



American Federation
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

AFT Teachers
AFT PSRP
AFT Higher Education
AFT Public Employees
AFT Healthcare

555 New Jersey Ave. N.W.
Washington, DC 20001
202/879-4400
www.aft.org

Sandra Feldman
PRESIDENT

Edward J. McElroy
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Nat LaCour
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

VICE PRESIDENTS
Roger Benson
Mary Bergan
Barbara Bowen
John Cole
Paul F. Cole
Antonia Cortese
Sheryl Davenport
Jesus Delgado Burgos
Maureen Dinnen
Edward Doherty
James F. Dougherty
Walter E. Dunn, Jr.
Al Fondy
Andy Ford
Janna K. Garrison
David Gray
Thomas Y. Hobart, Jr.
Sandra C. Irons
Loretta Johnson
Ted Kirsch
Alan Lubin
Deborah Lynch
Herb Magidson
Jim McGarvey
Tom Mooney
Ruby Newbold
Candice Owley
Sandra Peterson
Maria Portalatin
Marcia B. Reback
Laura K. Rico
William Scheuerman
Kristin Sterling
Louise A. Sundin
Norman Swenson
Ann Twomey
Adam Urbanski
Randi Weingarten

October 5, 2001

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the more than one million members of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), including over 120,000 in higher education, I urge you to *oppose H.R. 1992, The Internet Equity and Education Act of 2001*. It is our understanding this legislation will be considered by the House this week. H.R. 1992 eliminates the requirement that students enroll in at least 12 hours of coursework to receive full student aid and modifies the so-called "50 percent rule" under which institutions must offer no more than half their coursework by distance education in order for their students to be able to receive federal student aid. These changes to existing provisions of law and regulation fail to take into consideration issues of quality and standards in distance education programs and preempt demonstration programs and studies that are currently underway to gauge the effects of distance learning on student aid program integrity.

Both the 12-hour and 50 percent rules, while not perfect, have been tools to ensure integrity in federal student financial aid programs within our institutions of higher education and promote some "same-time same-place" interaction as part of a student's academic program. Moving forward with H.R. 1992 at this time, without consideration to quality control safeguards and higher standards, would be premature and irresponsible, particularly when other approaches are available.

The AFT believes that we need more data and information on the effects of lifting the 12-hour and 50 percent rule. We, along with other organizations, anxiously await the information from the U.S. Department of Education on the Distance Education Demonstration program authorized by the Higher Education Act (HEA). The 5-year demonstration program is currently in its second year with 25 participants. The information gathered from this demonstration program will be available to inform Congress for the next HEA reauthorization on the most appropriate action on distance education policy.

The AFT is eager to work to develop possible alternatives that would both facilitate the intentions of the supporters of H.R. 1992 as well as respond to the concerns we have discussed. Technology has paved the way for significant developments in education. Ensuring that these developments enhance the quality of education in our colleges and universities is our primary goal and concern.

House of Representatives/Page 2

We urge you to vote against H.R. 1992 and wait until the appropriate data and information on the Demonstration project are available to assure quality safeguards for distance education.

Sincerely,

Charlotte J. Fraas
Director
Department of Legislation

CF:cmw
opeiu2afl-cio
HR 1992