



Rep. Courtney's Work to Correct the PSLF Program

Rep. Courtney has worked for years on behalf of American student loan borrowers of all ages to lower the cost of higher education, and to hold unscrupulous loan servicers and for-profit colleges accountable.

He began pressing the Department of Education to fix the PSLF program as soon as a wave of complaints first began surfacing in 2018. That year, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) released data showing that an outsized 99% of PSLF applicants had been rejected, many through no fault of their own. In April 2018, Rep. Courtney voted to pass the *Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018*, which created the Temporary Expanded Public Service Loan Forgiveness (TEPSLF) program to assist public servants who had previously been denied forgiveness on their student loans.

Despite ED's knowledge that PSLF was not being administered properly, in December 2018, former ED Secretary Betsy DeVos and the Trump Administration issued a memorandum barring student loan servicers from releasing important data to law enforcement officials, hindering the ability of states' Attorneys General and agencies like the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) to maintain oversight of loan servicers who might be engaged in unscrupulous practices. Only a few weeks later, in May 2019, a report from the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) found that 61% of loan servicers were non-compliant with ED standards.

Rep. Courtney questioned former Secretary DeVos on her Department's efforts to undermine protections for student loan borrowers when she came before the House Education and Labor Committee for a hearing in April 2019. He stated in part: **"Brazenly, the Department did not even publicly notice this [memorandum], and it was only obtained because someone at the Department leaked it. So, I want to ask, [...] what is the rationale for the Department to shut off that flow of information regarding student loan servicers, which has been standard operating procedure for decades? This is a decision you made—to shut off this information to people who are law enforcement. They're investigating things like fraud. So please explain the decision in that memo."** [Click here](#) to read more.

In May 2021, [Courtney introduced the Recognizing Military Service in PSLF Act](#) (H.R. 3486). The bill was strongly bipartisan—Courtney was joined by Rep. Dusty Johnson (R-SD) as an original co-sponsor—and would finally enable American servicemembers to count the full length of their service towards student loan forgiveness. Existing rules prevent many active duty servicemembers who have deployed from applying their full period of deployed service towards PSLF, meaning they're made to complete a longer period of service before qualifying for student loan forgiveness.

H.R. 3486 would allow them to count the full length of their service towards PSLF. Courtney's bill received support from [veterans' service organizations like the IAVA, the VFW, and many more](#).

In August 2021, Secretary Cardona announced that his Department [would restore the government's ability to conduct oversight](#) of loan servicers on behalf of borrowers within their jurisdictions—the oversight that Secretary DeVos did away with.

Also in August 2021, the Biden Administration also announced a policy under which they would presumptively grant [full student loan relief to borrowers the Department determines were defrauded by their colleges](#)—a departure from the previous administration's policy. Under former Secretary DeVos, students who could prove they were defrauded were only ever entitled to receive partial relief. Instead, the Department of Education under Secretary Cardona will assume that defrauded student borrowers are entitled to 100% relief, unless evidence is presented to the contrary.

In September 2021, Courtney [wrote to U.S. Department of Education Secretary Miguel Cardona](#) to weigh in on behalf of eastern Connecticut residents who have encountered serious problems with PSLF. Courtney shared the stories of five eastern Connecticut residents who encountered problems with PSLF, and encouraged the Department to adhere to three guiding principles in correcting the program: Simplicity, Accessibility, and Communication. [Click here](#) to read more.

In October 2021, [Courtney welcomed the Biden Administration's announced overhaul of the PSLF program](#). Among several important improvements, the Biden Administration's overhaul included provisions contained in Rep. Courtney's *Recognizing Military Service in PSLF Act*, the bill he introduced in May 2021.

Since then, Courtney has worked to spread the word about the newly overhauled PSLF program to public service workers throughout eastern Connecticut. In May, he was joined by The Alliance: The Voice of Community Non-Profits to host a public webinar and information session on new updates to the PSLF program—[click here to watch](#).