

Republican budget threatens American education

Dear student, This is a busy time for you. But while you are choosing classes and making the decisions that will help you build a good life for yourself, the congressional majority is working to make drastic cuts in education — in your student loans, in national service and even in your scholarships. And the cuts will jeopardize the future you and your generation are working toward.

I want you to know that I oppose these cuts. I will do everything in my power to fight them and to see to it that the dream of higher education remains real for all Americans. I will do this not only by defending the opportunities of those of you who are already in college, but by opening the doors further to make sure that even greater numbers of deserving Americans have the chance to stand where you stand today.

For the first time in a long time, leaders from both parties are resolved that we must balance the federal budget. From the day I took office, I've been committed to this goal — to getting rid of the budget deficit that quadrupled our national debt in the 12 years before I came to Washington. So far, we have made great progress. In three years, we have cut the deficit nearly in half, from \$290 billion to \$160 billion.

Now we are ready to eliminate the deficit entirely. On this, the congressional majority and I see eye-to-eye.

But just how we get rid of the deficit is another matter. The majority in Congress wants to balance the budget in seven years, and do it while giving unnecessarily large tax cuts. But in order to do these things, the congressional majority would make enormous cuts in education.

My balanced-budget plan would take more years that Congress' to eliminate the deficit, but that's a small price

COMMENTARY President Clinton

to pay to keep your scholarships, your student loans, and national service safe and well. It would also preserve our ability to protect the environment and the integrity of Medicare for our older citizens.

Balancing the budget is about more than numbers. It's about our values and our future. Education has always been the currency of the American Dream. When I was your age, it was assumed — based on our long history — that each generation would have a better life than the preceding one. More than anything else, a good education is the way we pass this vision on to those who come after us.

The facts speak for themselves. Earnings for those kids with no post-secondary education have fallen substantially in the last 15 years. The only people for whom earnings have increased steadily are people exactly like you — those Americans with more education. Every year of higher education increases your earnings by six to 12 percent. Those years also mean a stronger overall economy and richer lives for those who have them.

Balancing the budget will be good for our economy and your future if it's done right. But simply balancing the budget won't do much good in the long term if your generation does not have the education it needs to meet the challenges of the next century.

Just think over what the congressional majority's plan, if it went through, would do to you, your classmates, and any of the one out of two college students who receives federal aid. It would:

- Raise the cost of student loans by \$10 billion over seven years by charging you interest on your loan while you are in

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school. This would increase the cost of a college education by as much as \$3,100 for undergraduates and \$9,400 for graduate students.

- Deny up to 360,000 low-income students desperately needed Pell Grants in 1996.
- Shut down Americorps, our national service initiative, which gives thousands of young people the chance to earn and save money for college while serving their country.

By contrast, my balanced-budget plan builds on the national consensus that we must help people help themselves through the power of education. It eliminates both of our deficits: our budget deficit and our education deficit. My plan cuts wasteful spending by more than \$1 trillion, but it also increases investments in education by \$40 billion over the next seven years.

Think over how my balanced-budget plan would help guarantee your future and all the hard work you're about to put into it. It will:

- Increase funding for Pell Grants by \$3.4 billion. Almost one million more students would benefit from the scholarships, and we would raise the top award to \$3,128 by the year 2002.
- Expand Americorps to let even more young Americans serve their communities and go to college.
- Protect our direct-lending program, which makes student loans more affordable, with more repayment options, and saves taxpayers, parents and students billions of dollars.

I just returned from Pearl Harbor where I took part in ceremonies marking the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. In the late 1940s when the veterans we honored left their loved ones to go off and serve their country, they were the age most of you are now.

When they came home, the country recognized their service and their potential, and it responded with the G.I. Bill, which guaranteed a college education to every returning veteran. Those who served weren't given a handout, and they didn't want one. They were given the opportunity they needed to take responsibility for their lives.

Your generation has its own battles to wage. You face the choice of doing something right and difficult — or something easy and wrong.

In taking on the responsibility of educating yourselves, you have chosen the right and difficult path. You did the work you had to do to get into college. You may be working now to pay your way. And your family may have worked long hours and made great sacrifices to help you get where you are today.

You deserve the nation's support. And your future success will likely repay our common investment. I do not accept the arguments of those who condemn irresponsibility in young Americans and then seek to deny the nation's helping hand to the millions of you who are doing the right things.

I hope you'll support my efforts to protect education and balance the budget. The fight for education is the fight for your future. In my life — and in the lives of countless Americans — education has meant the difference between the impossible and the possible. It should be true in your lives, too. With your help, we'll keep it that way.

LETTERS

Sexist Saferide

Every student on campus spends their money to operate Saferide but only women may use it. Quimby Masters (ODE, July 25) justifies the women-only policy by saying, "Our riders support this." The men of the Citadel military college probably say much the same thing, but they will either have to have equivalent programs for women elsewhere or open their facility to women. This is despite the fact that men organized and sought funding for their all-male institution.

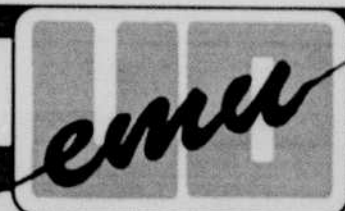
If we accept Master's idea that if men want a Saferide they should form one, then we can also say that women have the same opportunity to seek funding for and establish their own military college, and that Shannon Faulkner is out of luck. Should that be the case? No! Publicly funded programs have to be open to everyone without regard to sex, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, marital status, handicap, political view, national origin or any other extraneous consideration.

For Shannon Faulkner, there is no need to be in the Citadel, but for men there is a need for better protection. Michael Endicott (ODE, July 20) points out that men are two times more likely to be victims of violent crime than women are. This seems sufficient reason to open Saferide.

The state has no more responsibility to women's safety than has to men's safety. The state is obligated to provide men with the same services it provides women. Either open Saferide to men or close it down altogether. I consider establishing a separate program for men a waste of resources.

Sonja G. Schirmer
Mathematics

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