

By Austin Bard

Rep. David Price visited N.C. State University Monday to advocate for a proposal that would prevent an impending increase of the interest rate on federally-subsidized student loans.

Price, seeking reelection to Congress from North Carolina's Fourth District, told a dozen or so students and a crowd of reporters at the Wolf Plaza that his colleagues should act before a July 1 deadline passes and the interest rate on Stafford Loans propels from the current 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent.

He said the increase, which would only apply to new loans, would affect some 160,000 students in North Carolina and 7.9 million nationwide. That could translate to upwards of an extra \$1,000 per year for students relying heavily on subsidized loans. Price blasted Congressional Republicans for inaction and Mitt Romney for not pressing his colleagues to extend the current rates.

Romney has said he supports the effort to extend the low interest rate on student loans. "This is real money," Price said. "It could be put to a lot better uses: buying textbooks, investing in a start-up, starting an IRA, especially in this economy."

Also in attendance was Lisa Fristoe, mother of four, including a daughter who is a current NCSU student.

Students in North Carolina are "working hard in high school, they're getting into college and they're graduating with skills they need for the jobs of today and tomorrow," Fristoe said. "They shouldn't have to sign away their financial security when they go to college. But that's what's at stake."

Debate over the student loan proposal has been raging for months. In April, President Barack Obama visited Chapel Hill as part of a three-state tour to urge Congress to prevent the interest

rates from rising on July 1.

Critics of the extension, such as the Washington Post Editorial Board, point out that the interest rate was lowered to its present amount just last year and have called for focus to shift to Pell Grants to improve college access.