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NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, March 10, 2005

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CRIMINAL STUDENT LOAN RESTRICTION IN HIGHER ED LAW DOESN'T DESERVE A SECOND CHANCE, SAYS STARK *Focus Must Be On Expanding Access to Student Aid*

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Rep. Pete Stark (D-CA) joined Congressional colleagues, college students and the Coalition for Higher Education Reform in calling for the repeal of a provision in the Higher Education Act that prevents students from receiving federal student aid due to a state or federal drug offense.

The following is Rep. Stark's statement:

"In today's competitive economy, denying young people the choice of a college education is to deny them the opportunity to succeed. Barring those who've committed minor drug offenses from obtaining student loans closes the door of education and opportunity.

"It's time to repeal this unfair and punitive provision in the Higher Education law. It does direct harm to low-income students who are the most likely to need financial aid to go to college. It's created a ridiculous double standard where most criminal convictions don't limit eligibility for financial aid while minor drug possession puts student loans out of reach. That's criminal.

"Increasing funding for student loans and making them available to all Americans, regardless of criminal history, opens the door to second chances. As Congress reauthorizes the Higher Education Act this year, I hope Republicans and Democrats will see the value of repealing this provision. We ought to encourage education and opportunity, not limit it."

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