



# Congressman Tim Bishop

*FIRST DISTRICT -- NEW YORK*

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **BISHOP APPLAUDS HOUSE PASSAGE OF PELL GRANT FAIRNESS BILL**

*Congressman votes to increase Pell Grant aid for thousands of low-income college students*

Washington, DC—Congressman Tim Bishop applauded this week’s passage of the “Pell Grant Equity Act” (H.R. 990) in the U.S. House of Representatives. The bill, which passed with bi-partisan support, would repeal a rule that unfairly reduces Pell Grant scholarship aid for thousands of low-income college students who attend low-cost colleges and universities. The bill originated in the House Education and Labor Committee, of which Bishop is a member.

“This legislation is another step in the direction of expanding access and affordability for higher education,” said Bishop, who was a college administrator for 29 years and is a leading advocate of expanding college access and affordability. “For many families and students struggling to make ends meet, every dollar counts. I will continue to do everything I can in Congress to reduce the financial burden facing students and their families.”

Under current law, a provision called “tuition sensitivity” limits the amount of Pell Grant aid eligible students receive annually based on their tuition costs – keeping students who otherwise qualify for a maximum Pell Grant scholarship from receiving the full sum.

Dr. Shirley Robinson Pippins, President of Suffolk County Community College (SCCC), stressed the importance of this legislation for Suffolk County students, noting: “Approximately 5,000 of SCCC’s students—over 20% of our student body—qualify for Pell Grants. Advocating on behalf of these students, we are delighted to see the tuition sensitivity rule repealed as part of H.R. 990. We hope the final bill will ensure that students who attend this nation’s community colleges will not be unfairly penalized for making the financially savvy choice to attend a high-quality, lower-cost institution. Providing access to money that can be used to help cover the cost of books and other college expenses could mean the difference between being able to afford attending college or not.”

While the Pell Grant scholarship can cover a student’s cost of attendance, which is the total sum of tuition and fees as well as books, supplies, transportation, room and board and miscellaneous personal expenses, tuition sensitivity is based on a premise that grant need should be solely based on the cost of tuition. For many students, these related expenses often present the greatest financial barriers to attending college. The Pell Grant Equity Act would eliminate the tuition sensitivity provision, which would aid students in the most financial need.

According to the Congressional Research Service, the Pell Grant Equity Act would benefit approximately 96,000 students in the 2007-2008 academic year. Of the 5 million undergraduate students who received a Pell Grant scholarship in FY 2006, more than 74% have incomes below \$30,000.

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