

108TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3567

To require the General Accounting Office to conduct an investigation of the high price of college textbooks.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 20, 2003

Mr. WU introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

A BILL

To require the General Accounting Office to conduct an investigation of the high price of college textbooks.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

4 The Congress finds the following:

5 (1) It is in the interest of the Nation to ensure
6 that the people of the United States have the oppor-
7 tunity to obtain a postsecondary education.

8 (2) According to the United States Census Bu-
9 reau, in 2001 a person with a bachelor's degree

1 earned nearly 90 percent more, on average, than a
2 person with only a high school diploma.

3 (3) Since 1980, the rate of increase of the cost
4 of postsecondary education has far exceeded the rate
5 of increase of inflation, public assistance to students,
6 and family income.

7 (4) Over the past decade, increases in tuition at
8 private colleges and universities in the United States
9 have averaged nearly 5 percent per year and have
10 been twice as great as increases in the Consumer
11 Price Index.

12 (5) The rapidly rising cost of postsecondary
13 education poses a serious threat to the ability of the
14 people of the United States to ensure their and their
15 children's access to postsecondary education.

16 (6) Since 1992, the annual amount of new stu-
17 dent loan commitments has increased from
18 \$15,000,000,000 to \$35,000,000,000, which rep-
19 resents an increasing burden on college graduates to
20 pay for their college education long after that edu-
21 cation is completed.

22 (7) According to the National Association of
23 Independent Colleges and Universities, nearly 80
24 percent of their full time, dependent undergraduates
25 receive some sort of financial assistance.

1 (8) Students can spend nearly \$1000 a year on
2 college textbooks, and, for many students, particu-
3 larly those in 2-year degree and certificate pro-
4 grams, textbooks make up a large percentage of
5 postsecondary education costs.

6 (9) American college students often find that
7 their textbooks cost far less overseas than they do in
8 United States; oftentimes, the exact same textbook
9 can be purchased overseas at half the cost.

10 (10) Congress must do everything possible, in-
11 cluding addressing the cost of college textbooks, to
12 make college more affordable.

13 **SEC. 2. COMPTROLLER GENERAL INVESTIGATION RE-**
14 **QUIRED.**

15 (a) INVESTIGATION REQUIRED.—Within 6 months
16 after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller
17 General shall conduct an investigation to examine—

18 (1) the cost of college textbooks in the United
19 States; and

20 (2) whether the same textbooks are being sold
21 outside the United States for substantially less than
22 the cost in the United States.

23 (b) REPORT REQUIRED.—Within one year after the
24 date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General
25 shall submit a report on the investigation required by sub-

1 section (a) to the Committee on Education and the Work-
2 force of the House of Representatives and the Committee
3 on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate.

4 Such report shall include—

5 (1) the average amount of money a student
6 spends on textbooks;

7 (2) the average cost to produce a new textbook;

8 (3) the average cost to produce a new edition
9 of a previously published textbook;

10 (4) the reasons for the price discrepancy in
11 textbooks in the United States and outside the
12 United States;

13 (5) the extent of the problem with such price
14 discrepancy;

15 (6) whether the price discrepancy problem oc-
16 curs more in certain subject areas than others;

17 (7) the extent to which new editions of text-
18 books are different from their previous editions, in-
19 cluding the percentage of work that is actually sub-
20 stantively changed from one edition to the next; and

21 (8) the average time period between old and
22 newer editions of textbooks.

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