

# RHETORIC VS. REALITY: THE G.O.P. RECORD ON EDUCATION

## RHETORIC:

*"We're going to spend more on our schools, and we're going to spend it more wisely."*

—President Bush,  
January 8, 2002



SPECIAL REPORT



SEPTEMBER 2002



## REALITY:

The Republican budget cuts teacher quality by 4%, eliminating high-quality training for 18,000 teachers.

REP. GEORGE MILLER, SENIOR DEMOCRAT  
HOUSE EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE COMMITTEE

<http://edworkforce.house.gov/democrats>

# **RHETORIC VS. REALITY: *THE G.O.P. RECORD ON EDUCATION***

**A report by Congressman George Miller (D-CA)  
Senior Democrat, House Education and the workforce Committee**

**September, 2002**

**RHETORIC ON RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL REFORM:** “We're going to spend more on our schools, and we're going to spend it more wisely.” —*President Bush, January 8, 2002*

- **REALITY:** The Bush Administration’s budget proposal cuts funding for the No Child Left Behind Act by \$90 million from last year. In combination with inflation, the result is 18,000 fewer teachers getting trained, 33,000 fewer children in after-school programs, and yet another year without the needed resources to turn around failing schools.

**RHETORIC ON ACCOUNTABILITY FOR RESULTS:** “The fundamental principle of this bill is that every child can learn, we expect every child to learn, and you must show us whether or not every child is learning.” —*President Bush, January 8, 2002*

- **REALITY:** The Bush Department of Education is already establishing loopholes in the new accountability requirements. It allows states to refuse to implement statewide tests; to measure children’s progress against each other rather than against objective standards; and to define an uncertified teacher as “highly qualified.”

**RHETORIC ON COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY:** “By working together, the administration and Congress have succeeded in opening the doors of [college] opportunity for all Americans.” —*Secretary of Education Rod Paige, August 5, 2002*

- **REALITY:** For the second year in a row, the Bush Administration has requested inadequate funds for their proposed maximum Pell grant. It also proposed raising interest rates on refinanced student loans, while House Republicans refuse to consider a bipartisan proposal to forgive the student loans of teachers in high-poverty schools.

**RHETORIC ON CHILD CARE:** “We must make sure that every child enter[s] school ready to learn — every child — not just one, not just a few, but every, single child. ... Anyone who is serious about educational reform must be serious about early childhood education.” —*President Bush, April 2, 2002*

- **REALITY:** The Bush Administration’s budget freezes child care and includes only a token increase for Head Start, even though millions of eligible low-income children cannot be served due to inadequate resources.

## RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL REFORM

Last year, the bipartisan No Child Left Behind Act mandated high expectations and promised additional resources to achieve that goal. Successful school reform requires *both* accountability for student achievement *and* the money necessary to raise teacher quality, reduce class sizes, and implement other initiatives proven to help children learn.

But this year, children and teachers got a rude shock: a Bush budget that cut funding for education reform. House Republicans approved the Administration’s bottom-line number for education. In the first full year of education reform, the Republican budget:

- Actually cuts \$90 million from last year’s educational funding; and
- Falls \$7 billion short of the Act’s benchmark of the needed resources.

**The Bush budget threatens to yank out the rug from underneath education reform.**

Testing alone won’t raise achievement. When states identify failing schools, Congress must help turn those schools around by investing in proven initiatives such as:

- **Teacher Quality.** Putting a highly qualified teacher in every classroom is the single most important step to successful school reform. The Republican budget cuts teacher quality by 4%, eliminating high-quality training for 18,000 teachers.
- **Title I.** The Republican budget provides a \$1 billion increase for Title I only by cutting other programs in the No Child Left Behind Act. It falls more than \$4 billion short of the No Child Left Behind Act’s promise. As a result of growing demand, an estimated 250,000 more eligible children will be left behind by Title I next year than were this year.
- **Bilingual Education.** The Republican budget freezes Bilingual Education—a cut after inflation—even though schools must teach 300,000 more students with limited English proficiency next year.

- **After School Programs.** The No Child Left Behind Act promised a \$500 million increase for after school. By freezing the budget for this initiative, the Republican budget denies 33,000 children safe places to learn after school.
- **Special Education.** The President’s budget includes a \$1 billion increase for the long under-funded special education program (IDEA). At this rate, it will take another 15 years to reach the level of funding promised by the Congress 27 years ago. If the President had supported—instead of defeating—the bipartisan Harkin-Hagel proposal last year, schools would have received an additional \$2.8 billion in special education funding this year.
- **Modern School Facilities.** Last year, President Bush killed the federal initiative to help local communities provide safe, modern schools. His budget plan includes no resources to address the \$127 billion crisis in school repairs.

## ACCOUNTABILITY FOR RESULTS

**The Bush Administration is watering down the No Child Left Behind Act’s strict accountability provisions.** The crux of the No Child Left Behind Act is holding states and schools to clear, high standards for student performance. Already, however, the Bush Education Department’s lax implementation is threatening the accountability requirements.

- **Dumbing down tests.** Education’s regulations allow states to measure students’ achievement against their peers, rather than against an objective standard. The No Child Left Behind Act prohibits these “norm-referenced” tests. They do not measure whether any students at all have reached state standards for excellence, and therefore fail to inform families and policymakers whether schools are succeeding. Norm-referenced tests are antithetical to the principle that all children can reach high, objective standards.
- **Different tests for different students.** The new regulations allow states to rely on a patchwork of local tests, rather than a single state test. However, educators cannot reliably compare results from different tests. As a result, states may lack valid data to use in identifying failing schools and could misidentify successful schools as failing.
- **Uncertified teachers who are “highly qualified.”** The No Child Left Behind Act requires schools to ensure that all teachers are “highly qualified” within four years. By law, highly qualified teachers must have their state certification. However, the Education Department permits states to define teachers who are only in the process of obtaining alternative certification as “highly qualified.” It does our children a disservice to call a teacher who does not have state certification—and may never get it—a highly qualified teacher. Moreover, Education creates a double standard by establishing this loophole only for alternative certification programs, but not traditional schools of education.

**Allowing discrimination on religious grounds with federal funds.** Under the No Child Left Behind Act, federal education programs can directly fund religious organizations for the first time. The Act prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, and sex (except as otherwise permitted under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972). Contrary to the plain language of the statute, however, Education proposes to permit organizations to discriminate on the basis of religion when hiring employees for positions paid for with federal funds.

## COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY

**The Bush Administration is failing to keep the promise to America's college students.** Across the nation, state budget cuts and a drop in the value of endowments has forced many universities to raise tuition by the most in a decade. Meanwhile, a record-setting 15.8 million students will enroll. But the Republican higher education budget ignores the growing needs of today's college students:

**Pell Grants.** Pell scholarships provide up to \$4,000 to low-income students, the foundation of student aid to make college affordable for all qualified students.

- The Republican budget included \$10.9 billion for Pell grants—\$450 million less than Pell received this year (including the supplemental appropriation enacted in July).
- The Republican budget would cut the maximum Pell grant to \$3600—\$400 below this year and \$800 below what's needed just to keep pace with projected tuition hikes. (This year, the Bush Administration requested new authority to reduce Pell grants, rather than run a deficit as in past years.)
- The Republican budget also eliminates the Leveraging Education Assistance Partnerships program, cutting 72,000 scholarships for low-income students.

**Student Loans.** Student debt is skyrocketing as college tuitions rise, making affordable loans critical to college opportunity. The average borrower graduates with \$17,000 in debt.

- **Higher Interest Rates.** In April, the Bush Administration proposed raising \$1.3 billion in revenue through higher rates on refinanced student loans. While the Administration is no longer actively pursuing the idea, it has not ruled out proposing it again in the future.
- **Loan Forgiveness for Teachers.** This year, President Bush proposed tripling student loan forgiveness for thousands of teachers in high-poverty schools. Despite bipartisan support for this idea, House Republicans watered-down the provision by making it subject to annual appropriations. Mandatory funding is critical: A discretionary program for

child-care providers serves only 75 people a year due to inadequate funding, while the mandatory program for teachers serves 20,000.

- **More Monopolies.** Sixty-two percent of college graduates cannot choose which lender will refinance their student loans, even to get better service or lower rates. House Republicans refused to consider bipartisan legislation creating competition.

**Historically Black Colleges.** Historically black colleges and universities play a critical role in creating educational opportunities for minorities, who attend college at rates far lower than other Americans. The Republican budget provides only a 3.6% increase for these colleges, not even enough to keep up with projected inflation and enrollment growth. Nonetheless, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer calls this increase “very large.”

## A HEALTHY START FOR ALL CHILDREN

**The Bush Administration said that pre-school programs would be a high priority after bipartisan enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act, but the Republican agenda fails to help children get the healthy start they need for success.** High-quality early care and education for children under five is critical to their future success in school and in life.

- Sixty-five percent of mothers with children under 6 are working, including half of mothers with infants are working.
- About 14 million children under 6 are in some type of child care arrangement everyday, including about 6 million infants.
- Millions of welfare recipients are compelled by federal law to enter the workforce, creating massive additional, unmet demands for quality child care.

**The Bush Administration’s budget fails to address to America’s child care needs.**

- **Early Care and Education.** The Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) provides healthy and safe environments to 2 million low-income children, allowing their parents to hold jobs. Because of a drastic funding shortfall, CCDBG serves only one-seventh of eligible children. The Republican budget freezes child care, cutting assistance to 30,000 children. Moreover, the Administration’s welfare proposal would require approximately \$4 billion in additional child care funding, but it would provide none.
- **Head Start.** Head Start provides comprehensive early education and developmental services for preschool children from poor families, helping many children reach school

ready to learn and succeed. Head Start only serves 60% of all eligible children because of lack of funding.

Since 1998, Early Head Start has provided comprehensive developmental services for children under three, and a recent governmental study found that Early Head Start children demonstrate improved development and skills. However, Early Head Start only serves 2% of eligible children.

The Republican budget fails to increase Head Start funding by enough to keep pace with inflation. It would leave approximately 2,800 more children behind.