



# Coalition for Higher Education Act Reform

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## **CHEAR Confronts Drug Czar**

*Walters answers question about controversial education law*

WASHINGTON—Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) John Walters was forced to explain the federal government’s policy of denying financial aid to students with prior drug convictions when confronted by an education rights advocate during a press conference.

Brian Dolber, Outreach Coordinator for the Coalition for Higher Education Act Reform (CHEAR), asked the “Drug Czar” if he believes that the Drug Provision of the Higher Education Act, which has denied financial aid to over 157,000 students, represented “a just and effective way of solving our nation’s drug problems?”

While Walters admitted that the law may have problems, he clung to the idea that providing aid to young people who have made past mistakes will put money in the pockets of “drug traffickers.”

“Education is an important component of rehabilitation. But those that are involved in the drug problem should not be subsidized with public funding,” said Walters. “We’re trying to draw a line between the victimizers and those who need rehabilitation... We’re trying to work with both sides.”

However, CHEAR believes that the only solution to this problem is a full repeal of the law. “Walters may say he is working with both sides, but what he’s really trying to do is play both sides of the fence. It is unethical for the government to deny anyone the opportunity to go to college,” said CHEAR Outreach Director Chris Mulligan.

“The Drug Provision does not distinguish between different drug offenses,” said Mulligan. “Being that 88 percent of all drug arrests are for simple possession, this law primarily targets the normal student arrested for possession, not the ‘drug traffickers’ Walters would make them out to be.”

The Coalition for Higher Education Act Reform is supported by over 180 education, civil rights, rehabilitation and religious organizations from across the country, who have called on Congress to repeal the Drug Provision of the Higher Education Act. Introduced in 1998 by Rep. Mark Souder (R-IN), the Drug Provision has denied 157,000 students access to the funding they need to go to college.

**For more information, contact Chris Mulligan at (202) 293-8340, or visit the CHEAR website at [www.raiseyourvoice.com](http://www.raiseyourvoice.com).**

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