

# **BACK TO SCHOOL: Democrats Fight For America's Schools & Colleges**

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U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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## **Democrats Support America's Students**

Democrats are working hard to support America's students and families. We believe in:

- ü *Fully funding the No Child Left Behind Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*
- ü *Supporting and rewarding high quality teachers*
- ü *Modernizing and building state-of-the-art schools*
- ü *Cutting interest rates in half for student loans*
- ü *Increasing the maximum Pell grant*
- ü *Making college tuition tax-deductible*



### ***Budgets Reflect Values; Education Programs Should Be Fully Funded***

Federal budgets are more than numbers on a page; they reflect values. **Democrats believe that budgets neglecting our children's education do not reflect the values of the American people, and that the American people deserve a New Direction.**

For far too long, the Bush administration and the Republican-led Congress have failed to adequately fund education. And this year is no different. The President's budget and **the bill funding education and health programs for 2007 that is currently before the House of Representatives would provide \$1 billion less for education programs than what was provided for 2005, and \$400 million less than what was provided for 2006.** This misguided proposal:

- ↓ *Cuts funding for the No Child Left Behind Act by nearly \$500 million.* This cumulates in a funding shortfall of \$56.7 billion since the bill was enacted in 2002.
- ↓ *Cuts Title I formula grants* for two-thirds of all school districts.
- ↓ *Eliminates key programs* including Education Technology Grants and Arts in Education.
- ↓ *Freezes funding for Head Start* and other child care programs.
- ↓ *Fails to meaningfully increase the maximum Pell grant.* As proposed, the maximum Pell grant is worth \$800 less in constant dollars than it was 30 years ago.

## ***Support and Reward High Quality Teachers for Every Classroom***

Over the next decade, public schools will need more than 2 million new teachers to meet the needs of the growing student population. Unfortunately there is no national plan for attracting outstanding students into the teaching profession or keeping them there.

Democrats are working to attract, develop and retain talented teachers to fill this void and ensure that every teacher in every classroom, teaching every child, is highly qualified. To help make this happen, Democrats introduced **The Teacher Excellence for All Children Act (The TEACH Act, H.R. 2835)** to:

- ü **Increase the supply of outstanding teachers** through financial incentives including competitive salaries, tax breaks, and up-front pre-paid tuition assistance for high-achieving undergraduate students.
- ü **Identify and reward our best teachers** through the development and use of data systems that can track student achievement gains, identify and improve teacher effectiveness, and inform instruction.
- ü **Ensure all children have teachers with expertise in subjects they teach** by providing funding for school districts to pay higher salaries to exemplary highly-qualified teachers and principals who transfer into the hardest-to-staff schools.
- ü **Keep the best teachers and principals in our schools** through state-of-the-art induction programs.

## ***Modernize and Build High Performing Schools***

For teachers to teach and children to learn, they must have safe, healthy, state-of-the-art school facilities and the latest in educational technology.

When President Bush took office, evidence showed public school renovation and repair would require well over \$100 billion. Instead of addressing that need, **President Bush eliminated the Emergency School Renovation and Repair program**, which provided schools with \$1.2 billion in President Clinton's last budget. In 2005, the American Society of Civil Engineers' Report Card for America's Infrastructure gave our school facilities a "D."

And, as technology becomes more and more important to education, the President and the Republican-led Congress have proposed eliminating hundreds of millions of dollars in federal support for school technology and related teacher training.

Democrats believe our children and teachers deserve better. That is why we have introduced **the 21<sup>st</sup> Century High Performing Public School Facilities Act (H.R. 5928)**. The Act would:

- ü **Provide \$6.4 billion per year for public school repair, modernization, and construction.**
- ü **Provide \$1 billion for school technology and related teacher training**, as promised by the No Child Left Behind Act.

## ***Reverse the Raid on Student Aid***

Earlier this year, Congress cut \$12 billion out of the federal student aid programs in order to help finance tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans.

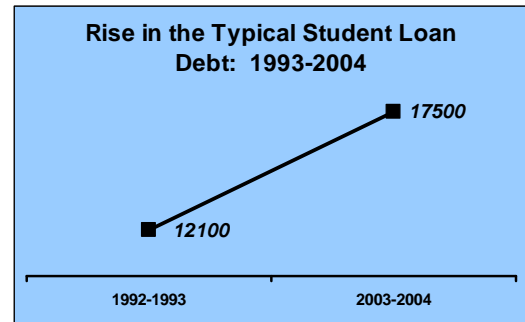
These cuts come at a time when student debt and college costs are rising at alarming rates.

Congress should be making college more affordable, but instead, Washington Republicans chose to put college further out of reach for American students and families.

Democrats want to make students whole again and the **Reverse the Raid on Student Aid Act (H.R. 5150)** would help make college more affordable by:

- ü **Cutting interest rates in half from a fixed rate of 6.8% to a fixed rate of 3.4% for the borrowers most need on subsidized student loans.**
- ü **Cutting rates on parent loans for undergraduate students from a fixed rate of 8.5% to a fixed rate of 4.25%.**

Under this bill, the typical undergraduate student borrower with \$17,500 in debt would save \$5,600 over the life of his or her loans.



## ***Give Students and Families a Voice***

"I come from a small rural family that makes less than \$20,000 a year. I am currently a student at the University of California Berkeley and I am entirely dependent on financial aid, ... Students should be rewarded for going to college, not punished with huge amounts of debt. ..."  
*Colin Phillips, Willits, CA*

Time and again, this Congress and President Bush have refused to listen to the voices of students and families. Democrats are listening to the voices of everyday Americans and working to lay the groundwork for a New Direction. Through online e-forums sponsored by the Democrats on the Education and the Workforce Committee, such as the one held on college costs, parents, students and other higher education stakeholders have communicated their stories directly to Members of Congress.

During the e-forum on college costs, we heard numerous stories from students and graduates who are struggling with paying for college. Many are forced to make difficult choices and are asking for help in reducing the student loan debt that is looming large in their futures. Democrats on the Education and the Workforce Committee will continue to hold forums on the education issues facing American families and work to pass laws that reflect these voices and values.

"I'm 8 years out of college and still have college loans to pay. ... After college my husband and I had our first child and now 8 years later just had our third. We both teach full time in the public schools and while paying for just the cost of living, I feel the crunch of my student loan is very stressful. ..."  
*Justine Davis, Oregon, IL*

"...When I chose the profession of social work, it was because I had the desire to work with disadvantaged populations to be of much help as possible to them. The reality is, my total student loans are \$50,000. Unfortunately, my loan debt will probably cause me to choose a job that is not with one of the many public service offices, where there is much needed help. ..."  
*Shannon McCullough, Ocean Gate, NJ*

## ***A New Direction for America***

Democrats are proposing a New Direction for America where education is a top priority. It is a New Direction that provides opportunity, security, and prosperity for all Americans, not just the privileged. We will fight for: Real security at home and overseas; Better, and better paying, American jobs; College access for all students; Energy independence and lower gas prices; Affordable health care; and Retirement security and dignity.

To learn more about the New Direction for America, visit:

[www.housedemocrats.gov/newdirection](http://www.housedemocrats.gov/newdirection)

To learn more about Democrats' Strengthen Our Schools plan, visit:

[http://housedemocrats.gov/news/librarydetail.cfm?library\\_content\\_id=423](http://housedemocrats.gov/news/librarydetail.cfm?library_content_id=423)

### ***About Representative George Miller Senior Democratic Member Committee on Education and the Workforce***

Congressman George Miller is a leading spokesman in Congress on education, labor, the economy and the environment. He has represented the 7<sup>th</sup> District of California in San Francisco's East Bay since 1975.

Miller plays a leadership role in the House of Representatives developing policies, strategy, and communications on a wide range of issues. He has been the ranking Democrat on the committee on Education and the Workforce since 2001.

To contact the Committee on Education and the Workforce, please call us at (202) 225-3725 or visit our website:

<http://edworkforce.house.gov/democrats>



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