

Truman Scholarship testimony: Jennifer Kabbany

Preface

Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright once [said](#) of the federal Truman Scholarships that she could “easily see tomorrow’s Cabinet members, elected representatives, nonprofit directors — even presidents” in those awarded the scholarships. One thing she neglected to predict: Those future leaders are [nearly all Democrats](#). While the program is meant to help aspiring young public servants get through grad school, extensive research spanning a decade shows it’s essentially a scholarship program for the Democratic Party and the liberal activist network.

Introduction

My name is Jennifer Kabbany and I am editor-in-chief of The College Fix, a daily news website focused on higher education, published by the nonprofit Student Free Press Association. We are a 15-year-old organization that works to train college reporters and help launch their media careers. Personally, I have been a journalist for more than 25 years, and have worked for the Student Free Press Association since 2012.

Background

In early 2017, College Fix editors learned there may be a political bias problem with the federally funded Truman Scholarship program, which is supposed to be nonpartisan and given simply to “persons who demonstrate outstanding potential for and who plan to pursue a career in public service.”

We investigated the news tip by reviewing the biographies and LinkedIn profiles of the 2015 and 2016 winners to ascertain their political leanings. We [determined](#) that 42 of the 112 scholars from those two years had ties to Democratic politicians or liberal groups, while only four had worked for Republicans or conservative organizations. The rest of the winners’ affiliations could not be determined based on their online footprints.

As we reported at the time, multiple Truman scholars from the 2015 and 2016 cohorts had interned for local and Congressional Democratic lawmakers, as well as at the White House during President Barack Obama’s tenure, or for Hillary Clinton’s 2016 presidential campaign. Others worked for liberal-leaning think tanks and advocacy groups such as the Brookings Institute, Planned Parenthood, Feminist Majority Foundation, NAACP and Urban Institute.

Based on these findings, we reviewed the 2017 scholars as well. There's a saying that "once is chance, twice is coincidence, third time is a pattern." [We found a pattern](#). For the 2017 class, 27 of the 62 scholars worked for Democratic politicians, campaigns, liberal organizations or held leadership positions with left-of-center campus groups. Only three scholars worked for Republican politicians or conservative organizations.

By the numbers

The College Fix has investigated the Truman Scholars ever since. Every year, up through the 2025 class that was announced in the spring, we have since uncovered the same results.

In fact, in the [2018 cohort](#), not a single Republican or conservative winner could be found among the biographies. In contrast, 46 of the scholars had worked for Democratic candidates such as Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders or Barack Obama, or they listed as their primary interest progressive causes such as intersectionality, climate change, expanded government-provided health insurance, LGBT issues, food insecurity, and minimizing so-called rape culture.

The last seven years have also yielded the same results, in which we determined that, on average, 30 to 40 of the winners have supported Democratic or progressive candidates or causes, while only about three listed Republican or conservative ones.

In sum, of the 653 [winners reviewed](#) from 2015 to 2025, only 29 conservatives have been identified compared to 397 liberals, based on their public bios, LinkedIn profiles, and social media accounts.

Most recently, for the class of 2025, we [found](#) 43 of the 54 winners have worked for Democratic politicians, advocated for progressive causes, or identify as left-leaning. In contrast, only three scholars have worked for Republican politicians, advocated for conservative causes, or could otherwise be identified as right-leaning.

Democratic or left-leaning politicians for whom 2025 scholarship winners have worked for include Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, California Sen. Adam Schiff, former Pennsylvania Sen. Bob Casey, and Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, as well as former President Joe Biden.

Awardees have also been involved with various left-leaning organizations, including College Democrats, Lawyers Collaborative for Diversity, Palestine Solidarity Committee, and Planned Parenthood Generation Action.

In contrast, one recipient previously interned at the Heritage Foundation, another [interned](#) for Louisiana Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy, and the third is involved in the Utah Republican Party.

Real-time results

The Truman Foundation has claimed that the political affiliations or beliefs of students in college do not predict what their political affiliation and belief will become later in life. But new research from The College Fix proves the program does not just reward students for being liberal in college, but helps them continue working for liberal causes after winning.

In recent months The College Fix reviewed the jobs and careers of the 2015 to 2020 cohorts to determine what the Truman beneficiaries are up to now, in real life, having benefited from the U.S. taxpayer bankrolling their postgraduate education.

Most of the former winners from 2015 to 2020 — 226 out of 357— have obtained jobs and careers directly tied to or advancing left-wing beliefs or the Democratic platform. Put simply: the Truman scholarships [spawn](#) 35 Democratic jobs for every 1 Republican job.

One Truman alumnus — Mussab Ali, who was given a Truman scholarship in 2017 — is currently running for mayor of Jersey City. In September, Ali was joined by Democratic Rep. Ilhan Omar, who [threw her support](#) behind the candidate.

There's also Nik Marda, a 2020 Truman fellow and a Stanford University grad, who is currently working as a campaign manager for the “Jake Johnson for Congress” effort. Johnson seeks to flip Minnesota's 1st District to blue, running against Republican incumbent Rep. Brad Finstad.

In contrast, only four Truman alumni from 2015 to 2020 could be found to have worked in GOP politics or conservative causes.

Although The College Fix could not determine the employment records of 127 Truman alumni from 2015 to 2020 based on their online footprint, there is plenty of evidence that most of them are leftists based on their undergraduate internships, social media posts, and LinkedIn profiles. So our findings on the left-wing leanings of Truman Scholars likely underestimates the problem of bias.

This is no surprise, as The College Fix published in August data showing that roughly [80 percent](#) of the 2017 and 2018 Truman Scholars promote or are engaged in leftist policies today, and data published in June that [75 percent](#) of Truman Scholars from the 2015 and 2016 cohorts continue to do so as well.

The Truman Scholarship Foundation seeks regional diversity in its selections, and tries to award its scholarships to students from every state. College Fix research shows that winners selected

from Republican-leaning states most often go on to work for progressive causes or Democratic politicians, showing that most red states do not produce winners that represent the majority of its constituents' voting habits.

The College Fix looked at the 125 Truman Scholar winners from 2015 to 2024 from the states of Georgia, Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Ohio and Utah.

Of those, 60 of the scholars, or 48 percent, went on to have at least one job working for leftwing, progressive or Democratic causes after winning the scholarship. In contrast, only three winners, 2.4 percent, could be found to have gone on to work for a conservative or Republican cause.

Ramifications

The imbalance shows that those nominating and selecting the winners of the prestigious taxpayer-funded scholarship favor leftwing, Democratic and progressive causes over conservative and Republican ones.

This structural bias persists across many years and it contradicts the program's public purpose.

The decade-long data reveals a taxpayer-funded program that, in practice, functions as a talent pipeline for the Democratic Party and liberal activist organizations.