

# The Washington Post

## Democrats join GOP in voting to block tighter regulation of for-profit schools

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Dozens of House Democrats, including the party leader, joined with Republicans on Friday in a vote to block an Obama administration plan to tighten federal regulation of trade schools and colleges operated for profit.

The 289 to 136 vote attached the anti-regulation measure to a Republican spending bill that has little chance of becoming law. But the move illuminated sharp divisions among Democrats weeks before the administration is expected to unveil the final version of a rule advocates say will help ensure that for-profit schools prepare students for "gainful employment."

A draft version made public last year would require schools to comply with new rules for student debt and loan repayment, or risk losing access to federal aid. Obama officials say their goal is to protect students who too often wind up with large debts they cannot repay. Industry executives say the proposal would unfairly penalize programs that offer nontraditional students a path to a college degree.

The Washington Post Co., which operates Kaplan for-profit schools, is part of an industry coalition lobbying against the proposal. For-profit colleges, whose enrollments account for more than 10 percent of postsecondary students, are the fastest-growing sector of higher education.

Along with all but four House Republicans, 58 Democrats, including House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (Calif.), voted to approve the measure blocking funding for implementation of any new gainful employment rules, congressional aides said.

The number of Democrats who defected from the administration's position surprised observers following the debate. Rep. Alcee L. Hastings (Fla.), a leader of the breakaway Democrats, said the administration's proposal was misguided and would force many schools that train nurses, physical therapists and other essential workers to close.

"What will happen to the single mother trying to change careers who wants the flexibility of a private-sector college?" he asked.

Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.), who opposed the amendment, said many for-profit colleges are "ripoff schools" that target vulnerable populations and fail to give them a useful education.

The Education Department is still developing its final version of the rule, which raises the possibility that Friday's vote could affect how the matter unfolds.

"We believe our final regulations will do the best job of protecting students and taxpayers and will continue working with Congress and education stakeholders as we thoughtfully move forward on this important

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issue," department spokesman Justin Hamilton said in a statement.

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