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April 7, 2014

GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS SOUND OFF ON THE TAX REFORM ACT IN “NATIONAL CALL-CONGRESS DAY”

[Washington, D.C.]– The National Association of Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS), as part of their “GradsHaveDebt2” campaign, has organized their second “National Call-Congress Day” to encourage graduate and professional students across the United States to express their concerns about proposals included in the Tax Reform Act of 2014, that would increase the tax burden and impose additional financial pressure on graduate and professional students.

If passed, the Tax Reform Act would affect graduate and professional students on several levels. Subtitle C of the Act, titled “Simplification of Education Incentives” outlines measures that would:

- Tax the tuition waivers that Graduate Assistants (GAs) and Research Assistants (RAs) receive from their universities
- Repeal tax deductions for interest on student loans
- Repeal the Social Security tax exemption for students with income over \$1200
- Repeal tax exclusions on student loan forgiveness programs

A draft of the Tax Reform Act of 2014 was released by Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp (R-MI) in February of this year, and is based on analysis by the Joint Committee on Taxation (JCT). This latest attempt at overhauling the tax code however, if passed, would deal yet another blow to graduate and professional students, who just last year, saw their interest rate caps go up from 6.8% to 10.5%, forcing them to pay higher interest rates than undergraduates for the first time in history. Graduate and professional students also lost their eligibility to access the in-school interest subsidy in 2012 as part of the Budget Control Act, which will add \$18.1 billion to graduate student debt over the next 10 years.

The “GradsHaveDebt2” was launched last July and have staged a number of events including a “National Message-Congress Day” on February 11. They also staged their first “National Call-Congress Day” in December of last year, which was the largest graduate student advocacy effort ever organized by NAGPS. Graduate and professional students at 27 universities made over 860 calls to about 1/3 of Congress.

“The GradsHaveDebt2 campaign is more important than ever right now, as quite frankly, the graduate and professional students of America cannot afford this proposal to be adopted. We are already burdened with higher interest rates and the loss of Subsidized Stafford Loans, we simply can’t take any more,”

stated Neleen Leslie, PhD candidate at Florida State University and President & CEO of NAGPS. “Not only are we being forced even more deeply into debt with higher priced student loans, but we’re also being asked to pay taxes on money we never actually see? The Federal Government should be investing in higher education, not making it financially prohibitive for students to pursue advanced degrees.”

On April 9, 2014, NAGPS members across the country will host local “Call-Congress” events on their campuses, as part of NAGPS’ National Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation Week (April 7-11, 2014), a week of activities designed to highlight and recognize the contributions graduate and professional students make to their universities and the nation. The GradsHaveDebt2 campaign will continue throughout the year, and urges Members of Congress to:

Reunify student loan interest rates, and

Reinstate the in-school interest subsidy for graduate and professional students.

Visit [Facebook.com/GradsHaveDebt2](https://www.facebook.com/GradsHaveDebt2) to find out more about the event and to read personal accounts from graduate and professional students across the country discussing their struggles with postgraduate student debt.

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The National Association of Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS) is a volunteer, student-run organization representing more than half a million graduate and professional students from over 90 institutions across the United States. See www.nagps.org/members

NAGPS develops and sustains a member network that connects graduate and professional students across America, allowing them to share resources and best practices in ways that empower member organizations to successfully serve their constituents and amplify students’ voices to campus, state, and federal policymakers.