

Take Action on Higher Education Reauthorization

Tell Congress what you think.

If you haven't told your elected officials in Congress what you think is best for you, how will they know? Now is the time to advocate for yourself and your future. The current Higher Education Act has been extended until the end of 2005. If you feel strongly about any of the issues listed in the previous article, now is the time to let your Senators and Representatives in Congress know. You've elected them and they are responsible for looking out for your best interests. You can make your opinion known in one of the following ways:



Send an e-mail message



Send a letter



Call your Congresspersons

Let them know who you are, where you live, and that you support or do not support one of the higher education proposals listed in the previous article. You also want to let them know why these proposals (Pell Grants, income protection allowance, childcare, and/or tax credits) matter to you.

How to Contact your Senators:

www.senate.gov/index.htm

This Web site links you directly with your Senators. Just click on your state and the Web site will provide you with their names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses. If you click on the e-mail address a new form will appear that can fill it out with your name, address, and a message. You can e-mail both senators regardless of their party affiliation.

How to Contact your Representatives:

www.house.gov/Welcome.shtml

The "House Directory" link at the bottom of the House of Representatives home page leads you to your representative's contact information. The Web site also has a "Write your Representative" link that allows you to type in your name, address, and message. See the next page for sample letters to Senators written by two students in a college transition program.

Each Senator and Representative has his or her own Web site. In most cases, you can get more information on a particular bill by looking at the "Issues" or "Legislation" section of the Web site. The bill title and its authors are listed below.

The College Access and Opportunity Act - submitted by John Boehner (R -Oh), Chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee. <http://edworkforce.house.gov/heasummary.pdf>

The Pell Grant Plus Act - submitted by Max Burns (R-GA) and Ric Keller (R-FL).
<http://edworkforce.house.gov/issues/108th/education/highereducation/pellplussummary.htm>

The Nontraditional Student Success Act - submitted by Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY) and Bill Graham (D-FL). <http://clinton.senate.gov/~clinton/news/2004/2004211531.html#par>



Tell others.

One voice isn't always enough. If you want to make an impact you need to rally your friends, family, coworkers, teachers, and other students. It will make more of impact if your Senators and Representatives receive fifty e-mails or phone calls than if they only receive one. A hundred phone calls or e-mails will be more effective than fifty phone calls or e-mails.

When you write a letter...

Follow the tips on page 18 and don't forget to include your mailing address. It's important to put your home address on the letter to show the Senator or Representative that you live in their district.

November 30, 2004

Senator Edward M. Kennedy
315 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

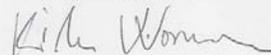
Dear Senator Kennedy:

I am urging your support regarding Bill # S 2630, The Nontraditional Student Success Act submitted by Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY) and Bill Graham (D-FL). I am voicing my support for this bill as it makes necessary funds available to students returning to higher education. I am returning to college after a twenty year hiatus, while pursuing a career in Emergency Communications. I have achieved much success in my career and feel that bettering my skills requires further education. I work in the public sector and I serve the city of Cambridge. My improved skills and education would benefit the citizenry and my goal to fulfill my professional potential.

Making this funding available to people like me enables us to find new skills and prepare to compete for jobs in other, newer markets, as many of those in my age bracket find our jobs either outsourced or discontinued. Educating ourselves after being laid off is important. Many of us have prepared, somewhat inadequately, for this setback. We are not looking for extra funding from the Unemployment Insurance Board. However, rising costs in higher education deplete our funds quickly and we are unable to make it without unemployment insurance. These funds will only allow us to cover basic living needs. We are given fish instead of being taught how to fish.

I urge you to vote to extend this funding to those of us who need it. Vote in favor of Bill # S 2630, The Nontraditional Student Success Act, and teach us how to fish!

Your loyal constituent,


Kirk Wornum

December 7, 2004

Senator Ted Kennedy
304 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Kennedy:

I am writing you this letter in support of the bill S 2630, The Nontraditional Student Success Act that Senators Hillary Clinton and Bill Graham submitted.

I support this act because the number of non-traditional students has been increasing dramatically on college campuses all across America. As a woman and mother of three children, my dream is to go to college next year. And I know that college tuition is not easy to pay. I do not know how I am going to afford to go to college and at the same time balance work and family responsibilities. I am paying college for my son. Many higher education policies make it harder for us to complete our degrees.

This proposal will eliminate these barriers and improve retention among non-traditional students. Helping these students succeed is not only good for each student and the families that rely on them; it is also good for our economic prosperity. I want to thank you for your support of adult students like me.

Sincerely,



Venette Faustin

These students did include their addresses on their letters but they were removed to protect their privacy.