

EDUCATION AND THE REPUBLICAN BUDGET: FISCALLY RECKLESS, MORALLY IRRESPONSIBLE, AND A FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP

Democrats believe that on every issue our nation faces, it is our responsibility to ensure that the policies we pursue are consistent with the values we cherish. The Bush Administration's 2006 budget fails in every respect. It is fiscally reckless, adding trillions to the deficit over the next 10 years. It is morally irresponsible, slashing funding for key homeland security, veterans benefits, health care, and education programs. And the Bush Administration's failure to include details of its Social Security privatization proposal and the cost of the war in Iraq is a clear failure of leadership. Democrats are fighting to restore fiscal responsibility and hold those in power responsible for their actions. We are committed to upholding the key values that are the foundation of a strong and secure middle class: national security, prosperity, community, fairness, accountability and opportunity.

Cuts Education Department funding below this year's level. For the fourth year in a row, President Bush shortchanges education – this year, for the first time, even cutting education funding below the current-year level. The Bush budget is cutting education funding despite rising college costs and the challenging academic requirements under the No Child Left Behind Act.

Shortchanges education reform efforts by \$12 billion. President Bush provides \$12 billion less for education than was promised in the No Child Left Behind Act – meaning that 3 million children will not get the help with reading and math that they were promised under Title I. Overall, since the No Child Left Behind Act was signed into law, President Bush has underfunded the law by \$39 billion.

Guts Head Start. Once again, the President's budget proposes turning Head Start into a block grant program that eliminates comprehensive educational, health, and nutrition services that children in this program currently receive. In addition, the budget freezes Head Start funding at this year's level, meaning that 25,000 children will have to be cut from the program next year – despite the fact that Head Start is currently serving only 60 percent of eligible preschoolers.

Shuts 1.7 million children out of after-school programs. President Bush provides \$1.3 billion less for after-school programs than was promised in the No Child Left Behind Act – meaning that 1.7 million children will be left without a safe place to play and learn after school.

Shortchanges special education for 6.9 million children. The Bush budget provides \$3.5 billion less than promised for special education in the IDEA Improvement Act enacted by Congress just two months ago, providing local school systems with less than half of the funding they are owed by the federal government. This marks the fifth year in a row President Bush has failed to put us on the path to fully funding special education.

Misleads the public about high school reform. The Bush Administration has trumpeted the investment of more than \$1 billion in high school reform efforts. In reality, over \$600 million of these funds are required to continue existing grants made for other education programs. In addition, the remaining resources are being taken from existing programs.

Freezes bilingual education for the fourth year in a row. President Bush's budget freezes bilingual education at \$676 million, even though the number of students with limited English proficiency is growing rapidly. This proposal provides no increase for bilingual education for the fourth year in a row.

Eliminates Safe and Drug-Free Schools. The Bush budget completely eliminates funding for the \$437 million Safe and Drug Free Schools program. This means no federal resources to ensure safety and reduce drug abuse in our schools. This elimination will compromise existing efforts to ensure safe learning environments and safeguard students from terrorist threats.

Eliminates education technology. The Bush budget also completely eliminates funding for the \$496 million Educational Technology State Grant program, despite the fact that studies have shown that technology can substantially raise student achievement.

Eliminates GEAR-UP, Upward Bound, and Talent Search. The Bush budget completely eliminates the \$306 million GEAR-UP, \$313 million Upward Bound, and \$150 million Talent Search programs – which ensure that high-risk students succeed in high school and move on to college. As a result, about 1.3 million students – 70 percent of whom are minorities – will lose the support they need to make it to college.

Eliminates vocational education. The Bush budget completely eliminates the \$1.3 billion vocational education program, destroying innovative career and technical education programs for students attending high school and community college. Eliminating vocational education cuts off a pipeline to job opportunities in emerging fields such as telecommunications and health care for millions of students.

Jeopardizes aid to children of military families. The Bush budget freezes Impact Aid funding, jeopardizing programs and services for the children of military families.

Breaks promise to raise the maximum Pell Grant to \$5,100. While campaigning in 2000, George W. Bush pledged to make college more affordable and accessible by increasing the maximum Pell Grant for college freshmen to \$5,100. And yet the President breaks his promise once again in this budget, only increasing the maximum Pell Grant by \$100 – from \$4,050 to \$4,150 – falling nearly \$1,000 short of his promise to students. President Bush is breaking this promise at a time when college tuition is rising rapidly.

Eliminates Perkins Loans. The Bush budget completely eliminates the Perkins Loan program. If this proposal is enacted, just in 2006 alone more than 670,000 student borrowers would lose out on loan forgiveness if they became teachers, law enforcement officers or if they serve in the military.

Forces millions of low and middle-income students to pay thousands more for their college loans. The Bush budget eliminates the current low fixed consolidation rate benefit. According to the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service (CRS), this change will force the typical student borrower to pay \$5,500 more for their college loans.

Eliminates an additional 41 education programs. In addition to eliminating Safe and Drug-Free Schools, education technology, GEAR-UP, Upward Bound, Talent Search, vocational education, and Perkins Loans, the Bush budget eliminates an additional 41 education programs, including Even Start and Ready to Teach, for a total cut of \$4.3 billion. Attached is a complete list of the 48 education programs eliminated in the Bush budget.

