




Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

October 18, 2016

To: Chancellors, Superintendents, Presidents, Accreditation Liaison Officers, and Other Interested Parties

cc: Commissioners

From: Barbara A. Beno 
ACCJC President

RE: U.S. Senate Proposed Legislation

A few weeks ago, Senators Warren (D-MA), Durbin (D-IL), and Schatz (D-HI) proposed new federal legislation on accreditation to be included in the next Higher Education Act, *The Accreditation Reform and Enhanced Accountability Act of 2016; S.3380*. The proposed legislation calls for sweeping changes in accreditation practice in the United States, and its component elements reflect much of the criticism of accreditation and higher education that you have read in the business press and seen reported in the higher education press.

In late September, the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC, an organization comprised of the executives of the seven regional accrediting commissions) discussed this proposed legislation at its meeting in Washington. C-RAC also discussed the legislation with the leadership of the six organizations that comprise the American Council on Education's "Six" – the American Association of Community Colleges, the American Association of Universities, the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, the Association of Public Land Grant Universities, and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, to discuss the implications of the proposed legislation.

C-RAC has written a brief analysis of the "Warren Bill", *which I enclose for you*. I think the grave concerns accreditors and higher education organizations have about the bill are well expressed in the C-RAC analysis. The United States is moving toward a more federalized process for accreditation in response to the large amount of federal funding for higher education and the amount of student debt.

ACCJC urges you to read the analysis carefully. You may want to read the Warren Bill as well. The bill will most certainly play an important role in the development of the next Higher Education Act. ACCJC or the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) may ask you to participate in providing feedback to Congress on the ideas in this bill as it moves forward in 2017.

The draft bill will not be passed this session, and is unlikely to pass in its current, whole form.