

“Only by making college more affordable and accessible will we be able to compete in a globalizing world.” ~ Congressman John B. Larson

College costs are out of control. To maintain a competitive and innovative workforce, every qualified student must have the opportunity to pursue higher education.

In the 110<sup>th</sup>

th

Congress, Democrats took a strong stand on this issue and passed important legislation that will help to bring down the costs of college and expand opportunities.

### ***The Higher Education Act***

One of these legislative achievements was passing a reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) for the first time in 10 years. The HEA authorizes the federal government's major student aid programs. With the passage of The Higher Education Opportunity Act, [H.R. 4137](#)

, on July 31, 2008, Congress expanded financial aid programs for low-income students, simplified the student loan process, and increased the responsibility of colleges to report tuition increases.

To view a summary of the entire bill from the Committee on Education and Labor please [click here](#)

### ***The College Cost Reduction Act***

The Pell Grant is one of the federal government's most important tools to help more students afford college. The Pell Grant program offers need-based scholarships to undergraduate college students. The College Cost Reduction Act of 2007, [H.R. 2669](#), which

was signed into law on September 27, 2007, increased the maximum Pell Grant amount from just over \$4,000 to \$5,400 over the next five years.

The bill also cut interest rates for subsidized student loans and increased borrowing rates for third and fourth year students.

Finally, it created a grant program that will give financial incentives to students who agree to teach in a high-need area following graduation.

In total, for Connecticut students this bill will contribute an additional \$130 million for the 39,500 students pursuing higher education over the next five years.

For more information on this important legislation please [click here](#) for a summary from the Committee on Education and Labor.

Here are some recent bills that I cosponsored or voted for in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress:

**[H.R. 2458](#)** , **Universal Higher Education and Lifetime Learning Act of 2007** - This legislation would replace the Hope Scholarship and Lifetime Learning Credit with a Higher Education Tax Credit.

This credit would cover 50 percent of expenses up to \$3,000 and 30% of expenses between \$3,000 and \$8,000.

The bill would allow

**[H.R. 5715](#)** , **Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act of 2008** - H.R. 5715 included provisions to increase the amount of unsubsidized loans available to students, allow for families to defer payments on PLUS loans for six months following their child's graduation, granted authority to the Secretary of Education to purchase loans from companies that do not have enough capital to support them and also give federal funds to lenders of last resort in order to maintain their ability to issue new loans.

***For more information on Congressional efforts to make college more affordable, please see:***

[CRS Report: The Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act of 2008](#)

[CRS Report: Campus-Based Student Financial Aid Programs Under the Higher Education Act](#)

[CRS Report: Federal Pell Grant Program of the Higher Education Act: Background and Reauthorization](#)