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Congress to Vote on Expanding School Drug Searches

Controversial Bill Skips Committee, Goes Directly to Floor

Students and Educators Team Up to Defeat Political Powerplay

WASHINGTON, DC – The leadership of the U.S. House of Representatives on Tuesday will bring to the floor a bill allowing school officials and police greater authority to search public school students for drugs. Despite the bill's controversial nature, House leaders are skipping the committee deliberation process and are bringing the bill directly to the floor in an attempt to give its sponsor, Rep. Geoff Davis (R-KY), a victory to tout during his difficult reelection bid this November.

"It's offensive that Congress is playing politics with students' dignity," said Kris Krane, executive director of Students for Sensible Drug Policy. "We're tired of having our constitutional rights trampled on by the War on Drugs. We demand drug policies that respect and protect us."

SSDP has teamed up with the National PTA, the American Federation of Teachers, the American Association of School Administrators, the National School Boards Association, the Council of the Great City Schools, and the ACLU to oppose the bill.

The bill, "The Student and Teacher Safety Act of 2006," H.R. 5295, would allow schools to search groups of dozens of hundreds of students on the mere suspicion that just one of them has drugs. Similar justification allowed police officers to storm a high school in Goose Creek, SC, in 2003, forcing dozens of students to the ground and pointing loaded guns directly at their faces during a widely-criticized raid in which no drugs were found. The school's principal resigned, and the school district and the police department paid over one million dollars in a lawsuit settlement this July.

Because of the House leadership's legislative maneuvering, only 1/3 of House members present need to vote against the bill to defeat it.

In addition to granting schools the ability to carry out expanded drug searches on administrators' impulses, the bill mandates that school districts specifically adopt written policies allowing such searches, under threat of losing federal anti-drug funding. The original version of the bill invented a new looser class of evidence required to justify searches, called "colorable suspicion," but due to SSDP's lobbying efforts to date, the language has been scaled back to stricter "reasonable suspicion" in the version that will be voted on this week.

More information about the bill, as well as video of the 2003 Goose Creek raid, is available on SSDP's blog at <http://daregeneration.blogspot.com/2006/09/take-action-now-stop-school-drug.html>

Students for Sensible Drug Policy is an international grassroots network of students who are concerned about the impact drug abuse has on our communities, but who also know that the War on Drugs is failing our generation and our society. SSDP mobilizes and empowers young people to participate in the political process, pushing for sensible policies to achieve a safer and more just future, while fighting back against counterproductive Drug War policies, particularly those that directly harm students and youth.

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