresponsibly, of five new entitlement programs, when three current entitlement programs right now are bringing us into a mountain of debt, a mountain, a legacy of debt to our children and grandchildren, the last thing we ought to do is create five new entitlement programs.

For all those reasons, I urge a ''no'' vote, Madam Speaker.

Mr. MCKEON. Madam Speaker, I am happy now to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. KELLER), the subcommittee ranking member on the higher education portion of the Education Committee.

Mr. KELLER of Florida. Madam Speaker, I'm going to limit my comments to the Pell Grant portion of this legislation.

I'm honored to serve as the ranking member on the Higher Education Subcommittee. I used to be the chairman of this committee before the change in Congress, but I still have the honor of serving as the chairman and founder of the Pell Grant Caucus.

Pell Grants are money we give to children from low- and moderate-income families to help them go to college. I, myself, would not have been able to go to college if it wasn't for Pell Grants. Pell Grants are truly the passport out of poverty for many worthy young people.

We believe, in a bipartisan manner, that all children, rich or poor, deserve the opportunity to go to college through Pell Grants. When this College Cost Reduction Act was initially presented in the House, I felt that it spent too much money on new entitlement programs and too little on Pell Grants. For example, it had an increase of $5.8 billion. I was honored to serve on the conference committee. I made those comments during our conference committee. And the conference committee decided to increase the Pell Grant funding from $5.8 billion to $11.4 billion, doubling what was in the original House bill.

What does that mean for young people going to college? That means the maximum award is now going to go from $4,310 to $5,400, phased in over time.

Whatever one may think of the rest of the provisions, pro or con, I have to tell you that is an outstanding provision in terms of a Pell Grant increase.

Now, some of my Republican colleagues may say that we're investing several billion dollars in Pell Grants and is that a wise use of money. I can tell you that these Pell Grant increases pay for themselves. The nonpartisan Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance said that by investing $13 billion in Pell Grants, it helps yield up to $85 billion in additional tax revenue. The reason is the average college graduate makes 75 percent more than the average high school graduate. So it's good for the treasury. It's good for our young people, and it's good for employment rates in this country.

I want to congratulate and thank Congressman MILLER, Congressman HINOJOSA and Congressman MCKEON for all their work in substantially increasing Pell Grants. Those provisions make it much easier for young people to be able to go to college.

Mr. MCKEON. May I inquire as to the time remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 5 minutes remaining. Mr. MILLER has 23¾ minutes remaining.

Mr. MCKEON. Is there any way we could prevail upon the chairman to give us 1 or 2 of his 23½ minutes?

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. I'm under very strict guidelines here from the leadership.

Mr. MCKEON. Just 2 minutes? Could we ask unanimous consent that we each get 2 extra minutes? I would love to hear you for 25.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. I'm not going to use my time, but I'm under very strict confines here with my leadership. I've asked members of my committee not to speak, so I can't be yielding time when I didn't give it to the members of my committee. I'm sorry. I don't want to be put in that position.

Mr. MCKEON. Madam Speaker, I'm happy now to yield 2 minutes to the gentlelady from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX), a member of the committee.

Ms. FOXX. Madam Speaker, this bill does absolutely nothing to improve access to a college education. It's a sham. It's another move toward socialism and taking away personal responsibility in our country.

I probably have the most experience in this area of anybody in Congress. I worked my way through college, through an undergraduate and doctoral programs without any loans whatsoever. It can be done. It is not necessary for people to borrow $19,000 a year to go to college or come out with that kind of a debt.

I've served in the field of education. I've been a school board member, higher education administration. I've directed Upward Bound special services programs, and I know what it's like to have, to be operating these programs. We have absolutely no accountability in the programs that we are passing here, and we need to be doing that.

The American people want significant and strong education, but they do not want to see us wasting money like we're wasting here. This is called the College Cost Reduction Act. It does absolutely nothing to reduce the cost of going to college. But it starts out a long list of complex new entitlement programs, and my colleagues have spoken very, very eloquently about that.

We still are going to have college students stuck with college costs that are going up every week because the Federal Government is involved. We're doing nothing to help the Federal Work-Study Program, which has been one of the most successful programs that the Federal Government has ever gotten into.

I can't support a bill that raises the cost of going to college instead of lowering the cost of going to college. This is going to make it even more complicated to do financial aid regulations, even though we're reducing the size of the form. What we need is a workable Federal financial aid system that helps students get a high quality education. But this bill falls far short of that standard by shifting Federal money to the institutions and to loan relief for college grads.

Mr. MCKEON. Madam Speaker, I'm happy to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND).

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Madam Speaker, Mr. RYAN from Wisconsin said all the relevant fiscal things that I wanted to say, so I want to say this. This is more smoke and mirrors. This has been a smoke-and-mirrors Congress, and this is more smoke and mirrors because it is an illusion that we're trying to sell to the American people. But they've done a good job because evidently they have sold this to the administration.

And I want to say, Madam Speaker, I am totally disappointed in the administration that they have bought this bill of goods. This is nothing but a sham.

I'm from the State of Georgia where we instituted the HOPE Scholarship Program, which worked out great for students. But what ended up happening is the colleges continued to go up on their tuition, costing the taxpayers more and more money because it was not a competitive market anymore. That's what we're fixing to get into colleges and universities all across this country. And taking the private industry out of this, making them responsible for the loans is going to put the taxpayers on the hook. It's going to be a great disaster. And again, I want the administration to know, Madam Speaker, how disappointed I am.

Mr. MCKEON. Madam Speaker, we've, I think, heard some very good things about this bill. I've been on this committee now for 15 years since I came to Congress. I've had great concerns about people that are not able to go to college. We've seen statistics that show that 48 percent of young people from lower-income families are not able to attend college because of the cost of college. I have introduced legislation. I've done what I could to try to reduce the cost of college.

This bill is called the Cost Reduction Act. It does nothing to reduce the cost of college. It gives money to schools, which we haven't done in the past. We've given the money to individual students and let them pick the school that they've gone to. It does increase the money to Pell Grants, and I appreciate that.

During the time that I was Chair of the Higher Education Subcommittee and the time that we've been in the majority, we've doubled the money going into Pell Grants, and we have a million and a half students, now, more that are receiving Pell Grants than before. And that's good.

But the thing about this bill that really bothers me, I guess, is the promise it holds out to students that they're never going to receive. It reminds me of a TV contest, game contest that I've seen in the past that showed three curtains or three doors, and you tried to pick the door that had the great prize. And my concern is that these students are going to start school with the idea that their interest is going to be cheaper 4 years, 5 years from now when they graduate, and they're going to find that it's not. There's a promise there that when they open that door they're going to find a huge tax burden. They're going to find huge loan burdens.

And what we should be working on in a cost reduction bill is something that actually addresses what we can do to lower the cost of a college education, not the loan interest. What we should really be trying to do is address the core problem, the cost. College cost has been going up four times faster than people's ability to pay for the last 20 years. We should be addressing that problem. We should oppose this bill.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the chairman of our subcommittee, RUBÉN HINOJOSA, and all of the members of the conference committee for their valuable contributions to this legislation.

I would also like to thank Chairman SPRATT, who spoke earlier, for providing the reconciliation process, and all of the work that their staff did to make sure that we complied with the reconciliation process and we complied with the PAYGO rules so that there would be no new costs to this legislation to provide these benefits to students and to their families. And I want to thank his staff, Tom Kahn and Sarah Abernathy and Lisa Venus.

I would also like to thank Senator KENNEDY and Senator ENZI for their help and their staffs' work with us to have a successful conference and a conference report on this act.

And I'd like to thank the Education and Labor Committee staff, Mark Zuckerman, Alex Nock, Stephanie Moore, Denise Forte, Gaby Gomez, Julie Radocchia, Jeff Appel, Rachel Racusen, Lisette Partelow, Lamont Ivey, Sarah Dyson, Ricardo Martinez and Moira Lenehan of Representative HINOJOSA's staff.

This work could not have happened without the long hours put in by a very diligent, committed legislative counsel, and I want to thank Steve Cope and Molly Lothamer.

Given that we must balance our numbers, we appreciate the significance of work provided by the staff at the Congressional Budget Office, including Paul Cullinan, Debb Kalcevic and Justin Humphrey.

The Congressional Research Service has been particularly supportive of our efforts, in particular, Adam Stoll, Charmaine Mercer, David Smole, Becky Skinner and Jeff Kuenzi.

I want to thank all of these individuals, and certainly I want to thank the students who, for so many years have tried to get the Congress to respond to their needs and to the needs of their families if they have to borrow money to go to school, to go to school and to achieve a higher education, to achieve the education that that provides.

I certainly want to thank USPIRG and the United States Student Association and many others who worked so hard over these past years.

We remember just a year ago, just a year ago we were here in the reconciliation process when $11.9 billion was taken out of this very same account, but rather than to use it for the benefit of the students, that $11.9 billion went to pay for the tax cuts to the wealthiest people in this country.

We took $11.39 billion out of this same account and we gave that to the Pell Grant students, to the most needy students in this country who need it the most. That's the difference that an election makes. That's the difference that a year makes. That's the difference that a lot of hard work by the students across this country and their families have made as they've asked Members of Congress to address this issue.

This legislation, just earlier today, passed in the Senate by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 79–12.

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It has now been stated that the President of the United States supports this legislation and will sign this legislation.

I would hope that all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle would understand the importance of this legislation, the value of this legislation to our students and to their families as we know so many of them struggle to put together the means by which they can pay for the college education of the students. One of the very great moments in a parent's life is when a student gets accepted into college, the students announce they want to go to college, and then you immediately start to think about how we are going to pay for this.

This legislation will make it a lot easier for a lot of parents and a lot of students who desperately need this help.

I ask all of my colleagues to support the conference report and let's join this bipartisan coalition and help America's families and students. I thank everybody for their cooperation.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of H.R. 2669. Since my arrival in Congress, I have worked to support initiatives that would expand access to higher education for all students, regardless of disability, background or economic circumstances. Need-based federal student aid programs have leveled the playing field for so many students, yet in recent years the purchasing power offered by a Pell grant has dwindled. Meanwhile, college education costs have soared, and more and more students struggling to keep up with loan repayments have found themselves locked into high interest rates and unable to consolidate their debt. Others have seen their dreams of higher education go unrealized, due to concerns about how they could possibly pay for it.

Today, Congress takes a meaningful step to address these issues. The College Cost Reduction Act, the single largest investment in education since the GI bill, will cut interest rates in half on subsidized student loans over the next four years, make student debt more manageable for those facing economic hardship and increase the purchasing power of the Pell grant. Additionally, this bill will encourage and reward public service by offering loan forgiveness and repayment of our most dedicated military service members, nurses, early childhood educators and others who take on some of the most needed and challenging—but not the most lucrative—professions. In the battle to improve access to affordable education, the passage of the College Cost Reduction Act is a tremendous victory.

I strongly believe that the passage of this bill into law will make America stronger. While our Nation certainly faces challenging times of war and economic hardships, we should take tremendous hope and pride in the investments that Congress is making in the future by expanding access to higher education. I am proud to support this legislation and urge my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 2669.

Mr. HARE. Mr. Speaker, as a Member of the Education and Labor Committee, I rise today in strong support of the College Cost Reduction and Access Act—the single largest investment in college financial aid since the 1944 GI bill.

Working families in Illinois and around the Nation continue to struggle with the rising costs of college. This historic investment in higher education will begin to put a college degree back in reach for millions of average Americans, and do so at no new cost to U.S. taxpayers.

The College Cost Reduction and Access Act would make need-based student loans more easily accessible and provide for additional mandatory funding for the Pell grant scholarship by at least $1,090 over the next 5 years, benefiting nearly 230,000 students in Illinois, including over 22,000 newly eligible beneficiaries. Illinois students and their families will receive more than $1.2 billion over 5 years in the form of student loans and Pell grants as a result of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this bill includes a provision to cut the interest rate on subsidized student loans in half over the next 5 years—from 6.8 percent to 3.4 percent, benefiting 128,765 student borrowers in Illinois. Once fully phased in, it would save the average 4-year college student, who begins school in 2011, $4,510 over the life of his or her loan.

The College Cost Reduction and Access Act pays for itself by reducing excessive Federal subsidies paid to lenders in the college loan industry by $20 billion. In the current budget-tight environment, the Federal Government should not be over-funding lenders while families struggle to send their kids to college.

Making college more affordable and accessible for working families is good for our economy, national security, and competitiveness in the world. I was proud to play a role in crafting this landmark legislation from the very beginning and I am honored to vote for its passage today. I urge my colleagues to join me in making college more affordable for our students and urge the President to sign this bill into law.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Mr. Speaker, I strongly support the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007. This important legislation will provide thousands of Iowa's students and families with the financial support they need to attend college by increasing the purchasing power of the Pell grant. Next year the scholarship will increase by $490 and by 2012 the grant will reach $5,400.

The bill also provides upfront tuition assistance and makes it easier for students who pursue careers as public school teachers. In Iowa, 36 percent of students who attend pubic 4-year schools graduate with unmanageable debt levels if they choose to take a teaching job in the State.

As a college teacher in Iowa I regularly encountered students struggling to afford their education, and I'm certain that this bill makes the right investments at a critical time for our students. I urge my colleagues to support this bill and strongly support its passage.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the Conference Report on H.R. 2669. As the father of three college graduates and a college sophomore, I am all too familiar with the financial burden higher education poses on families and students.

As lawmakers, our number one higher education priority should be to ensure that college is affordable for any student. Instead of helping students, the conference agreement would require student borrowers to pay thousands more for a college education.

The conference agreement does not contain any language to address the issue of rising college costs. Instead of holding colleges and universities accountable for how they spend taxpayer dollars, the agreement does the exact opposite and throws additional Federal funds at institutions while denying new information to consumers.

The most appalling aspect of this agreement is that it achieves minimal deficit reduction. The conference agreement only produces $750 million for deficit reduction, even though the bill cuts $22.3 billion from the student loan program. Last year, President Bush signed into law a Republican reconciliation measure that achieved a full $12 billion in deficit reduction while increasing benefits for students.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this agreement and encourage President Bush to veto this legislation if it comes to his desk.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2669 the College Cost Reduction Act. I would like to thank Chairman MILLER and his staff for this bill that will provide New Jersey residents an additional $262 Million in loan and Pell grant aid.

Once signed into law, this legislation will ensure that more Federal student aid money gets to the students who need it, and in New Jersey, the need is great. Over 61,000 students in New Jersey take out need-based loans for 4-year schools each year and incur an average of over $14,000 in debt. Under the legislation, the maximum value of the Pell grant scholarship would increase by $1,090 over the next 5 years, reaching $5,400 by 2012. This increase would fully restore the purchasing power of the scholarship, which in recent years had been frozen at $4,050 until Congress boosted its value to $4,310 earlier this year.

I am pleased that the committee included several initiatives that I have been working on, including provisions from my bill H.R. 2017, the Part-time Student Assistance Act. We have raised the income protection allowance in the College Cost Reduction Act so that working students can work more without having that count against their student aid. Further, we were able to eliminate the earned income tax credit from calculations so that working families do not have to bear this burden.

The bill also provides upfront grant aid for those who are becoming math, science, and foreign language teachers. The bill would create grants providing upfront pre-paid tuition assistance of $4,000 per year with a maximum of $16,000 for elementary or secondary school math and science teachers and critical foreign language teachers. Our classrooms have an increasing shortage of teachers for these vital subjects. This problem is most severe in school districts were students come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Without qualified teachers in these areas, we are endangering the competitiveness of our children in the global economy.

Students who take out loans or receive Pell grants will now find it easier to finance their education. By investing in foreign language and math and science education, we'll enhance both our economic and national security. Part-time students will have an easier time balancing the need to care for their families and improve their education. This is public policy at its best—it lifts up Americans from all walks of life.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is an investment in our future. Without providing access to a college education we will not be able to compete with nations that have already made the investments in providing a quality education for their own children. The United States is a dominant world economy because of our educated workforce. With this bill we will take a larger step toward maintaining this edge and I ask my colleagues to support it.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, there are a few provisions in H.R. 2669 that I believe are very important to students and parents across the country.

I support the increases in Pell Grants and cuts to interest rates on federally subsidized student loans provided in H.R. 2669. These provisions are the most effective way we can help low and middle income students achieve the dream of a college education, and I am pleased this bill will provide relief for those students.

I am also pleased that the final bill includes a small but very important provision that is similar to legislation I have introduced, the FAFSA Fix for Homeless Kids Act.

The current Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, creates insurmountable barriers for unaccompanied homeless youth—youth that are homeless and alone. These children do not receive financial support from their parents, and many do not have access to parental financial information or a parental signature required by the FAFSA. As a result, unaccompanied homeless youth are prevented from accessing the financial aid they need because they cannot supply the information required by the FAFSA.

The FAFSA Fix for Homeless Kids Act addresses these barriers by allowing unaccompanied homeless youth to apply for federal financial aid without providing parental income information or a parent signature. This will open the doors of higher education to some of our nation's most vulnerable youth, and I am pleased that H.R. 2669 includes the FAFSA Fix for Homeless Kids Act.

While I am encouraged that H.R. 2669 includes these provisions, I still have serious concerns about a number of other provisions in the bill. Specifically, I oppose the mandatory spending in the bill that is directed at institutions and philanthropic organizations. It is unprecedented to provide mandatory spending to these organizations. Instead of creating new and complicated programs, we should have provided additional funding to Pell Grants.

I also have concerns about the viability of the Federal Family Education Loan Program. During the last Congress, the Education and the Workforce Committee made $20 billion in changes to the Federal Family Education Loan Program by eliminating and reducing federal subsidies to lenders. Just two years later—certainly not long enough to evaluate the impact of those changes—we are back again squeezing student loan lenders. Does the Democratic leadership expect lenders to continue offering student loans out of the goodness of their hearts? This program is essential to the students and families in my district, and I hope that this legislation is not a back-door attempt to kill the Federal Family Education Loan Program.

I support H.R. 2669 because of the additional funding provided for Pell Grants, the decrease in student loan interest rates, and the hope it will give to unaccompanied homeless youth. However, I have serious concerns about the mandatory spending created in H.R. 2669 and the viability of the Federal Family Education Loan Program. I hope that in the future that we can work in a more inclusive manner to address the skyrocketing costs of college without adding to the deficit that students we are trying to help will eventually have to repay.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this important legislation to reduce the costs of college for low-income and middle class families. I urge my colleagues to join me in voting to pass it.

As the first member of my family to graduate from college, I know firsthand that affordable access to higher education is the key to the American Dream for working families. My life's work has been to improve educational opportunities for all because education is the key to the future. Education levels the playing field and empowers every individual willing to work hard the ability to make the most of his or her God-given talents. This legislation will make a real difference to make college more affordable without raising taxes while maintaining budget discipline.

Specifically, this bill will cut in half the interest rate on federally subsidized Stafford Loans over the next five years, from 6.8 percent to 3.4 percent. Under this conference report, the average North Carolina student starting school in 2007 will save $2,200 throughout the life of the loan, and the average N.C. student starting school in 2001 will save $4,270. This legislation also will raise the maximum value of the Pell Grant scholarship by $1,090 by 2012.

The bill will help ensure a highly qualified teacher in every classroom by providing upfront tuition assistance to qualified undergraduate students who commit to teaching in public schools in high-poverty communities or high-need subject areas. It will encourage public service by providing public servants loan forgiveness after ten years of public service for military servicemembers, first responders, nurses, educators, and others. Finally, this legislation will make historic new investments in minority-serving institutions and encourage state and philanthropic participation in college retention and financing to increase the number of first generation and low-income college students.

I want to congratulate Chairman MILLER for this accomplishment and thank him and his great staff, including Gabriella Gomez, Denise Forte and Mark Zuckerman, for working with me to ensure that the bill does not unintentionally harm North Carolina's nonprofit lending agency. I am pleased the President has committed to signing this bill into law, and I encourage all my colleagues to vote for it.

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to vote against H.R. 2669, a bill which does not reduce the cost of a college education, but creates five new entitlement programs and expands the reach of government programs over non-profit and commercial lenders.

The measure contains $21.5 billion in new spending over five years while saving only $752 million for deficit reduction. The bill cuts $22.3 billion from the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) program, to force a shift to the government's direct lending program, increasing the government's role.

H.R. 2669 spends $7.1 billion on college graduates by gradually phasing down interest rates from 6.8 percent to 3.4 percent over four years, before allowing rates to return to the original rate in July 2012 to recover the costs of the new spending.

What we are voting on today does nothing address the problem facing college bound students—rising college costs. Instead of holding colleges and universities accountable for how they spend taxpayer dollars, we are doing the exact opposite. We are helping graduates, not students, and expanding the Federal government.

Budget gimmicks won't teach our children, and won't make college more affordable for low- to middle-income families. Until we take a real, thoughtful look at the reasons behind the skyrocketing cost of a higher education, we are simply going to continue to pass legislation that sounds good, but does little.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Conference Report for H.R. 2669, the Education and Labor College Cost Reduction Act of 2007, the single largest investment in higher education since the GI Bill. This important legislation does far more than ease the burden of student loans for college graduates—it will make the American dream possible for low- and middle-income students, helping families pay for college. I would like to thank Chairman MILLER for introducing the legislation, as well as his steadfast commitment to this important issue. May I also thank Speaker PELOSI for her visionary leadership in leading America in a new direction. I am proud to be part of a Democratic majority that delivers on its promises to the American people.

Mr. Speaker, in 21st century America, a college education is a critical investment toward individual success, as well as toward the strength of our nation. Higher education is associated with better health, greater wealth, and more vibrant civic participation, as well as national economic competitiveness in today's global environment. As the need for a college degree has grown, however, so has the cost of obtaining that education. The result is rising student debt. Students graduating often leave school with far more than knowledge and a degree; many face years of having their financial lives dictated by the burden of debt. Their choices of careers and jobs may be severely constrained by the necessity of repaying these loans.

This bill strengthens the middle class by making college more affordable: 6.8 million students who take out need-based federal student loans each year will see the interest rates on their loans halved over the next four years, saving the typical borrower (with $13,800 in need-based loan debt) $4,400 over the life of the loan, once fully implemented. With the recent sub-prime lending crisis and subsequent economic turmoil, the United States economy lost over 4,000 non-farm jobs in the month of August. More and more middle class students will be in need of assistance to turn their college dreams into a reality. This legislation makes student loan payments more manageable for borrowers by guaranteeing that borrowers will not have to pay more than 15 percent of their discretionary income in loan repayments. It also allows borrowers in economic hardship to have their loans forgiven after 25 years.

This Conference Report contains many important provisions that make significant strides toward making the dream of higher education a reality for more Americans than ever. It provides an increase in college aid by roughly $20 billion over the next five years, with no additional burden on American taxpayers. By cutting excessive federal subsidies to lenders, this legislation pays for itself.

This Conference Report contains a specific commitment to minority-serving institutions. It authorizes $510 million for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian institutions, and the newly designated Predominantly Black Institutions. These funds will work to ensure that students will not only enter college, but remain and graduate. About 2.3 million students attend minority-serving institutions, including ⅓ of all minority students who attend college.

This new investment is particularly critical for African-American students and their families. African-American students currently comprise about 12 percent of all undergraduate students. Many institutions have helped black students bridge ethnic-related economic barriers, making college education possible for underprivileged minorities. Among Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), which give African American students an opportunity to have an educational experience in a community in which they are a part of the majority, costs are also rising. This resolution would support many of these honorable institutions in their righteous deeds in educatIng our underprivileged students of color.

In addition, this bill encourages and rewards public service. Students who pursue careers as public school teachers will receive upfront tuition assistance of $4,000 per year, to a maximum of $16,000, providing aid to at least 21,500 undergraduate and graduate students. This is particularly important, given that 23 percent of public college and 38 percent of private college graduates have student loan debt that is unmanageable on the starting salary of a teacher. By providing the guarantee of assistance, this bill is an important step toward ensuring that there is a highly qualified teacher in each of America's classrooms.

Similarly, public servants will receive complete loan forgiveness after ten years of service. This will assist our driven young people who want to serve their country in the military, law enforcement, or as first responders, firefighters, nurses, public defenders, prosecutors, and early childhood educators. It ensures that dedicated Americans will not be precluded from serving their country because of a preponderance of debt.

Mr. Speaker, I also support the Conference Report for H.R. 2669 because it will increase the maximum Pell Grant award by $1090 over the next five years to $5,400. It will also increase eligibility by raising the income threshold, allowing more students from more families to automatically qualify for grants. The Federal Pell Grant Program prides itself on providing need-based grants to low-income undergraduate and certain postbaccalaureate students to promote access to postsecondary education. These grants are particularly important for students of color, with 45 percent of African American and Hispanic students at four-year colleges depending on Pell grants, compared to 23 percent of all students. Approximately 4.5 million students currently depend on Pell Grants and "over 70 percent of Pell Grant funds go to students from families with incomes of $20,000 a year or less." Increasing the maximum Pell Grant Award will expand racial and ethnic diversity in higher education institutions, benefiting not only the institutions, cultural background but it will also be a great learning experience for students to learn diverse cultural backgrounds different from their own.

In addition, the Conferene Report for H.R. 2669 cuts the interest rates on subsidized student loans in half from 6.8 percent to 3.4 percent over five years. Once fully implemented, this cut would save the typical borrower—with about $13,800 in need-based loan debt—$4,400 over the life of the loan. By cutting interest rates on federal loans, Congress can save college graduates thousands of dollars over the life of their loans. Mr. Speaker, recent graduates, especially those of minority status with low to moderate incomes, must spend the vast majority of their salaries on necessities such as rent, health care, and food. For borrowers struggling to cover basic costs, student loan repayment can create a significant and measurable impact on their lives.

Crushing student debt also has societal consequences, according to a report by two highly respected economists, Drs. Saul Schwarz and Sandy Baum. The prospect of burdensome debt likely deters skilled and dedicated college graduates from entering and staying in important careers such as educating our nation's children and helping the country's most vulnerable populations.

To solve this problem and ensure that higher education remains within reach for all Americans, we need to increase need-based grant aid; make loan repayment fair and affordable; protect borrowers from usurious lending practices; and provide incentives for state governments and colleges to control tuition costs. H.R. 2669 is an important step in a new and right direction for America.

Last November, House Democrats promised a New Direction for America. This bill, the single largest investment to higher education, comes at no additional cost to American taxpayers, but brings extraordinary benefits for our nation. I am proud to be part of a Democratic majority that delivers on its promises to the American people.

I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of adoption of the Conference Report for H.R. 2669, the Education and Labor College Cost Reduction Act of 2007.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Conference Report to accompany H.R. 2669, the College Cost Reduction and Access Act. I thank Chairman MILLER for shepherding this bill through the House so that it can be signed into law by the Prdent.

This legislation marks the single largest investment in higher education since the 1944 GI bill and at no new cost to taxpayers. The investnent is available because this new Congress cut excess subsidies that the federal government pays to the student loan industry.

As I travel around eastern Connecticut, I hear from so many students and families about their concerns with the cost of higher education and the amount of debt they are taking on to finance that education. Unfortunately, students across the country are graduating with about $18,000 of debt upon graduation. This debt can have a crippling effect on young adults as they embark on their career path after graduation.

I often refer to the Connecticut district I represent as the higher education district. For this reason, I am pleased to be a member of the Education and Labor Committee and the Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness subcommittee. My district is home to the University of Connecticut, Eastern Connecticut State University, Mitchell College, Connecticut College and Lyme Academy. In addition, Asnuntuck Community College, Three Rivers Community College and Quinebaug Valley Community College are located in eastern Connecticut.

Students have access to a myriad of educational opportunities in eastern Connecticut and this legislation before us today will expand the Pell Grant program that so many students rely on—the maximum value of the grant will grow by $1,000 to a maximum value of $5,400 in five years. The Pell Grant Program is so important that during committee consideration of H.R. 2669, I offered an amendment to boost funding by $900 million. I am pleased that the Conference agreement invests in the Pell Grant program even more. Further, and of paramount importance to so many families, the interest rate on loans will be cut in half from 6.8 percent to 3.4 percent after four years.

The College Cost Reduction and Access Act also provides loan forgiveness for people after 10 years of public service in areas such as law enforcement, first responders, fire fighters, nursing and early childhood education.

This new Congress continues to keep faith with a promise to chart a new direction for this country. This Congress is showing its mettle by breaking down barriers to affordable education and boosting middle-class families.

If we are to maintain our competitive advantage in the world and ensure that more Americans achieve economic prosperity, we must make higher education attainable and affordable. I urge my colleagues to support the College Cost Reduction and Access Act.

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, I reluctantly rise in opposition to this conference report. I do so in spite of my past support for increases in Federal student loan programs and expanded access to college for all young people regardless of their economic status.

As a young student at the University of Nebraska and Creighton Law School, I had to rely on student loans and part-time jobs to cover my tuition, books, and living expenses. And I know that for many families that is also the only way their children can afford to meet the rising costs of a college education. That is what I have consistently voted for, increases in Pell grants and the reduction of interest rates from 6.8 percent to 3.4 percent. I am also a cosponsor of H.R. 722, a bill to increase the maximum Pell grant award to $4,810 for academic years 2008–2014.

There are three reasons why I have decided to vote against this bill. First, this Conference Report provides $22.3 billion in cuts to federal spending, over five years, but then at the same time spends roughly $21.57 billion in that same period time period which amounts to $752 million in deficit reduction. When H.R. 2669 passed in the House, it was estimated to cut spending by $20.38 billion, and spend $17.58 billion, leaving a remainder of $2.79 billion in deficit reduction. Unfortunately, much of the spending in the Conference Report goes towards five new entitlement programs and graduates of college rather than current students.

The second reason that I cannot support this legislation is that many of its provisions will drive private sector lending companies out of the market place, reducing the choices for student borrowers and eventually making the U.S. Department of Education the lending option of last resort. That is probably the intended purpose. A government agency replacing the free market.

In addition to reducing loan rates, it reduces the level of insurance that private lenders can use to off-set student loan defaults, and makes other cuts that will reduce incentives to remain in the student loan business.

It also eliminates the exceptional performer incentive program for good lenders who help students restructure their loan agreements if they are having trouble meeting their loan payments. Also, loan origination fees for lenders would be increased. All of these punitive provisions will reduce the number of private sector student loan firms thus reducing student loan choices for students. I also believe private capital working with the secondary markets creates more dollars to offer students than does the U.S. Department of Education.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, even though the conference report contains savings that pay for the many new entitlement programs created by the legislation, at the end of 5 years, the American taxpayers will be asked to pay the entire cost of these new programs. History tells us that once a Federal entitlement program is created, it will not die. We cannot afford to create another unchecked Federal entitlement spending program that will only contribute to the future inflation of college costs.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a "no" vote on this conference report.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand today to support the College Cost Reduction and Access Act. I thank Chairman MILLER and the Conferees for their quick work on this Conference Report, and all the work they have done on this important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, for years, American students and families have demanded relief from rising tuition and ballooning debt. The average student exits college with almost $20,000 in student loan debt, which, because of accumulating interest, can take years to pay. This debt is burdening our communities. When a student has tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars of debt, it limits choices. Those students might not be able to take lower salary jobs in the fields where we desperately need them—as teachers or first responders. When two-thirds of our college graduates are in debt, it limits our economy. Those graduates have less money for a down payment on a house, less money to invest, and less disposable income.

Even worse, some students are deterred from going to college altogether when costs are too high. We lose some of the best and the brightest—those who are qualified to learn, who want to learn, who have worked hard and gotten the grades, but who run into financial barriers when it comes time to head off to college.

Today, we are bringing some relief. We are going to open the doors to college and help our young people reach their full potential. We're going to increase Pell grants to make college more affordable. We're going to cut the interest rates on loans in half so they're easier to pay off. We're going to institute income-based loan repayment, so graduates don't have to choose between paying their rent and paying off their loans. And we're going to expand loan forgiveness for those who enter public service, so we have more teachers, first responders and nurses.

We made a promise to the American people before the last election. We've been working to fulfill that promise from the first 100 hours of the new Congress. And today, as our young people head back to school, the House and Senate are going to see that promise through with largest increase in student loans since the G.I. bill.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Conference report to H.R. 2669 the College Cost Reduction and Access

Act. I would like to thank my colleagues who worked diligently to bring this legislation before the full Congress, including Chairman MILLER, Chairman KENNEDY, and Subcommittee Chairman HINOJOSA.

The College Cost Reduction and Access Act takes savings generated as a result of the reconciliation process and makes four major investments in America's students, especially students in African American communities.

First, the bill will increase the maximum Pell grant scholarship—the Federal scholarship for low- and moderate-income students—over the next 5 years to $5,400. This increase in the Pell program is critical. Since the 2001–2002 school year, tuition at public four-year colleges has risen 55 percent. Unfortunately, during that same time period, the maximum Pell grant award increased by less than 8 percent and did not increase at all over the past 4 years.

Second, H.R. 2669 will cut the interest rate on student loans in half over the next 4 years. This interest rate reduction will provide enormous relief to the many students who take out subsidized Federal loans.

Third, this legislation will make a strong and historic investment in Historically Black Colleges and Universities and minority serving institutions. HBCUs represent an important piece of our history and investments in HBCUs are imperative for both student services and programs as well as institutional needs and infrastructure improvements. The College Cost Reduction and Access Act shows this commitment by improving and increasing funding for much needed student programming and opportunities. The funding for these colleges and institutions can be used for a variety of important programs and needs, including science and lab equipment, library books, and enhancement of certain disciplines of instruction such as math, computer science, engineering and health care.

This funding will go a long way toward closing the achievement gap that exists across our nation and helping those who wish to better themselves through education achieve their goals. The bill also provides, for the first time ever, funding for Predominantly Black Institutions and Asian and Pacific Islander-serving institutions, thereby recognizing the importance of institutions of higher learning that serve these communities. In addition, it also provides additional funding to Hispanic-serving institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Alaska Native-serving institutions, and Native Hawaiian-serving institutions. While this funding will cover only a portion of the unique needs of these historical places of learning, I appreciate the commitment that members of the House Education and Labor Committee have expressed to continue to find ways to support these important institutions.

Finally, the College Cost Reduction and Access Act includes a provision to aid the Upward Bound program, which is the last hope and ticket to the future for many low income and first generation college students. The bill includes an additional $228 million to fund both new and prior funded Upward Bound programs across the Nation. This funding will reach several Upward Bound programs at HBCUs. In this grant cycle, 30 percent of Upward Bound programs at HBCUs would have been eliminated despite an increase in the total number of Upward Bound programs receiving grants. This provision would also provide funding to other deserving Upward Bound programs including programs serving Hispanic students.

I believe the College Cost Reduction and Access Act contains critical support for our nation's higher education system and I urge my colleagues to support the conference report.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I join with my colleagues in support of efforts to make college education more affordable for more Americans. Indeed, earlier this year I voted in support of H.R. 5, the College Student Relief Act of 2007. I believed that bill took some positive steps.

Unfortunately, the bill that is being brought before the House today for consideration, H.R. 2669, is full of budget gimmicks, creates five new entitlement programs, spends tens of billions of dollars, and shifts from the private sector to the taxpayers the potential liability for billions of dollars should student loans borrowers default.

I am very disappointed that the bill before us, H.R. 2669, falls far short of its goal. While those who drafted the bill assert that it is a comprehensive solution to making college more affordable, H.R. 2669 fails to address the core problem of access to U.S. colleges and universities: sky-rocketing rates of tuition and room and board. In just the last 7 years, annual inflation has increased on average 2.7 percent. However, higher education costs for students have increased an average of 4.2 percent—a rate that is 55 percent higher than regular inflation. This bill takes a pass on addressing that fundamental issue, and simply makes it easier and more likely that students will borrow more money and accumulate a larger debt by the time they graduate from college. H.R. 2669 completely ignores the root problem. The end result of this bill will be that the average college student graduating from college 4 years from now will still face a higher college debt than those graduating this year—even with all of the billions of dollars included in this bill.

Under H.R. 2669, those attending college in the future will be able to borrow more money and perhaps pay a lower interest rate for a short period of time, but with college expenses growing at a rate that far exceeds the annual inflation rate, students will end college with a significantly larger debt.

This bill creates five new Federal entitlement programs, costing tens of billions of dollars. In an attempt to feign compliance with the pay-as-you-go rules adopted by the current Congress, the Democrats include a provision that sunsets these new entitlement program. This is a budget gimmick designed to fool the American people. Does anyone really think that when these programs expire and students are half way through their college education, they will simply be allowed to expire? Of course they won't, and taxpayers will be forced to hand over tens of billions of additional dollars to continue these programs. Incidentally, this will come at about the same time when the House-passed state children's health insurance program, SCHIP, funding dries up and Congress will be looking for tens of billions of dollars to extend that program. Creating five new entitlement programs and spending tens of billions of dollars puts this nation on a path to financial ruin.

The bottom line is that H.R. 2669 enables students to take on more debt which will further burden them for many years past graduation. In 2006, the Higher Education Price Index, HEPI, calculation showed that inflation for colleges and universities jumped to 5 percent. This is 30 percent higher than the consumer price index, CPI—the regular inflation rate. When colleges and universities know that students have access to more funds through financial aid, loans, and grants, they have simply seen this as an opportunity to raise costs for students. This was the case in the past when college loan limits were significantly expanded and it will be repeated after this bill is passed.

The bill takes a pass on encouraging colleges and universities to put a lid on uncontrolled tuition increases. But it's not surprising given that this is the same Democrat majority that created a massive $100 million lobbying loophole for public universities. If we truly want to help our students go into the world with a good education saddled with less debt, we should hold colleges and universities who take government aid more accountable and not allow them to continue their excessive increases in college costs. Colleges and universities have an obligation to exercise fiscal responsibility rather than simply seeing these new student loans and grants as an opportunity to shift more of their fiscally irresponsible costs onto the backs of students and taxpayers.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KAGEN). Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the conference report.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the conference report.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

PATENT REFORM ACT OF 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 636 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 1908.

□ 1223

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 1908) to amend title 35, United States Code, to provide for patent reform, with Ms. SOLIS in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH) each will control 30 minutes.