

**Thursday, November 30, 2006**

My older daughter came home from college for Thanksgiving last week. The holiday allowed for plenty of food and bonding along with a few precious days to reunite. The day she returned to campus, she left a gift for me that brought tears to my eyes:

A tuition bill.

My daughter attends the State University of New York. A few years ago, she was considering attending George Washington University, located twenty blocks from the Capitol. "With my grades and SAT scores," she told me excitedly, "I might be able to get into GWU!" She spoke of how wonderful it would be to be in Washington, to have dinner together when Congress was in session, to spend time in the nation's capital.

But all I could see flashing in front of my eyes was \$51,920, which is what it costs to send a student to GWU - for one year.

When it comes to college affordability, I view the issue as a tuition-paying parent and as a Member of Congress. And I don't want America to be a place where any parent tells a child; "I know you're smart enough to get into GWU. We're just not rich enough to send you."

That's why college affordability will continue to be one of my key priorities when the new Congress convenes in January.

Specifically, I'll be pushing my legislation to give every American family a permanent \$7,500 tax deduction for college expenses: tuition, room, board, fees, etc.

Furthermore, I'll support immediate legislation -- in the first 100 hours of the new Congress -- to slash interest rates on federally-backed student loans.

Clearly, the cost of these initiatives won't be insignificant. But if we can subsidize farmers with \$19 billion a year not to grow crops, isn't it a better idea to subsidize America's families to cultivate kids that can compete against India, Japan and China in a global economy?

Thanksgiving and the approaching holidays are reminders of our shared values and priorities. What better gift to the next generation of Americans -- and their parents today -- than a break on their college tuition?

Posted by: SI