



American Federation
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

AFT Teachers
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AFT Higher Education
AFT Public Employees
AFT Healthcare

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March 25, 2004

The Honorable Judd Gregg
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6300

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the more than 1.3 million members of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), including 150,000 higher education professionals, I write to express our strong opposition to H.R. 3077, the International Studies in Higher Education Act. As the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee considers amendments to the Higher Education Act (HEA), we appreciate the opportunity to share our views with you on this important matter.

H.R. 3077 reauthorizes the international education program under Title VI of the HEA. AFT strongly supports the Title VI program, which awards grants to colleges and universities to create and strengthen foreign language and international studies programs. Over the years, students participating in this program have gained proficiency in many languages and enhanced their understanding of other cultures. This specialized training has prepared these students for careers dealing with some of the most challenging and complex issues facing our country today.

In keeping with its mission, Title VI grants are awarded under a nonpartisan peer review system conducted by language and international studies professionals. We are particularly concerned that the current selection process would be fundamentally changed under H.R. 3077 by the creation of an International Higher Education Advisory Board to review and make recommendations on university-based Title VI activities. This Advisory Board would be chosen, not by professionals, but by the political branches of government. The Board's purpose, according to its advocates, would be to highlight, question, and ultimately curb academic activities under Title VI that some members oppose politically.

Establishment of this new board would undermine longstanding bipartisan consensus that the federal government should respect academic freedom and independence, and not politicize professional programs on campus. This existing policy has been successful and certainly should not be abandoned now. At best, the proposed Board would be duplicative—at worst, it would tarnish the Title VI

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program's professional reputation in the university community both here and abroad. The AFT respectfully requests that you not include such a board in the Senate version of Title VI of the HEA.

As the committee continues its consideration of the HEA reauthorization, we look forward to working with you on this and other aspects of the HEA that are important to AFT higher education professionals and the students they serve. If you have further questions, please contact me or Gabriella Gomez of the AFT legislative staff at (202) 879-4452.

Thank you for considering our views on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Charlotte J. Fraas
Director, Legislation Department

CJF:kb