April 5, 2001

Character Act would promote this needed planning.

We commend your efforts in introducing the Community Character Act and we look forward to working with you toward its adoption.

Sincerely,
LEE L. VERSTANDING,
Senior Vice President,
Government Affairs.

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS,
Washington, DC.
April 3, 2001

Hon. Earl Blumenauer,
Longworth Building,
Washington, DC.

Dear Congressman Blumenauer: On behalf of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) and its 14,000 members, I'm writing to convey my strong endorsement of the “Community Character Act” (CCA) you have sponsored. ASLA applauds your leadership in promoting legislation that will support state and tribal efforts to develop and update land use plans.

The Community Character Act as an effective tool to promote more livable communities and stewardship of the natural environment, both of which are important aspects of the landscape architecture profession.

Americans are increasingly aware and concerned about the byproducts of unmanaged growth—loss of open space, congestion, strip malls, and loss of ecological biodiversity—as clearly indicated by surveys and the passage of numerous local ballot initiatives to address growth. CCA responds to these concerns by authorizing funding assistance to states and tribal governments that request help in implementing their respective visions of sustainability.

In addition to minimizing some of the harmful impacts that unplanned development can have on local and regional ecosystems, good planning and design makes smart business sense. Planning and design help to create communities with character—places where people want to be. As more people are attracted to such places—both residents and tourists—local economies flourish. CCA has garnered bipartisan support, as well as the endorsement of a broad array of organizations, including planners, conservationists, preservationists, and the National Association of Realtors.

Thank you again for your sponsorship of “The Community Character Act” and your continued commitment to enhancing more livable communities across America. I look forward to working with you to enact this legislation.

Sincerely,
NANCY C. SOMERVILLE,
Executive Director.

SMART GROWTH AMERICA,
Washington, DC.
April 4, 2001

Hon. Earl Blumenauer,
Wayne Gilchrest,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

Dear Representative Blumenauer and Representative Gilchrest: Smart Growth America would like to commend you on the introduction of the Community Character Act of 2001. We support both the bill and your efforts to assist states, multi-state regions and tribal governments in their efforts to revise their land use planning legislation and develop comprehensive plans.

Planning for future growth and directing development so that it strengthens existing communities while building upon their physical, cultural historical assets is integral to smart growth. We applaud your foresight and willingness to help states, tribal government and regions in their ongoing efforts to achieve smart growth by coordinating transportation, housing and education infrastructure investments while conserving historic, scenic and natural resources.

The Community Character Act makes the federal government a partner in the ongoing efforts of states, regions and tribal governments that want to plan for future growth. We applaud your efforts and look forward to working with you to pass this timely legislation.

Sincerely,
DON CHEN,
Director,
Smart Growth America.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COLLEGE ACCESS ACT TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS ACT OF 2001

Hon. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
Of the District of Columbia
In the House of Representatives

Wednesday, April 4, 2001

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, today, I am pleased to introduce the District of Columbia College Access Act Technical Corrections Act of 2001. I am particularly pleased and appreciative to be joined by my colleagues, D.C. Subcommittee Chair CONNIE MORELLA and former Chair TOM DAVIS, who are original cosponsors of this bill and were original cosponsors of the landmark College Access Act that has proved so successful.

This bill is necessary to correct three problems that have arisen in the administration of the District’s Tuition Assistance Grant Program, authorized in 1999 with the passage of the District of Columbia College Access Act.

The Act allows D.C. residents in-state tuition at public colleges and universities nationwide or a $2500 stipend at private colleges and universities in the region.

First, the bill amends the College Access Act to remove a provision limiting the benefits of the Act to residents who graduated from high school before January 1, 1998. The bill would allow current college seniors and a smaller group of juniors who are presently excluded from program, but are otherwise eligible for College Access Act benefits to receive those benefits. The arbitrary cutoff date, which was not included in the bill passed by the House, was put in the bill in the Senate out of concern that there might not be enough money to cover all eligible students. Fortunately, the evidence does not support this assumption, allowing the students eligible in the original House bill to be funded. The District has received over 3500 applications and placed over 1600 students at colleges and universities across the country. The program’s $17 million appropriation was originally derived from the Department of Education’s own statutory reappropriation, allowing the students eligible in the College Access Act Technical Corrections Act of 2001.

Second, the bill removes the arbitrary three year deadline for college admission in order to be eligible for the benefits in the College Access Act of 2001. The bill as passed by the Senate never intended to deny in-state tuition to students who had to work after high school or who have decided to get a college degree later in life. The three year deadline language was also placed in the Act by the Senate to control the cost of the program. However, the District has done a study of the data and it is clear that it has the funds to include these students in the program. It is unfair to penalize otherwise eligible students because their life circumstances necessitated that they work before entering college. The Congress should applaud and encourage these students. The Department of Education, for example, does not place a similar constraint on its programs.

Third, the bill closes the loophole that currently allows foreign nationals who live in the District to receive the benefits of the Act. The congressional intent of the bill was to allow college access to non-D.C. residents, not foreign nationals who happen to live in the District. Most of these students already have the option to take advantage of their own country’s higher educational systems. The bill merely mirrors the Department of Education’s own statutory requirements on this matter.

The positive impact of the College Access Act on the District of Columbus has been extraordinary. For the first time, D.C. students have the same higher educational choices available to them as residents of the fifty states. This bill seeks only to include those who were arbitrarily left out of the Act from receiving these benefits.

The end of the current school year is rapidly approaching and current college seniors will begin to graduate in May. Because of the necessity for swift passage and the non-controversial nature of this bill, I am asking Chairwoman MORELLA to seek to have the bill placed on the suspension calendar as soon as we return from recess.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this important, non-controversial measure.

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY COUNSELING IMPROVEMENT ACT

Hon. MARGE ROUKEMA
Of New Jersey
In the House of Representatives

Wednesday, April 4, 2001

Mrs. ROUKEMA. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Elementary and Secondary Counseling Improvement Act, legislation to provide for elementary and secondary school counseling programs. The epidemic of school shootings across the nation exemplifies the urgent need for school-based mental health services for our youth. Many youth who may be headed toward school violence or other tragedies can be helped if we identify their early symptoms.

The lack of mental health interventions can produce devastating results for children, including disrupted social and educational development, academic failure, substance abuse