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Thursday, June 12, 2008

Representative Joe Knollenberg
U.S. House of Representatives
2349 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 205150001
Fax: (202) 226-2356

RE: Please Support H.R. 642

Dear Representative Knollenberg;

As a member of Zeta Tau Alpha Alumni Association at Michigan State University, I am asking you to join the growing bipartisan list of sponsors of the College Fire Prevention Act (HR.642). This bill provides a strong public incentive for private expenditures to protect our national investment in each generation of college students residing in all forms of collegiate housing, and is an important issue to my campus chapter. In 1978, our sorority house had a fire and know first hand of the benefits of this bill.

Only a limited percentage of all collegiate housing has up-to-date fire safety systems - creating a severe hazard for college students. Not-for-profit student housing, like fraternity and sorority houses, lags even further behind. Fraternities and sororities are the largest not-for-profit source of student housing in the United States - housing over 250,000 of our 2.1 million college students. Clearly, there is a great need that is not being addressed to upgrade and expand the capacity of all student housing with the latest fire-safety equipment in order to save lives and protect property.

Housing construction and upgrades are low priorities for private and public institutions - especially at a time of state budget belt-tightening. Not-for-profit student housing on the other hand cannot offer tax-deductibility for gifts made to upgrade fire safety systems, and so it is nearly impossible for Fraternities and Sororities to raise funds for these large capital projects.

Passage of the College Fire Prevention Act would strongly encourage private investment by universities and not-for-profit student housing providers by creating a four year, $100 Million per year matching grant program for capital investment and expansion of student housing with modern fire safety systems. Given the enormous national investment in each generation of college students, this matching grant program will protect that investment and forestall preventable injury by providing incentive to raise and expend money for: (1) improving existing life-saving systems such as fire alarms and sprinklers; (2) installing new systems; and (3) upgrading obsolete wiring and infrastructure to making safety renovations in housing that has been heavily used for

decades.

Passage of the College Fire Prevention Act will provide for safe, modern and affordable housing for all college students. I implore you to support this matching grant program for all forms of student housing and co-sponsor the College Fire Prevention Act (HR. 642).

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