

# Legislator backs increased education aid

## Musgrave amendments cover state stipends, small-business assets

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WASHINGTON — If Rep. Marilyn Musgrave, R-Colo., has her way, Colorado students who decide to go to college in-state and children of small-business owners will be eligible for more federal financial aid.

The House Committee on Education and the Workforce passed two of Musgrave's amendments to a bill that reauthorizes the 1965 Higher Education Act, which helps low-and middle-income students. The legislation is expected to pass the House this fall, but Senate approval is uncertain.

"My kids needed student aid, are still using it, and there are lots of young people who need it," Musgrave said, adding that it took her and her husband 10 years to pay off their own education loans. "We just want to make sure students get the financial aid they need. Education is an

experience that's really the key to a successful life."

Her first amendment would ensure that state stipends through the College

Opportunity Fund will not be considered in determining the amount of federal aid a student can receive. The College Opportunity Fund provides up to \$2,400 of state money to students who stay at schools in Colorado.

"The last thing anyone wants is for this innovative way of funding to count against the students' federal financial aid eligibility," said Kay Norton, president of the University of Northern Colorado. "This shows (Musgrave) understands it is about students as individuals and the government's role in



Musgrave

higher education is to promote access."

Jason Hopfer, director of government relations and public relations for the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, said the amendment supports a measure that creates healthy competition between the state's universities to keep talent in Colorado.

Musgrave's second amendment would allow children of business owners to apply for financial aid without including their parents' small-business assets to determine how much they are eligible to receive.

"We have many small-business owners that look wealthy on paper, but are not," Musgrave said. "If parents and students sell the equipment to finance their child's education, they won't be able to make a living."

The Higher Education Act already includes a similar exception for farmers, whose children do not have to include the farm's

assets in calculating financial aid eligibility. John Stencil, president of the Rocky Mountain Farmers, said it makes sense to do the same for small-business owners, especially those in rural areas who face similar economic hardships as farmers.

"Having a degree only enhances your capability of making a living for the rest of your life," Stencil said. "(Students) can bring these skills back and provide leadership. If we can get them back to rural communities, they will provide the future."

Lynne Suppes, financial aid director at Aims Community College in Greeley, said she is concerned, however, that there will not be enough money in a decreasing budget to cover the number of students eligible.

"I think the intent there is good," Suppes said. "But I wouldn't be in favor of this if, in the long run, it just takes more money from the neediest of the needy."

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