

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 10, 2006

The Honorable Howard McKeon
Chairman
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable George Miller
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman McKeon and Ranking Member Miller:

In law schools throughout the country, the number of African American applicants, students, and graduates are *all* declining. At the same time, overall law school enrollment is on the rise. Preliminary analysis indicates that law school admission practices relating to the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) as well as the American Bar Association's (ABA) law school accreditation process are significant factors in this decline.

Many law schools are now using the LSAT as a primary factor in admissions, even though the testmakers acknowledge that the LSAT is not a perfect predictor of academic performance. The testmakers recommend evaluating and considering each applicant's undergraduate grade point average, personal statement, extracurricular activities, and work experience, in addition to LSAT score. As a consequence of this misuse and over-reliance on the LSAT, African American enrollment in many law schools has plummeted. For example, between 2002 and 2004, 69 of the 84 schools in the eight largest law school markets raised their 25th percentile LSAT scores, and 43 of those 69 saw their African American student enrollment decrease by an average of 19%.

Misuse and over-reliance on the LSAT is also occurring in the law school accreditation process and is having a similar impact on African American enrollment. The ABA is the Department of Education's official designee for the accreditation of law schools, and schools must be accredited by the ABA for students to be eligible for federal student loans. The ABA has rejected or delayed the accreditation applications of law schools based on their LSAT scores and has threatened sanctions against accredited schools unless they raise their minimum LSAT scores. Many of these schools serve the African American community. This has occurred without any reliable studies correlating increased LSAT scores with increased professional competence. African American enrollment at these schools has suffered as a result.

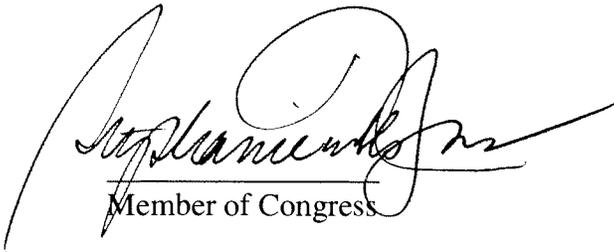
In addition, we have learned that the Department of Education announced that it would need more time to consider the ABA's petition for renewal of recognition, citing the need to review "a significant volume of material" from third parties. This raises the possibility that the ABA may not be in full compliance with the Department's requirements. The Department of Education is taking up this matter in June 2006.

Accordingly, we are writing to respectfully request that the Committee ask the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to do a quick, turn-around study on the impact that

LSAT scores and ABA accreditation practices are having on African American enrollment and graduation at America's law schools. Specifically, we request that GAO evaluate the contributing factors to declining minority enrollment, which include, but are not limited to, the impact of the ABA Standards for Approval of Law Schools, misuse of the LSAT in the law school admissions process contrary to Law School Admissions Council guidelines, and the transparency of the ABA's law school accreditation practices.

We believe that this information would be helpful to the Department of Education as it considers whether or not to renew its recognition of the ABA as an accrediting body. Accordingly, we ask that this study be completed by June 2006. This is an important topic of concern to many Members of Congress. We look forward to receiving your response.

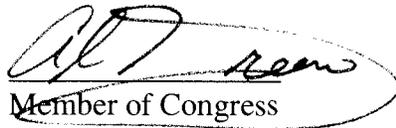
Sincerely,



Member of Congress



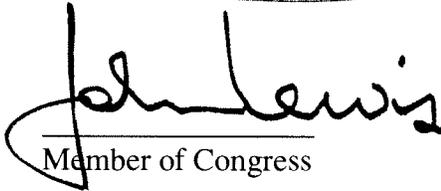
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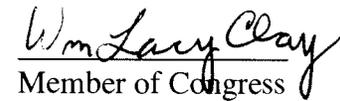
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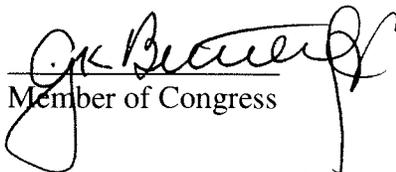
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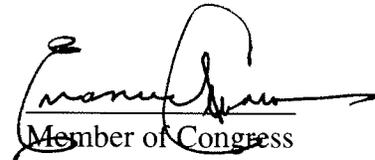
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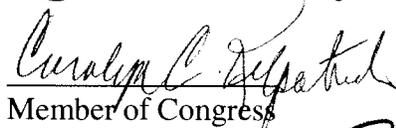
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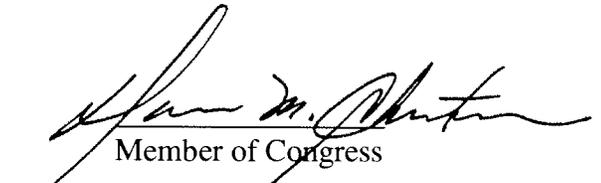
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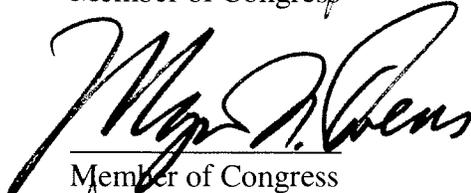
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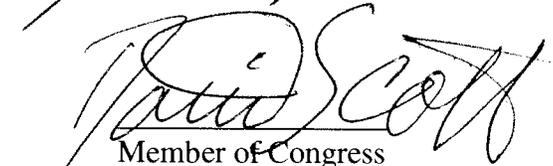
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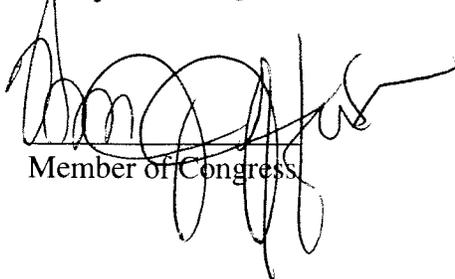
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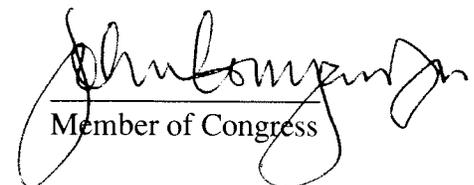
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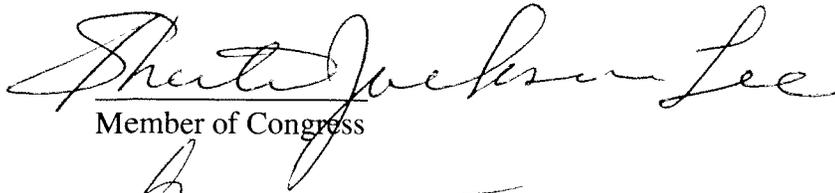
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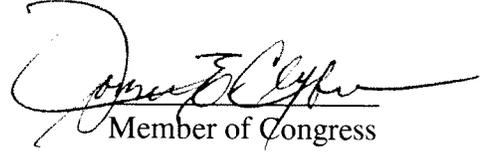


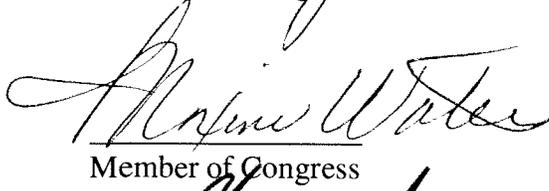
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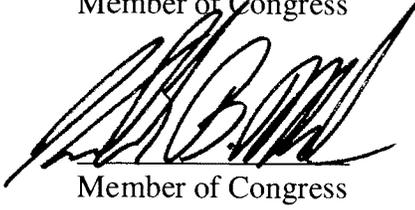
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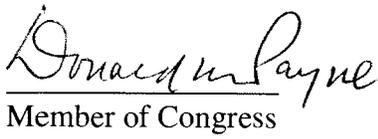

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Signatories

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