

# Congress Is Going the Wrong Way on the Road to Investing in America's Future

Vicki Choitz

In 2011, Congress passed a law that reduces funding for federal scholarships based on need—called Pell grants—and makes it harder for people to qualify for these scholarships. Congress passed this law at a time when the country needs exactly the opposite. This law takes the country in the wrong direction.

Before the new law, families who made \$32,000 or less would qualify under a special rule in the Pell grant program that meant they were not expected to pay anything toward their education. This would

increase their chance of getting the maximum Pell grant of \$5,550 if they enrolled full-time. The new law decreased the income amount for this special rule. Now, families have to earn \$23,000 or less to be able to qualify. Families making more than \$23,000 may still

## What is a Pell Grant?

**Unlike a loan, a Federal Pell Grant does not have to be repaid.**

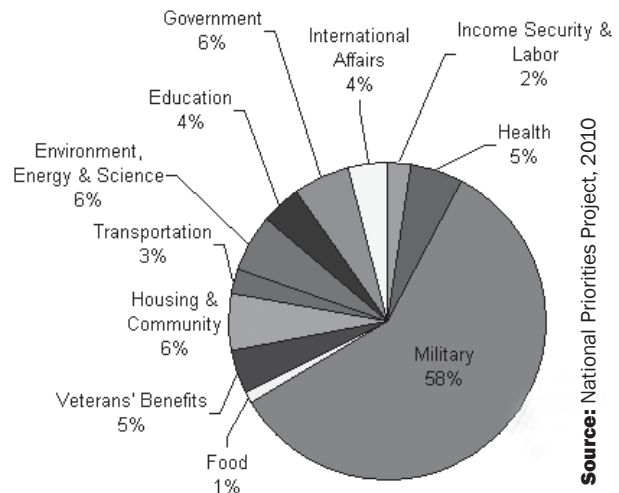
**Last year, the maximum Pell grant was \$5,550.**

**The amount depends on your financial need and other factors.**

qualify for grants depending on their circumstances. But, overall, very low-income students will have a harder time getting scholarships.

Next year, Congress has a choice: continue in the wrong direction or turn around and make the smart investments. At a time when lower-skilled workers have the highest unemployment rates, and more jobs require at least a postsecondary credential, it is in the best interest of the nation to help students get Pell grants. With Pell grants, more people will be able to attain the skills and credentials they need to support their families, strengthen their communities, and grow our economy.

## Discretionary Spending of the U.S. Federal Government for FY 2011



## Take Action!

**Visit <[www.savepell.org](http://www.savepell.org)>.** "Like" it on Facebook and follow it on Twitter. CLASP co-founded Save Pell last summer. Because of their work, the changes to Pell were not as harmful as they could have been. But there is more work to do! At their website, share your stories of how important Pell Grants are or will be. Save Pell will share them with policymakers when they advocate for Pell.

**Look at the chart.** What do you think of how the federal government spends its discretionary budget? What would you do if you wanted to see changes?

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