



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATE-PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Organization: [National Association of Graduate-Professional Students](http://NationalAssociationofGraduate-ProfessionalStudents.org)

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Grad Students Breathe a Sigh of Relief

On Wednesday, December 20, the US Congress voted to pass H.R. 1, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. The bill was approved by a 224-201 vote in the House of Representatives and a 51-49 vote in the Senate. The final version of the bill does not contain some proposals that would have directly hurt graduate and professional students across the country, and were present in the pre-conference House version of the bill. As a result of our advocacy efforts, along with that of our partners and allies, we were able to ensure that:

- “Qualified Tuition Reduction” or tuition waiver remains non-taxable,
- Employer-provided education assistance also remains non-taxable,
- Student Loan Interest Deduction is not eliminated, and
- Lifetime Learning Credit and Hope Scholarship are also not eliminated.

We are relieved that these provisions that would have negatively impacted graduate education were dropped from the final bill, and are happy that our #ReworkTheReform campaign was a success. We would like to thank the numerous organizations, including American Council of Education (ACE), Association of American Universities (AAU), Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), Michael J. Fox Foundation, and March for Science, that partnered with us to ensure graduate education remains affordable and accessible. We would also like to thank members of the House-Senate conference committee who agreed to drop these provisions. Most importantly, we would like to thank the thousands of graduate and professional students across the country, who took time out of their busy schedules to make their voices heard. The success of #ReworkTheReform is your success.

While we celebrate this victory, we remain concerned with this Congress’s overall tone and lack of support towards higher education, and the assaults being levied against it. On December 13, the House Education and Workforce Committee passed H.R. 4508, the PROSPER Act, with the aim of reauthorizing the Higher Education Act. Some of the provisions in the PROSPER Act would make graduate education more expensive for students across the nation. These include capping the loan amount for graduate-professional students, eliminating loan forgiveness programs, and changing income-based repayment for student loans to the detriment of the borrower. The bill also preserves the disparity between the interest rates for graduate and undergraduate loans, wherein students pay significantly more for borrowing money to fund their graduate education.

At a time when the federal government should be encouraging the pursuit of advanced degrees these, and other, provisions in the PROSPER Act will make graduate and professional education less affordable and less accessible, and will deter people with advanced degrees from entering into service in low income and rural areas of the country where they are needed the most.

NAGPS will continue our advocacy efforts to ensure that the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act supports the pursuit of advanced degrees and strengthens higher education. In the coming weeks and months we will continue to mobilize and organize our constituents, partners, and allies through social media, national call days, and lobby days on Capitol Hill. We call upon members of Congress to support legislation that strengthens higher education and oppose legislation that aims to cripple it.

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[NAGPS](http://NAGPS.org) is a national non-profit composed of graduate and professional student governments across the US that represents over 600,000 graduate and professional students at a diverse group of member institutions.