



***Press Release from Congresswoman  
Barbara Lee  
Ninth Congressional District of California  
U.S. House of Representatives***



**PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**

**Contact: Nathan Britton**

3/10/05

**(202) 225-2661**

**Rep. Lee Opposes Limits on Aid to Students with Drug Convictions  
Says Ban Unfairly Closes Doors to Students Who Want to Learn**

(Washington, DC) – Representative Barbara Lee gave the following statement at a press conference on Capitol Hill today to announce introduction of the Removing Impediments to Student Education (RISE) Act (H.R. 1184), a bill sponsored by Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA) that would repeal of the federal law that bars federal loans and grants to college students with even the most minor drug convictions, while applying no such blanket ban on aid to students convicted of any other crimes:

“I’d like to thank the Coalition for Higher Education Act Reform for the invitation to be here. It’s great to see organizations like the ACLU, Faces and Voices of Recovery, Students for Sensible Drug Policy, and the NAACP being represented here today.

“I want to thank Rep. Barney Frank for his leadership on this issue and for introducing the RISE Act (Removing Impediments to Student Education). I am pleased to be here today with my colleagues in support of this important legislation.

“As someone who believes in building healthy communities, I have a deep understanding of the value of learning. Education is the door to opportunity, and we should be doing everything we can to open that door wider, not slamming it shut.

“Denying educational assistance to people with a drug conviction, be it a misdemeanor or felony, slams the door to opportunity closed on thousands of people who want to learn.

“When you combine this policy with other unjust policies like “Three Strikes” laws and cuts to educational programs like Upward Bound, arts education programs, and after-school programs, you are creating prescription for an endless cycle of imprisonment for some people, and closing off all opportunities for advancement to others.

“It is important to remember that this law affects not only students at colleges and universities; it also shuts the door to blue collar workers seeking training on electrical, carpentry, computer, and other technical skills.

“Students and community groups alike realize the detrimental effect this has on our community. Student governments across the country have voted in support of repealing this act. Our educational institutions should not be made off limits to anyone in our community.

“Let’s repeal this provision, and open the door to opportunity to the tens of thousands of students who have been unfairly denied the opportunity to learn.”

###