

college by age 24, but only 7 percent of students from low-income families do. Minority and first-generation college students are 33 percent more likely to drop out.

Only 40 percent of whites ages 18 to 24 attend college; the figure is 30 percent for African-Americans and 16 percent for Latinos. Four in 10 Latino college students drop out within three years of enrolling.

Congress needs to do more to help students attend and finish college, and this requires doing more to help colleges train more and better public school teachers.

Last fall, Democratic members of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee proposed legislation offering five key ways to overcome these hurdles. The proposal would help students pay for college by increasing the maximum Pell Grant by \$450 next year. It would make repayment of student loans less costly by allowing students to refinance their already consolidated loans if the interest rate is reduced. It would encourage and reward students who work their way through college by exempting up to \$9,000 of their earnings from financial aid calculations. It would offer extra incentives for minority and low-income students

to complete college by tracking persistence rates and easing the transfer of credits from two-year to four-year institutions. And it would improve the recruitment and training of the elementary and secondary school teachers who are preparing the college students of the future by increasing Title II state and partnership grants by almost \$200 million.

Fulfilling the pledge of “education security” requires new resolve by everyone: students, families, colleges, states and the federal government. Students should work to save money for college. Families should pay what they can afford. Colleges should commit to limiting increases in tuition. States should continue providing as much support as they can for students. Greater federal support should be made available to fill the gap that remains. It is time to make the promise of education security a reality for all citizens, not just for some.

U.S. Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) is the ranking Democrat on the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Training in Freedom and Civilization



SEN. JUDD GREGG

Today, the American system of higher education is the envy of the world, due in large part to the leadership provided by New England’s colleges and universities. While American higher education has accomplished a great deal for New England and the nation, the system faces several challenges as it seeks to train the citizens and workers of tomorrow.

First, we need to develop a technologically literate workforce that will support the growing demands of business and industry. Obtaining a higher education is increasingly a prerequisite for a quality job and access to the American Dream. Recent studies reveal that over the course of a lifetime, the average college graduate earns about \$1 million more than someone with only a high school diploma.

From advances in computers to medical research—and the marriage of the two in nanotechnology—many of the promising and expanding sectors of the economy are producing jobs that require college-level academic training in math and science, and knowledge about how to apply these disciplines through technology to produce wealth and income. So, America’s future prosperity rests on the ability of institutions of higher education to accommodate the demand for a highly trained workforce.

New England continues to lead other regions of the

United States in human capital development, as measured by educational attainment. But in an increasingly global economy, with reduced trade barriers, we will face increasing economic competition from industrialized countries as well as emerging nations. It is important that New England’s colleges and universities work diligently to meet the demands of the evolving labor market and ensure that prospective students have access to the course offerings and high-caliber faculty necessary to meet this challenge.

As chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, I will be spearheading the effort to reauthorize the Higher Education Act next year. It is my hope that we will be able to use that opportunity to promote better access to higher education, so all Americans will be able to participate fully in the workforce of the 21st century.

In addition to technical expertise, I believe college students also need a solid background in such core subjects as English, history, Western civilization, foreign languages and the arts. Unfortunately, good core curriculum programs are all too rare in higher education today. Those institutions that do have these programs, like New Hampshire’s Saint Anselm College, provide students with a basic understanding of America’s heritage and equip them to wrestle with the challenges we face in our modern world. It concerns me that on many college

campuses, core classes are being squeezed out in favor of a balkanized curriculum that does not provide this kind of basic, well-rounded education. While I do not believe the federal government should mandate changes in college curricula, I do plan to scrutinize those federal grant programs that already exist in higher education to make sure they are not contributing to this problem.

Finally, as our nation continues to persevere in the war on terrorism, it is vital that we train students to understand our common heritage of freedom and civilization. To accomplish that, we need to teach them about Western civilization, traditional American history and the principles of free government on which this nation was founded. This basic knowledge is not only essential to the full participation of our citizenry in America's civic life, but also to the continued success of the American experiment in self-government. However, college students' lack of knowledge in these areas is quite startling. One survey of students at America's top colleges reported that, given a high school level American history exam, 81 percent of college seniors would have received a D or F.

To address this problem, I recently introduced the Higher Education for Freedom Act. This legislation would establish a competitive grant program to support centers within higher education that are focused on the teaching and study of traditional American history and government and the history and achievements of Western civilization at both the graduate and undergraduate level. Centers that serve students enrolled in K-12 teacher education programs would be included as eligible grantees. Although the task of preparing the next generation of workers and citizens will not be easy, it can be accomplished if we work together. Where the federal government has an appropriate role, I plan to make sure it fulfills that role responsibly. Where institutions have a role, I believe New England's colleges and universities, which have led American higher education before, can be a model for others to emulate.

U.S. Sen. Judd Gregg (R-N.H.) is chair of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Education Is Welfare Reform



SEN. OLYMPIA J. SNOWE

As Congress works to fine-tune our nation's welfare reform program, we have a great opportunity to look toward states for guidance. In fact, a successful program for moving parents off the welfare rolls and into the workforce has been in operation in Maine for a number of years. The premise of Maine's "Parents as Scholars" program is simple. Increased education is a critical factor in determining whether a person will be able to transition off welfare and keep a job with a decent income—one that allows them to support themselves, their children and their families.

Parents as Scholars has given hundreds of parents in Maine the opportunity to raise their incomes, by giving them access to higher education programs at the state's two- and four-year colleges. The parents must be eligible for the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF), though they are supported by state money. Participants are held to high standards. They are expected to demonstrate commitment to their courses of study and maintain minimum grade point averages. While they can't use the state money for tuition, they can use it to make sure they and their families have the services they need to succeed.

The results have been impressive. A recent study found that, given the tools to build their education, the partici-

pants in Parents as Scholars have improved their median wage by about 50 percent—from \$8 per hour to \$11.71 per hour. Seventy-one percent of Parents as Scholars graduates take advantage of their employer-sponsored health insurance, and most impressive, 90 percent of the working Parents as Scholars graduates have left TANF permanently.

These graduates' personal stories are also impressive. Last year, I had the opportunity to personally meet six graduates of the program. Michelle had been sleeping on a friend's couch with her infant daughter and had to hitchhike back and forth to work. Parents as Scholars gave her the assistance she needed to sustain her family, earn her degree and get a good job. Michelle now works with people with severe mental illness. And she has gone on, on her own, to earn a master's degree in social work. She and her daughter are thriving—and her daughter has learned a lesson about the importance of education and hard work, from a role model she sees every day right at home.

Maine's program is a model for other states to follow. The Senate Finance Committee recently adopted an amendment, based on my proposed Pathways to Self-Sufficiency Act, to expand the Parents as Scholars program nationally. Under this amendment, parents would be expected to meet the same hours requirements as other TANF recipients. But by letting them count their hours working in the classroom the same as hours at work, we will open the door for them to secure better jobs in