

## Obama Administration Record on Education

*“A world-class education is the single most important factor in determining not just whether our kids can compete for the best jobs but whether America can out-compete countries around the world. America's business leaders understand that when it comes to education, we need to up our game. That's why we're working together to put an outstanding education within reach for every child.”*

–President Barack Obama, July 18, 2011

President Obama believes we need to do much more than recover from the recession. We need an American economy that restores economic security for the middle class and is built to last, where hard work and responsibility is rewarded, and everyone who wants a good job can find one. To build this new economy, we need to provide every child with an education that will enable them to succeed in a global economy based on knowledge and innovation. That's why shortly after he took office, President Obama set the goal of having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020. And it's why he is working to provide every child access to a complete and competitive education. But President Obama also recognizes that parents need to be responsible for helping their children take their first steps toward educational and economic success. The role of parents is critical in our children's education, and the President has consistently urged parents to make sure the TV is turned off and homework gets done, to teach our children that success is the result of hard work and discipline. The Obama Administration's record on education includes:

- **Ensuring High-Quality Education for Every Child:** President Obama is committed to ensuring a high-quality education for all students, so they graduate from high school ready to attend college or enter the workforce prepared for a good-paying job.
  - **Reforming Education Through Race to the Top:** President Obama's Race to the Top made \$4 billion available on a competitive basis to states that developed rigorous standards and better assessments; adopted better data systems to provide information about student progress; helped teachers and school leaders become more effective; and provided support for the rigorous interventions needed to turn around the lowest-performing schools. Forty-six states and the District of Columbia submitted comprehensive reform plans to compete in the K-12 Race to the Top competition. Of these applicants, 19 states (serving 22 million students) received funding, 34 states modified state education laws or policies to facilitate needed change, and 48 states worked together to create a voluntary set of rigorous college- and career-ready standards.
  - **Enhancing Outcomes and Results in Early Learning:** President Obama also established the Race to the Top: Early Learning Challenge fund – a new \$500 million investment challenging states to raise the bar on the quality of their early childhood care and education programs, rewarding quality, incentivizing excellence, and promoting best practices. Race to the Top: Early Learning Challenge will focus on improving quality across programs, ensuring critical links with health, nutrition, mental health, and family support for our neediest children. Through the competition,

35 states, D.C., and Puerto Rico created plans to increase access to high-quality programs for children from low-income families, and 9 states received funding in the first round of the competition.

- **Discovering and Validating Good Ideas in Education through Investing in Innovation (i3):** The i3 program supports research-based innovative programs that help close achievement gaps and improve outcomes for high-need students. Nearly 1,700 applicants put forward innovations for consideration in the first round of the \$650 million competition in 2010. From this enormous outpouring of interest, the Obama Administration has identified 49 school districts, non-profits, and institutions of higher education as recipients of funding under the Investing in Innovation Fund. These grants leveraged an additional \$130 million from the private sector to support innovative reforms. Recipients of the largest i3 grants will scale up their programs with established histories and strong evidence of raising the achievement of poor and minority children. These grants alone will serve almost 2 million low-income children. A second round of grant funding in 2011 provides \$150 million to 23 grantees selected from nearly 600 applicants.
- **Raising Standards and Giving States Flexibility from No Child Left Behind:** As states are moving forward with education reforms, some provisions and unintended consequences of No Child Left Behind stand in the way of their progress. The Administration is offering states flexibility within the law – as authorized by provisions in the law itself – recognizing the great work being done by educators across America. This flexibility will let states, schools, and teachers develop and implement effective ways to give our children the skills they need to compete for the jobs of the future, while maintaining a high bar for the success of all students. Already, the Administration has granted flexibility to 11 states, and 26 additional states and the District of Columbia have since applied to the Department of Education for this flexibility.
- **Making Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Education a Priority:** Through Race to the Top, states were challenged to submit applications that proposed ways provided students with a rigorous course of study; built statewide cooperative agreements among STEM-capable community partners; and prepared more students for advanced study and careers (particularly from traditionally underrepresented groups). All 19 state awardees addressed this STEM priority in their applications, and are now implementing their proposals, which include strategies such as preparing and developing effective STEM teachers, establishing STEM-focused schools, or adopting engaging new project-based approaches to teaching technology and engineering. In addition, President Obama launched the Educate to Innovate campaign to bring together a coalition of companies, foundations and non-profits. A key project of this coalition is working together to meet the President’s challenge to prepare 100,000 great STEM teachers within ten years.
- **Increasing Access and Completion in Higher Education for All Americans:** For too many young people, the cost of college prevents them from getting the skills they need to

succeed in the workforce. That's why President Obama has worked to expand access to college and provide greater resources and support to ensure that more students graduate.

- **Helping Students and Families Pay for College:** By re-directing subsidies from private lenders to students, the Obama Administration raised the maximum Pell Grant award to \$5,550 and the number of Pell Grant recipients has increased by over 3 million – a 50% increase since 2008.
- **Providing Tax Credits to Help Families Pay for College:** For families struggling with the cost of college, President Obama created the American Opportunity Tax Credit, providing up to \$2,500 per year for four years of college tuition for families earning up to \$180,000.
- **Making College Loans More Affordable:** The student loan reform bill signed by President Obama ended subsidies for private student loan lenders and reinvested over \$40 billion in savings back to students. As part of this reform, student loan repayments will be capped at 10% of income (down from 15%) and forgiveness will be granted after 20 years (down from 25 years) starting in 2014. This new “Pay as You Earn Plan” will accelerate these changes for about 1.6 million students in 2012. In addition, 5.8 million borrowers who have loans from both the Federal Family Education Loan Program and a Federal Direct Loan have the opportunity to consolidate those loans and save up to half a percentage point on the interest rate on their loan. These changes will reduce the burden of student loans and keep more money in the hands of student borrowers.
- **Strengthening America's Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) and Community Colleges:** President Obama signed into law a bill that provided \$2 billion to community colleges to improve education and career training programs. By supporting innovative community college-employer partnerships to develop 21st century programs with a focus on growth industries, these grants will provide education and training opportunities that lead to pathways to good jobs. As part of the American Jobs Act, President Obama proposed investing \$5 billion in facilities modernization needs at community colleges. And in his latest Budget proposal, President Obama proposed an \$8 billion investment in the Community College to Career Fund, providing funding to states to partner with businesses to train workers in a range of high-growth and in-demand areas.
- **Giving Students and Families New Tools to Help Them Make Smart Financial Aid Decisions:** The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the Department of Education have teamed up to launch the new “[Know Before You Owe](#)” campaign aimed at creating a model financial aid disclosure form, which colleges and universities could use to help students better understand the type and amount of aid they qualify for and easily compare aid packages offered by different institutions. This “Financial Aid Shopping Sheet” makes the costs and risks of student loans clear upfront – before students have enrolled – outlining their total estimated student loan debt, monthly loan payments after graduation, and additional costs not covered by

- Federal aid. The Administration is also developing a College Scorecard, a report card for colleges containing key indicators of student success and financial outcomes, making it easier for students and families to choose a college that is best suited to their goals, finances, and needs.
- **Incentivizing Greater Value in Higher Education:** President Obama has emphasized the responsibility shared by the Federal Government, states, colleges, and universities to promote access and affordability in higher education. To keep tuition from spiraling too high and to drive greater value, the President has proposed reforms to Federal campus-based aid programs to shift aid away from colleges that fail to keep net tuition down, and toward those colleges and universities that do their fair share to keep tuition affordable, provide good value, and serve needy students well. He has called for new incentives for states to maintain funding for higher education and make long term reforms that will lead to lower prices and better outcomes over time through a \$1 billion investment in a new Race to the Top for College Affordability and Completion. The President has also proposed to invest \$55 million in a new First in the World competition, to support public and private colleges and non-profit organizations as they work to develop and test the next breakthrough strategy that will boost higher education attainment and student outcomes. And President Obama is calling on Congress to keep interest rates low for 7.4 million student loan borrowers to reduce future debt, make the American Opportunity Tax Credit permanent, and double the number of work-study jobs over the next 5 years to better assist college students who are working their way through school.
  - **Improving America's Schools:** President Obama has focused on fixing America's lowest-performing schools so that every child, regardless of what school they attend, has the opportunity to succeed in the workplace. That's why, as part of the American Jobs Act, President Obama proposed investing \$25 billion to make our education system the best in the world by rebuilding and modernizing K-12 schools so young people can compete and maintain American economic power abroad and a strong middle class at home.
    - **Transforming the 5,000 Lowest-Performing Schools in America:** The Obama Administration has dedicated over \$4 billion to challenge states and districts to implement the bold reforms needed to transform the 5,000 lowest-performing schools in America. Title I School Improvement Grants will provide up to \$6 million per school over three years to dramatically transform these lowest-performing schools into safe learning environments where students can thrive.
    - **Improving Educational Outcomes through Promise Neighborhoods:** Modeled after the success of the Harlem Children's Zone, the Promise Neighborhoods program supports cradle-to-career services to improve educational outcomes for students in distressed high-poverty neighborhoods. This year, five implementation grant awardees received up to \$6 million each, to implement plans that will provide more children access to great schools and that will bolster strong systems of family and community support, and additional communities will develop plans for future rounds

of funding.

- **Keeping Teachers on the Job:** The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, signed by President Obama in February 2009, provided nearly \$48 billion for education relief to states and schools districts to keep teachers on the job in the face of budget cuts caused by the economic recession. In 2010, President Obama signed a law that provided states \$10 billion in emergency funding to keep over 130,000 teachers in the classroom. And as part of the American Jobs Act, President Obama is calling on Congress to invest \$25 billion to support more than 320,000 teacher jobs and \$5 billion to keep police officers and firefighters on the job.