

In order for America to maintain our preeminent role in the world, it is critical that we provide all students with a quality education and ensure that they have the ability to pursue higher education. As a member of the House Education and Workforce Committee, Congressman Altmire has a leading role in making college more affordable and improving early childhood education.

Helping Western Pennsylvania Schools Through the Economic Downturn

With America in the midst of its worst economic recession since the Great Depression, school districts across the country are struggling to make ends meet. By voting for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, Congressman Altmire helped provide school districts across western Pennsylvania with millions of dollars in additional funding that will help them provide children with a first rate education. For more information, see: [[Western Pennsylvania Schools Will Receive Much-Needed Funding in Economic Recovery Package](#)].

Strengthening America's Schools

Congressman Altmire fully supports the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), to ensure that all students can perform math and read at grade level. However, he believes that the law must be reformed so that it works better for students, parents, teachers, and administrators. He has held a number of public forums to discuss the reauthorization of NCLB with local superintendents, principals, teachers and parents. Congressman Altmire brought the former chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor to the district, to hear local education stakeholders' concerns and suggestions first-hand. He also held a series of education roundtables during the summer of 2010 to get feedback on the challenges that schools, parents and students face in dealing with the realities of NCLB on a daily basis. For Congressman Altmire's statement on this issue, see: [[Altmire Discusses Future of No Child Left Behind Education Law](#)].

Making College More Affordable

Congressman Altmire has taken an active role in crafting legislation that makes college more affordable for American families. In 2007, Congressman Altmire helped draft the College Cost

Reduction and Access Act (H.R. 2669), legislation which provided the largest increase in federal student aid in more than 60 years at no new cost to taxpayers. By 2012, this legislation will have increased the maximum value of the Pell Grant scholarship by \$1,090 and cut the interest rates on need-based federal student loans in half. In 2009, Congressman Altmire continued to make college more affordable by voting for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), which included a \$2,500 tax credit that will help families cover the cost of tuition.

Helping Graduates Repay Their Student Loans

In 2008, more than 30 million Americans held almost \$556 billion in outstanding student loans. To help graduates pay off their student loans, Congressman Altmire voted for the College Cost Reduction and Access Act and helped to create a new Income-Based Repayment program for federal student loans. Under this new program -- which went into effect on July 1, 2009 -- borrowers' monthly loan payments will be capped at just 15 percent of their discretionary income. This could save borrowers hundreds of dollars each month. For more information, see: [[Altmire: Americans Will Benefit From New Student Loan Repayment Program Starting July 1](#)].

Expanding Access to College

As a member of the House Education and Labor Committee, Congressman Altmire played a key role in shaping the Higher Education Opportunity Act (H.R. 4137), the first reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in 10 years. This legislation, which became law on August 14, 2008, will encourage colleges to rein in tuition increases, restore integrity and accountability to student loan programs, simplify the federal student loan aid application process and more. Four of Congressman Altmire's legislative initiatives were included in the final bill, including a nationwide pilot program that will help lower textbook costs and a new program that will help community colleges design credit-bearing courses that are tailored to meet local employers' hiring needs. For more information, see: [[Altmire Initiatives to Lower Textbook Costs, Improve Workforce Development to be Signed into Law](#)].

Expanding Cyber Learning Programs Throughout Western Pennsylvania

With the help of \$500,000 in federal funding secured by Congressman Altmire, the National Network of Digital Schools Management Foundation in Midland will be able to increase cyber

learning opportunities throughout Pennsylvania. These centers will provide educators and the public with the opportunity to learn how digital education works, how schools of all types can adopt new educational technology, and how digital learning networks that are portable, adaptable and cost-effective can help to provide all students with equal access to quality curriculum and teachers, no matter where they reside. For more information, see: [[Altmire Secures \\$500,000 to help school districts develop online learning programs](#)].

Improving Early Childhood Education

Congressman Altmire helped introduce the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act (H.R. 1429), which was signed into law on December 12, 2007. The law expands access to Head Start, strengthens the programs' focus on school readiness, improves Head Start teacher quality, and ensures that taxpayer dollars fund only well-run programs. In addition, Congressman Altmire successfully amended the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act to help Head Start programs in rural areas confront the unique challenges that they face. For Congressman Altmire's statement on this issue, see: [[Altmire Votes to Help Prepare Children for School Success](#)].