The Simplifying the Application for Student Aid Act

To help streamline and improve the student aid process, Reps. Joe Heck (R-NV), Phil Roe (R-TN), Jared Polis (D-CO), and Mark Pocan (D-WI) introduced the *Simplifying the Application for Student Aid Act.* The legislation will:

Ensure Continued Allowance for Earlier Notification of Federal Student Aid

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) has traditionally relied on income tax data from the previous year that is not readily available at the time students start filling out their applications. The law currently grants the Department of Education the authority to allow students to apply with income data from two years prior to the date of application, a process known as prior-prior year. This process allows students to complete the FAFSA earlier and receive notification of their total federal financial assistance months before school starts. Despite calls from Congress and stakeholders to use prior-prior year, the department only recently took advantage of this authority. The *Simplifying the Application for Student Aid Act* will ensure that this commonsense policy is available to students and families in the future.

Simplify the FAFSA for Students and Families

The FAFSA application—a form that runs 10 pages long and includes 108 questions—is too complex for many students and families to complete. Questions ranging from the net worth of investments to complicated tax questions often deter students and families from even completing the form, preventing students from receiving financial aid for which they may otherwise be eligible. The electronic version of the form is also not always easily accessible for students and families.

The *Simplifying the Application for Student Aid Act* will require the Department of Education to allow applicants to more easily import their available income data through the Internal Revenue Service. This will help more students automatically populate answers to many FAFSA questions with information directly from their tax returns, eliminating many questions students and families struggle to answer. The bill will also require the secretary of education to make the FAFSA available on a mobile application and will require the online and application versions to be consumer-tested to promote clarity and ease of use.

Provide More Time for Aid Administrators to Verify and Package Aid

Before prior-prior year, student aid administrators had limited time to verify the accuracy of students' income data. The *Simplifying the Application for Student Aid Act* will strengthen the integrity of the application process and protect taxpayers by ensuring student aid administrators have more time to verify the income of those applying for financial aid. The bill will also allow aid administrators to determine the maximum Pell Grant award earlier to enable them to provide students with accurate aid information as soon as possible.