

The College Opportunity and Affordability Act of 2007

Expanding College Access, Strengthening our Future

Preventing Theft of Intellectual Property on College Campuses

College students often use their campus internet networks to download and share music, movies, and television programs. When they do it without the permission of the owner of the content, it is theft. This illegal file-sharing has exploded in recent years, and a large share of it occurs on college campuses.

Film, television, and music production companies invest their money and talent in creating entertainment products to generate revenues. Intellectual property theft has caused significant revenue losses within these industries – **hurting jobs and workers' benefits.**

To combat theft of intellectual property on college campuses, the College Opportunity and Affordability Act (H.R. 4137) would:

- ✓ Require colleges and universities to inform their students about the law and about campus policies on copyright infringement and illegal downloading*;
- ✓ Require colleges and universities to report their campus policies and their procedures for addressing violations*;
- ✓ Require colleges and universities, to the extent practicable, to develop a plan to deter illegal downloading and offer alternatives to it; and
- ✓ Establish a competitive grant program for colleges that want to explore innovative ways of stopping illegal downloading.

Not surprisingly, supporters of intellectual property theft are circulating myths about the bill, including:

MYTH #1: H.R. 4137 would take financial aid away from colleges and students who engage in illegal file sharing.

The bill includes no provisions that would strip federal student aid from either colleges or students because of illegal file-sharing.

MYTH #2: H.R. 4137 would force colleges to use alternative file-sharing programs that don't work well and that cost millions of dollars.

The bill does not mandate the use of any programs by colleges. Colleges and universities are simply required to report their campus policies on intellectual property theft, including their penalties, and to develop plans for addressing illegal file-sharing. For schools that want additional assistance in stopping illegal file sharing, the bill creates a voluntary grant program.

MYTH #3: H.R. 4137 would force colleges to become copyright cops.

Illegal downloading and file sharing is theft, and can result in severe civil or criminal penalties. Students should know about the law and any campus policies on file-sharing. The bill requires colleges to report this information to students; it does not ask colleges to enforce copyright laws. It does not ask colleges to report any cases of student violations.

*These provisions were also included in the Senate's reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, which was passed in July 2007.