

LLOYD DOGGETT
35TH DISTRICT, TEXAS



WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2307 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-4865

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
HUMAN RESOURCES
RANKING MEMBER

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
TAX POLICY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
TRADE

Congress of the United States House of Representatives

DISTRICT OFFICES:
217 W TRAVIS
SAN ANTONIO, TX 78205
(210) 704-1080

300 EAST 8TH STREET, SUITE 763
AUSTIN, TX 78701
(512) 916-5921
Facebook.com/LloydDoggett

March 9, 2017

LLOYD.DOGGETT@MAIL.HOUSE.GOV
www.house.gov/doggett

Secretary Betsy DeVos
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20202

Commissioner John Koskinen
Internal Revenue Service
1111 Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20224

Re: Broken FAFSA Data Retrieval Tool

Dear Secretary DeVos and Commissioner Koskinen,

Constituents have told me that the Data Retrieval Tool (DRT) – the critical tool that allows students and families to *quickly* and *accurately* complete their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) – has been down since Friday, March 3.

This is unacceptable. With the application for state aid for public schools in Texas due next week, March 15, it is imperative that the tool be fixed immediately. Families depend on it to obtain immediate, accurate access to tax information from prior years. Without it, they are more likely to have errors on their FAFSA, which could result in a full or partial loss of deserved aid. Many families who rely on state and federal aid do not have immediate or easy access to their tax information without this tool; the assumption that these families can complete the FAFSA manually by the deadline without using the DRT is inaccurate.

This morning, the Department of Education issued the following statement regarding the DRT's status:

“The IRS DRT on fafsa.gov is currently unavailable, and we continue to work on the issue.”

Students and families who have attempted to make use of the DRT received only the following message:

“This service will be unavailable due to system maintenance. We apologize for any inconvenience.”

It is more than an inconvenience to students who rely on resources they have been promised by the Administration.

I strongly urge the Department of Education and the Internal Revenue Service to:

1. Immediately investigate and rectify this problem, restoring the Data Retrieval Tool to full functionality,
2. Notify FAFSA filers and their families as to the timeline of the restoration,
3. Work with public higher education institutions, especially in Texas, with upcoming deadlines to ensure that students and families will not be penalized for technical problems that are not their fault.

Given the urgency, I would greatly appreciate an immediate update on the status of any progress.

Sincerely,

Lloyd Doggett