



Florida Senator Scott Hints at New Education Bills During Capitol Hill Briefing

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Rick Scott, a Republican senator and former governor of Florida, hinted at some new proposals to address college affordability during a CATO Institute briefing on Capitol Hill Wednesday, September 18. Standing alongside a panel of conservative academics, he also lambasted progressive policy ideas on higher education such as making college tuition-free and canceling student loan debt.

Neal McCluskey, Director of the Center for Educational Freedom at the Cato Institute, moderated the panel which consisted of Political Historian **Phil Magness**, Ohio University Economics Professor **Richard Vedder**, and George Mason University Foundation Professor of Law **Todd Zywicki**.

Scott raised concerns over the increasing cost of higher education as well as total student loan debt which currently sits at more than \$1.5 trillion. He stressed the importance of keeping college affordable for all Americans but spoke dismissively of student loan debt cancellation.

“It’s gonna be magic,” Scott said. “But of course cancelling student loan debt isn’t going to solve the problem of the cost of education. Politicians...too often fail to understand the importance of keeping the cost down for higher education. They just want to give out government money tied to no results.”

“The Democrats are proposing policy plans that will bankrupt and destroy our country just to win a presidential primary,” Scott added.



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While it's unclear exactly which presidential candidates Scott was referring to, only three candidates out of a field of more than 20 have so far released student debt cancellation proposals. Most recently Senator **Bernie Sanders** of Vermont released a plan in June that would cancel all student loan debt while both **Elizabeth Warren** and **Julián Castro** have both released plans for partial student debt cancellation.

Scott said he'll be filing legislation of his own in the near future that he claimed would “drive down the cost of education and ensure students are prepared to get a good job.” One such proposal, which Scott called “skin in the game,” would make universities partially responsible when students default on their loans. Scott also suggested cutting off federal funding to universities that raise tuition and fees and ending Obama era policies which he said hinder private lenders from giving out loans.

Following Scott's remarks panelists criticized the higher education system in the United States citing frivolous spending on amenities such as “rock climbing walls” and “lazy rivers” in the style of water parks as well as overemphasis on athletics and majors in the humanities as reasons for why the cost of higher education has risen so high in recent decades. It's important to note, however, that state budget cuts and other loss in non-tuition revenue have also been important factors in the rising cost of college tuition.