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Barrow Works to Strengthen Federal Pell Grant Program

Co-sponsors legislation to repeal recent \$300 million cut to Pell Grants; protect student eligibility standards

Washington, DC – Representing more than a dozen colleges and universities across Georgia’s 12th District, Congressman John Barrow (D-GA) this week co-sponsored legislation to repeal recent cuts to the federal Pell Grant Program – pushing to reverse a \$300 million reduction for low and moderate income college students during the 2005-06 school year.

“I believe we should be increasing funding for the Pell Grant program, not cutting it,” Barrow said. “Each year, students across the country have little recourse as they watch their tuition costs soar to new record highs. Slashing the Pell Grant program is a slap in the face to those students and families who are struggling just to afford the cost of a college education.”

In December, the Department of Education changed the formula it uses to calculate how much an individual student or family has available to pay for college. The size of their Pell Grant is based on a calculation that includes, among other criteria, deductions for state and local taxes. By lowering those tax deductions, students and families will appear to have more money available to pay for college, and thus receive smaller grants.

As a result of this recent change, 1.3 million students will now have their Pell Grant scholarships either reduced or eliminated. According to a January report by the Government Accountability Office, some students in Georgia could see their Pell Grants decrease by as much as 43 percent.

Barrow, who serves on the Committee on Education and the Workforce, said that H.R. 114, the *Ensuring College Access for All Act*, will reverse the \$300 million Pell scholarship cut and prevent students from having their federal Pell Grant eligibility amount reduced as a result of the changes to student aid calculations. Furthermore, Barrow said the bill would require the Department of Education to adjust eligibility

calculations in a way that would not hurt students and families who rely on Pell Grant scholarships to help cover the costs of college.

“When we make it harder for families to pay for college, we make it harder for future generations to succeed and get ahead,” Barrow continued. “This legislation will be an important step toward keeping the promise of the Pell Grant Program in place for generations to come.”

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