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NCHER Webinar to Discuss Supreme Court's Oral Arguments on Federal Student Loan Forgiveness

On Monday, March 6th at 2:00 pm ET, NCHER will hold a webinar to discuss the oral arguments that the U.S. Supreme Court recently completed on the U.S. Department of Education's federal student loan forgiveness program in *Biden v. Nebraska* and *Department of Education v. Brown*. During the call, several legal experts will give their assessment of the arguments made by the Solicitor General, the Nebraska Solicitor General, and other attorneys, provide a summary and peek into the questions asked by the justices, and what they think the court will do next on both cases. Members can

register for the webinar on the [NCHER website](#).

Congress, Secretary of Education React to Supreme Court's Oral Arguments on Federal Student Loan Forgiveness

Over the last 24 hours since the U.S Supreme Court heard oral arguments in *Biden v. Nebraska* and *Department of Education v. Brown*, two cases challenging the U.S. Department of Education's federal student loan forgiveness plan, several Members of Congress and the Department of Education issued statements in response to the proceedings.

First, Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona issued a statement discussing the Biden Administration's position: "Today, the Biden-Harris Administration mounted a powerful defense before the U.S. Supreme Court on our plan to provide targeted, one-time student debt relief to more than 40 million working- and middle-class Americans as they recover from the pandemic. The Department of Justice argued against the lawsuits aimed at denying relief to borrowers, made clear that challengers to the program lack standing to even bring their cases to court, and explained the Department of Education's decades-old authority used by multiple administrations to protect borrowers from the effects of national emergencies."

Second, House Republicans released several statements attacking the loan forgiveness plan. In a blog post entitled, [Fact Checking Biden's Student Loan Bailout](#), House Education and the Workforce Committee Chairwoman Virginia Foxx (R-NC) said, "There is no such thing as "forgiveness," and student loan debt does not go away—it remains on the federal government's books. Cancellation alone is estimated to cost at least \$400 billion dollars. The Biden administration simply moved the loan debt, agreed to by millions of student loan borrowers, onto the backs of American taxpayers."

Third, Congressional Democrats issued statements in support of the administration's plan. House Education and the Workforce Committee Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA) said, "A college education should not depend on how much money a student's parents make. Yet, the rising cost of tuition, decades of disinvestment in higher education, and the declining relative value of the Pell Grant have left many student loan borrowers with burdensome debt. That's why I support President Biden's student debt relief plan to deliver life-changing support for the borrowers who need it most. In fact, 90 percent of the student loan relief would go to borrowers who make less than \$75,000 a year."

President Nominates Julie Su as Next Secretary of Labor

Yesterday, President Joe Biden nominated Julie Su, who is currently serving as Deputy Secretary, to serve as the next Secretary of Labor. Secretary Marty Walsh is leaving the position to head the National Hockey League Players' Association. Ms. Su previously served as California's Secretary of Labor before being appointed by the President to her current position in 2021. In a [statement](#), President Biden said, "It is my honor to nominate Julie Su to be our country's next Secretary of Labor. Julie has spent her life fighting to make sure that everyone has a fair shot, that no community is overlooked, and that no worker is left behind. Over several decades, Julie has led the largest state labor department in the nation, cracked down on wage theft, fought to protect trafficked workers, increased the minimum wage, created good-paying, high-quality jobs, and established and enforced workplace safety standards." The nomination now heads to the U.S. Senate for consideration. For additional coverage, see this article from [Roll Call](#).

House Appropriations Committee Releases New Restrictions, No Earmarks in Labor-HHS-Education Spending Bill

This morning, House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Kay Granger (R-TX) announced new guidelines that members must use when requesting Congressionally directed funding, also known as earmarks, for the upcoming fiscal year (FY). According to the committee, there will be no project requests in the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Act, Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Act, or the Defense Appropriations Act. In addition, the committee is restricting total funding for earmarks in FY 2024 to 0.05 percent of discretionary spending, down from 1 percent put in place for last year. Finally, only projects with direct linkages to federally authorized laws are eligible to receive earmark funding. Similar to last year, lawmakers can only make 15 total requests and cannot request earmarks for for-profit recipients or projects that may financially benefit the lawmaker or their family. House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) said she is "saddened" by the new rules. Over 1,300 projects were funded through the Labor-HHS-Education Act this year, including hundreds of earmarks requested by Republican members.

For additional coverage, see this article from [The Hill](#).

Bipartisan Senators, Representatives Reintroduce Three Bills Related to College Affordability

Yesterday, Senate and House members introduced three pieces of bipartisan legislation related to college affordability.

In the Senate, all three pieces were introduced by Senators Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Tina Smith (D-MN), and companion pieces were introduced in the House by various members.

“I often hear from Iowa families who are frustrated and confused by the complex student loan borrowing process. So much of the student debt conversation focuses on repaying debt. We ought to fix the process on the front-end before students get in over their head. The federal government should be offering commonsense resources to better prepare borrowers,” Sen. Grassley said in a statement. “These bills would provide additional counseling, resources and clarity to the student loan process so that America’s next generation of leaders can pursue higher education opportunities without breaking the bank.”

First, Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Sen. Tina Smith (D-MN) introduced the [Net Price Calculator Improvement Act](#), which seeks to improve the accuracy and usability of net price calculators that are tools used by students and families to estimate the cost of attending college. The legislation would authorize the U.S. Department of Education to develop a universal calculator, so students can compare prices across colleges. This template would be designed to provide more accurate and user-friendly information to students and families, helping them to make informed decisions about their college choices. In addition to standardizing net price calculators, the bill would also require colleges and universities to make their calculators more accessible to students and families, including making the calculators readily available on the institution's website and ensuring that they are easy to use and understand. Rep. Brett Guthrie (R-KY) and Rep. Lori Trahan (D-MA) introduced a companion bill in the House.

Second, Sen. Grassley and Sen. Smith introduced the [Understanding the True Cost of College Act](#), which would create a universal financial aid offer form and standardize terms used to describe financial aid to allow students to more easily compare financial aid packages between schools. This legislation aims to address findings from the U.S. Government Accountability Office that over 90 percent of college financial aid offer letters understate the price students would pay for postsecondary education. Rep. Young

Kim (R-CA), Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ) introduced the companion legislation in the House.

Third, Sen. Grassley and Sen. Smith introduced the [Know Before You Owe Federal Student Loan Act](#), which would strengthen the Higher Education Act to enhance the current loan counseling requirements for institutions of higher education. The bill would make loan counseling an annual requirement before new loans are disbursed, rather than a one-time requirement for first-time borrower, and would allow students to decide exactly how much they would like to borrow, rather than offering the maximum possible loan amount as the default option. Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-IA) introduced the companion legislation in the House.

U.S. Department of Education News

For today's *Federal Register*, click [here](#).

General News

[Inside Higher Ed](#) reports on the U.S. Department of Education's new guidance on third-party servicers and the "anxiety" it is creating in the higher education community.

[Inside Higher Ed](#) reports on a new survey that finds only 55 percent of students say that they have been advised on required coursework for graduation.

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National Council of Higher Education Resources

1050 Connecticut Ave NW #65793

Washington, DC 20035

Phone: **(202) 822-2106**

Fax: (202) 822-2142

