

Congressman Altmire is fighting to make college more affordable for everyone and to ease the burden of loan debt that so many students face after graduation. Congressman Altmire played a key role in drafting and passing the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (HR 2669).

This legislation invests \$20 billion in student financial aid at no new cost to taxpayers and is the single largest increase in financial aid since the GI bill became law more than 60 years ago.

The College Cost Reduction and Access Act was signed into law on September 27, 2007. In 2008, Congressman Altmire also helped to enact the Higher Education Opportunity Act (H.R. 4137), a law that has helped to simplify the federal student loan aid application process.

Below is some helpful information on how to plan for college and how to access financial aid. As always, you can call my office if you have any questions.

This Information Web page, prepared by the **Congressional Research Service** for Members of Congress, guides students through the process of locating and applying for financial aid.

Start Gathering Information Early:

Free information is readily available from:
High school counselors
College and career school financial aid offices (where you plan to attend)
Local and college libraries
[U.S. Department of Education Website](#)
[Student Aid on the Web](#)

Other Internet sites (search terms student financial aid OR assistance)

Ask questions: Counselors may know if you have extenuating circumstances that affect your eligibility.

Be organized: Use a calendar to keep track of important deadlines.

Keep copies: Save all forms and correspondence: *Remember, you must reapply for aid each year*

Parents of students: Save money long before your child attends college.

[FinAid: for Parents](#)

[College Savings Plan Network](#) (state "Section 529" plans)

[Tax incentives for higher education expenses](#)

Student Aid Overview:

[FinAid: The Smart Student Guide to Financial Aid \]](#)

[Looking for Student Aid](#)

[Mapping Your Future](#)

[Paying for College](#)

Beware of scholarship scams:

[Federal Trade Commission](#)

Student Aid and Where It Comes From:

Basic assistance categories:

- Financial need-based:
 - Remember that students and their parents are responsible for paying what they can afford
 - financial aid is a supplement, not a substitute for family resources.
 - Non need-based:
 - Factors include academic excellence, ethnic background, or organization membership.
- Corporations may also offer assistance to employees and children.

Federal Student Aid: You can apply for all types of federal aid by submitting the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form. You may download this form or apply online at

www.fafsa.ed.gov

- FAFSA provides nearly 70% of student aid under Loans, Grants and Work/study programs.

- Available to all need-based applicants; some loans and competitive scholarships for non need-based.

- Free information from the [U.S. Department of Education](#) :
- [Funding Your Education](#)

Loans are the most common federal aid and must be repaid when you graduate or leave college.

- Stafford Loans include:
 - [William D. Ford Direct Loans](#) (DL) directly from the federal government .
 - [Federal PLUS Loans](#) , parental loans, not need-based.
- [Perkins Loans](#) , for the most needy undergraduates; through participating schools.

- Grants and scholarships are also available:

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- [Pell Grants](#)
- [Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants](#) (FSEOG)
- [Academic Competitiveness Grant](#)
- [National Smart Grant](#)
- [TEACH Grant](#)

- Other grants, scholarships, and fellowships, mostly graduate level: search the [Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance](#) (CFDA) by Beneficiary, such as "Student or Trainee" or "Graduate Student."

- "Congressional" scholarships:
 - Named for Member of Congress or other prominent individual (such as Byrd Honors Scholarships, Fulbright fellowships).

- Merit-based and highly competitive.
- Members of Congress do not play a role in selecting recipients.
- Search by Beneficiary in the [Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance](#) .

- Work study programs allow you to earn money while in school:
 - [Federal Work Study Program](#) : college campus jobs.
 - [Student Educational Employment](#) : jobs with the federal government.

- For questions not covered by the Department of Education website, call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-433-3243.

States offer residents a variety of scholarships, loans, and tuition exemptions:

- Check with your state [higher education agency](#) and [guarantee agency](#) .
- Consider prepaid tuition and college savings ("Section 529") plans: [College Savings Plans Network](#)
- Search your Internet browser under terms such as student financial aid or assistance AND your state.

Private foundations, corporations, and organizations offer scholarships or grants:

- [College Board Scholarship Search](#)
- [FastWeb](#)

Targeted Aid for Special Groups:

- African Americans: [Scholarships](#) (UNCF)
- Disabled students: [HEATH Resource Center](#)
- Foreign students: [Financial Aid for International Students](#)
- Financial Aid for Law School: [Law School Admission Council](#)
- Medical students: [Association of American Medical Colleges](#)
- Native Americans: [American Indian College Fund](#)
- Study abroad (for U.S. and non-U.S. citizens): [International Education Financial Aid](#)
- Veterans: [Education Benefits](#)

Interested in public service?

Federal assistance programs seek to encourage people to work in geographic areas or professions where there are particular needs (such as doctors in underserved areas); encourage underrepresented groups to enter particular professions; and provide aid in exchange for services provided (such as military service).

- [AmeriCorps Education Award](#)

Volunteers who complete one year of service receive an education award for current higher education expenses or to repay student loans.

- [Army Continuing Education System](#)

Additional benefits for Army personnel.

- [Bureau of Health Professions](#)

Scholarships and loans to needy health profession students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- [e-Scholar](#)

Scholarships, grants, fellowships, internships, and cooperative education with federal agencies.

- [Indian Health Service](#)

Scholarships for American Indian/Alaskan Native health profession students and loan repayment for persons working in IHS facilities.

- Military academies:

[U.S. Air Force Academy](#)

[U.S. Coast Guard Academy](#)

[U.S. Merchant Marine Academy](#)

[U.S. Military Academy](#)

[U.S. Naval Academy](#)

- [National Health Service Corps](#)

Scholarships and loan repayment for health profession students who agree to work in underserved areas.

- [Nursing Scholarships](#)

Offered in exchange for two years of service in areas with critical nursing shortages.

- Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC):

For students who want to be commissioned as officers after graduating from college.

[U.S. Air Force ROTC](#)

[U.S. Army ROTC](#)

[U.S. Navy ROTC](#) □

Aid for private K-12 education: No direct federal assistance, check with schools themselves:

- [Coverdell Education Savings Accounts](#) : for elementary and secondary school expenses as well as higher education.

- [Children's Scholarship Fund](#) : partial tuition assistance to low-income students.

Repaying Your Loans:

A number of repayment plans are available to meet your needs such as extended repayment, graduated repayment, or income based repayment. The federal government has ways to help you repay your loans as well.

- Eligibility depends upon the type of loan, when it was made, and whether it is in default. Check with your loan officer to find out if you qualify.

- [Loan Consolidation](#) : combine your federal loans into a single loan with one monthly payment.

- Sometimes loans may be canceled in exchange for public service.

Teachers: [Cancellation/Deferment Options](#)

Health professionals: [National Health Service Corps](#)

- Federal employees: [Federal Student Loan Repayment Program](#)

- If you are having problems with your loan and all other approaches fail, contact the Department of Education's [Office of the Ombudsman](#) .

States and some private employers provide help in repaying loans in exchange for certain types of public service:

- Medical school graduates: [State Loan Repayment Program](#)