

Texas Representative Roberto R. Alonzo's



Capitol Report

**Get Ready for FAFSA**

Every January millions of high school seniors, college students, and parents sit down together to fill out the dreaded FAFSA form-- one of the most essential steps in the financial aid process. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the basis for almost all student aid, loans and grants. It is important to start the financial aid process as early as possible because aid is given out on a first come first serve basis. The FAFSA form can be filed as early as January 1st preceding the academic year that you are requesting financial aid, which consists of 12 months from July 1st to June 30th. For example, the 2016-2017 academic year lasts from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017. A FAFSA can be filed for this academic year any time between January 1, 2016 and June 30, 2017. Visit www.fafsa.ed.gov for detailed instructions and helpful resources. There you can fill out the forms, save your information, and click to file online.

The FAFSA form can be quite confusing, and even more intrusive than the Federal tax form because it asks not only about income but assets of parents and students. Here are some key tips to remember when navigating your financial aid process.

- ✓ **Timing is everything.** January is the ideal time to get the FAFSA out of the way. Many schools award aid money on a first come, first serve basis until funds are depleted.
- ✓ **Financial Aid is income-driven, but assets count too.** The FAFSA formulas assume that students should be able to spend 20% of their assets on college. For parents, the rate maxes out at 5.64%. Moving money out of children's account over to a 529 account shields it from consideration as a child asset in FAFSA calculations
- ✓ **Be prepared for different aid packages.** Financial aid awards can vary greatly, even at schools of similar academic quality. Most financial aid packages include a mixture of grants, low-interest loans, and work-study opportunities.

**FDA Approves GE Salmon For Human Consumption**

Based on sound science and a comprehensive review, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is taking several important steps regarding food from genetically engineered (GE) plants and animals, including the first approval for a genetically engineered animal intended for food, AquAdvantage Salmon. In announcing the approval, the FDA stated that the fish is safe to eat and there are no biologically relevant differences in the nutritional profile of AquAdvantage Salmon compared to that of other farm-raised Atlantic salmon.

Dubbed the "frankenfish" by its critics, AquAdvantage salmon will reach market size in half the time of conventional salmon. Although the potential benefits and profits are huge, many people have concerns about manipulating the genetic code of other living creatures. Critics also worry that it could cause human allergies and the eventual decimation of the natural salmon population if it escapes and breeds in the wild.

"The increase in efficiency of production aside, is this really a good idea? It is important to weigh all aspects when considering such a monumental decision. Ultimately the health and safety of consumers should be the top priority," stated Rep. Roberto R. Alonzo.



(photo left)
Rep. Roberto Alonzo and Sylvana Alonzo met with Congressman Veasey while in Washington DC for the National Conference of State Legislators.

Important Deadline Approaching for Enrolling in or Renewing Affordable Care Act Health Insurance

Take Action by Dec. 15 for coverage to take effect January 1