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Obama Unveils Plan to Send Every Student to College



Written by EagleForum.org

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On July 14, President Obama proposed directing \$12 billion to community colleges across the nation in order to increase the number of community college graduates by five million over the next 12 years. The president proposes \$9 billion in "challenge grants" to community colleges that develop new programs, \$2.5 billion for construction and renovation, and \$500 million for development of online courses. If Congress acts on the president's proposal, the grants will become available in the first half of 2010.

The [community college](#) proposal, which Obama has labeled the American Graduation Initiative, is consistent with Obama's goal of postsecondary education for all Americans. "Whatever the training may be, every American will need to get more than a high school diploma," he declared to Congress in February.

Along similar lines, Congress is also considering legislation that would involve the federal government even further in the business of disbursing [student loans](#). On July 15, Rep. George Miller (D-CA) introduced a bill that would increase Pell Grants, not through subsidies to private lenders as Congress has done in the past, but through offering [college loans](#) directly from the federal government to students.

Conservatives are skeptical that short-circuiting supply and demand for higher education through more huge infusions of federal aid will result in the jobs and prosperity Obama promises. "More and more money has been pushed into higher education, both the schools and the students, for decades," says the Cato Institute's Neal McCluskey. "Most of what that's translated into is waste. So you've seen tuition skyrocket, you've seen these building arms races on campus."

In an article for *Reason* magazine (8-3-09), one bright college student draws several parallels between these higher education funding initiatives and the policies that contributed to the housing bubble and resulting collapse. "Someone decided homeownership was a good thing for almost everyone," writes Amanda Carey, "so the government started pushing people to buy homes, using the tax code and other incentives. The same thing is happening with [college](#). But instead of people getting [loans](#) for houses they could never pay off, 18-year-olds are getting excessive [loans for college](#). And just as we saw before the collapse of the housing bubble, the price of going to college in America is skyrocketing."

Carey points out that direct government lending to students marks one step further in the same direction the country traveled when Congress approved massive bailouts for the banking industry. It also further undermines the constitutional roles of both president and Congress.

Carey writes,

Federal involvement in education is nothing new, but President Obama is taking it to an extreme level by taking the financing of college out of the private sector entirely. With the increase in and government administration of Pell Grants, Obama is aggressively funneling young people into college, a decision that just isn't right for everyone. Apparently it's not enough to be the country's head auto exec and commander in chief: Obama is eager to try out the role of guidance counselor in chief, too.

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While both the American Graduation Initiative and the Pell Grant expansion have wide Democratic support in Congress, Democrats also face growing disapproval from the public of the unprecedented levels of deficit spending since 2008. (*Washington Post*, 7-14-09)

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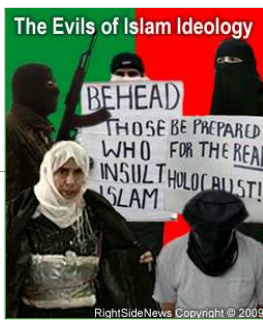
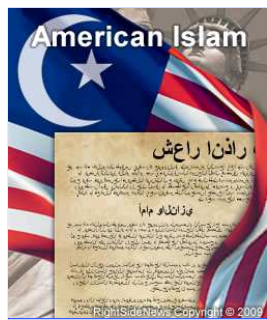
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