

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**STATEMENT OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY ON HIGHER EDUCATION  
LEGISLATION**

*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

From our earliest days as a nation, education has been the mainstay of our democracy and the engine of the American dream. Our nation's founders knew that an educated citizenry would strengthen our land and build up the values and character that make us Americans. They invested in education because they looked to the future and saw an even greater America over the glowing horizon.

We looked forward when we passed the GI bill. And it allowed service men and women coming back from the Second World War to get a college education. They became the Greatest Generation. The GI bill produced 67,000 doctors, 91,000 scientists, 238,000 teachers, and 450,000 engineers. It funded the education of three Presidents, three Supreme Court Justices and about a dozen Senators who served in this very chamber.

That is the kind of vision we have had in America when it comes to education. And it is our vision today as we reclaim our destiny and invest once again in the next generation.

In these past few days, we have made a new promise to American students and families: a promise to invest more as a nation to ensure that all of our young people, regardless of background, get the education they deserve and the training they need to succeed in today's global economy.

We have pledged here in the United States Senate that it doesn't matter where you're from. What matters is where you're going. And no American should be denied the right to go to college because of money.

Last week, we showed this commitment again when we made another new promise to students, providing them with the largest new investment in student aid since the GI bill. We increased the Pell Grant by more than \$1,000. We provided relief for student loans by saying your monthly payments will never exceed 15 percent of your monthly income. We said if you become a teacher, a firefighter or enter other public service jobs, your loans will be forgiven after ten years.

The bill before us brings about other key reforms that will make college more affordable to young Americans.

Our legislation will take steps to ensure that the student loan system is working in the best interest of students, by pursuing needed ethics reforms in the student loan industry.

It will simplify the federal financial aid application and delivery process, to ensure that a complex system does not work as a barrier to access for low-income students.

It demands that colleges do their part to keep college costs down – if we do our part to provide needed student aid, they must do their part to keep their tuition and fees reasonable.

And it will reform and improve our teacher preparation system. Teachers are the backbone of our K-12 educational system, and this bill will promote high-quality teacher preparation programs, and help recruit and retain high-quality teachers in high-need schools

I would like to thank all of my colleagues on the Committee for the work they put into this legislation. I especially thank Senator Mike Enzi, our Ranking Member, for all of his leadership on this bipartisan legislation.

And I would like all of the staff who worked so hard over the past few months to make this happen.

This legislation received unanimous bipartisan support in Committee, and I hope to see that same broad support today. We know education is the real key to opportunity. This legislation reflects that knowledge. It is a commitment I believe we must make to ensure educational opportunity to each and every young person in this country. I urge the Senate to approve this important legislation. Our students deserve nothing less.

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