



Rasputin Loan Program?

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There are few bright spots in your life when you know that federal student aid programs have huge negative consequences, but politicians have giant incentives to keep them. For the pols, playing Santa is a crucial, year-round activity, so programs that on the surface declare “caring” and “generosity,” but in the quiet darkness of reality are ultimately hurtful, rarely go away. Which is why I was so pleased when Congress let the Perkins program die a few months ago.

Alas, like Rasputin – “the chopping up... for a short time, seemed to be succeeding” – it appears Perkins cannot be killed.

It has just been reported that Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN), chairman of the Senate education committee, will move to revive Perkins for two more years. The goal, reportedly, is to facilitate an orderly transition to a simpler overall student loan system, but there is no need to keep one of numerous aid programs – especially one that is already supposed to die – in order to make the whole system eventually less fractured and confusing. And let’s be honest: Colleges – especially the wealthier ones that tend to get more of the Perkins money – love the program because they control the dough. So there’s a good chance if Congress revives the thing now, it will not be eliminated – er, eliminated *again* – in a couple of years. It will likely either just remain, or get some new window dressing and be renamed. And we will have lost even the slight progress that ending Perkins would have made against hugely counterproductive federal “help.”

Ronald Reagan famously mused, “The nearest thing to eternal life we will ever see on this earth is a government program.” It looks like Perkins will be living up to that standard... forever.

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