



Christine O. Gregoire
Governor of Washington
Chair

Dave Heineman
Governor of Nebraska
Vice Chair

Dan Crippen
Executive Director

July 1, 2011

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Senator McConnell, Speaker Boehner, and Representative Pelosi:

On behalf of the nation's governors, we write in support of H.R. 2117, the "Protecting Academic Freedom in Higher Education Act." In June, the U.S. House Education and the Workforce Committee passed H.R. 2117 on a bipartisan basis. We urge Senate and House leadership to take action to approve this important legislation to preserve the autonomy and strength of America's higher education system.

H.R. 2117 would repeal two federal regulations issued by the U.S. Department of Education that are highly problematic for states, institutions of higher education, and our students. Specifically, the bill would repeal the new federal definition of a credit hour and a new requirement that erects federal hurdles for states to authorize higher education programs. Additionally, the bill prohibits future action by the U.S. Department of Education to promulgate new federal mandates, rules, or regulations with respect to a federal definition of a credit hour.

Perhaps at no other time in history has the quality of our higher education system been so vital to students and our national economic interests. At the same time, across the country, governors are pursuing innovative higher education reforms to expand opportunities for students, create and retain jobs, enhance state competitiveness, and expand economic development. The new federal regulations could have a chilling effect on innovation and productivity in higher education.

Governors urge your support of H.R. 2117. We look forward to working with you to continually strengthen our nation's higher education system.

Sincerely,

Governor Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon
Chair, Education, Early Childhood and
Workforce Committee

Governor Robert F. McDonnell
Vice Chair, Education, Early Childhood and
Workforce Committee

cc: Committee on Education and the Workforce, U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education