

The Collegiate Housing and Infrastructure Act (H.R. 643/S.638) *Preserving the Future of Not-for-Profit Student Housing*

Our Growing Population of College Students Needs Safe, Modern and Affordable Housing. Rising enrollment is creating severe housing shortages on college campuses nationwide, with many institutions forced to put students into private hotels, dormitory lounges and triple resident rooms. Post-secondary enrollment will increase 15% from 1999-2011 as a “baby boomlet” peaks in 2008, when 2.1 million students will be enrolled in colleges and universities nationwide.

Greek Housing is a Key Source of Collegiate Housing. The housing shortage would be even worse without fraternities and sororities, who are the nation’s largest not-for-profit student landlords, operating several billion dollars in housing for more than 250,000 students each year at no cost to the host institutions. Fraternal housing, like the housing provided by host institutions, offers students a living and learning environment designed to promote academic and personal enrichment.

Collegiate Housing Capacity and Safety Need to be Upgraded. Life safety upgrades are the top challenge facing fraternal housing, as their smaller and older living spaces have twice the injury rate of other campus fires and significantly higher rates of property losses. Studies show that 80% of fatalities in student housing fires since 2000 have occurred in off campus housing such as fraternities and sororities where a majority of students live. The November 17, 2006 fire at the Phi Kappa Tau house at Nebraska Wesleyan University that killed one student and the April 10, 2005 house fire at Miami (OH) University that killed three students are the latest in a series of preventable tragedies.

The Current Tax Code Hinders Modernization and Safety of Some Student Housing. The federal income tax code allows colleges and universities to use tax deductible contributions for infrastructure improvements to classrooms, laboratories, dormitories, meeting areas and dining facilities, but forbids contributions to fraternity and sorority foundations to be used to make similar infrastructure improvements to student housing, meeting areas and dining facilities.

The Time Has Come for Equitable Treatment. There is no good policy reason for distinguishing between gifts made to colleges and universities for infrastructure improvements and gifts made to fraternities and sororities for the benefit of similarly situated students. The **Collegiate Housing and Infrastructure Act of 2007 (H.R. 643/S.638)** erases this disparity and allows tax deductible contributions to fraternity and sorority foundations to be used for the same purposes that a college or university could use such contributions (except for physical fitness equipment). In the 108th Congress, the Collegiate Housing and Infrastructure Act was included in the Charitable Giving Act of 2003 that passed the House by a 408-13 margin. The 2007 version of the Collegiate Housing and Infrastructure Act is the same as the language within the Charitable Giving Act of 2003 that passed the House.

Passing the Collegiate House and Infrastructure Act would:

- ***Encourage new charitable contributions to improve current collegiate housing***, thereby preserving and upgrading existing housing capacity and helping construct the new housing capacity needed to accommodate rapidly growing student populations.
- ***Result in safer student housing*** by enabling fraternities and sororities to fund the installation of modern life safety equipment such as fire sprinklers, smoke detectors and alarm systems.
- ***Promote a private-sector solution*** to protect and preserve public investments in higher education institutions and the students themselves.