

February 6, 2008

The Honorable Louise Slaughter
Chair, House Rules Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Slaughter:

As the Rules Committee prepares to draft a rule for consideration of legislation to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (H.R. 4137), we would like to express our strong opposition to any amendment that would add the so-called “academic bill of rights” (ABOR) to the bill.

ABOR would make ideologically driven changes to the current principle of nonintervention in curriculum and teaching under the guise of protecting students against a purported but unproven indoctrination by faculty. The quality and diversity of American higher education institutions flourish because the federal government has focused on ensuring the greatest level of access for all students while abiding by a principle of nonintervention in curriculum and teaching. Colleges and universities already have sufficient policies and procedures to ensure the quality of education while guaranteeing the rights of students and faculty alike, including tenure and due process policies to protect academic freedom, statements of student rights and responsibilities, and student grievance procedures.

A number of states have already declined to implement provisions similar to ABOR. In fact, over the last four years, 28 states have considered legislation aimed at correcting an alleged “political bias” at their state colleges and universities. After examining the evidence and assessing existing institutional policies, **no state has enacted this legislation**, regardless of which party held a legislative majority.

We believe it would be inappropriate for the House to consider an amendment to add ABOR to the higher education reauthorization bill and we strongly urge the Rules Committee to craft a rule that does not allow for such consideration.

Thank you.

American Association of University Professors
American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations
American Federation of Teachers
American Library Association
Association of College and Research Libraries
Campus Progress
Center for Campus Free Speech
Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO
National Education Association
U.S. Public Interest Research Groups
United States Student Association