

## EDUCATION

Education has played a very large role in my life and is one of the main reasons I have decided to run for the U.S. House. I have been involved in the education of Missouri youth for many years in a variety of capacities. After college I worked for St. Louis public schools, evaluating teachers and curriculum. Since then, I have taught political science and public policy at Washington University and University of Missouri St. Louis. Three years ago, I co-founded the Confluence Academies, a group of public charter schools that continue to grow and prosper. From my experience in classrooms with students ranging from disadvantaged urban youth to accomplished university academics, I believe that we need a revolution in our education system.

Right now funds for education are being cut nationwide, by Republicans in Washington and by state legislatures struggling with our economic slump. Unfortunately, these cutbacks could not come at a worse time.

As a nation we are facing an uncertain economic future in the middle and long term. Many of our manufacturing and industrial jobs are moving overseas; China and India, each with populations dwarfing ours, are on the verge of economic blossom.

**There is no greater investment in the future than the education of our young.**

Unfortunately, right now, the Federal government is only paying lip-service to the ideals I will champion as a Congressman. Bush's education bill is one of the largest unfunded mandates in the history of federal legislation. With "No Child Left Behind" taking effect this year, U.S. schools are in the midst of some of the most extensive reforms in history without the funds or administrative assistance needed to enact them. Instead, the act presents schools with severe penalties for failing standardized tests, penalties that only hamstring efforts for real reform.

Though I appreciate the need to hold our schools to high standards, I support incentives for progress rather than mandates that threaten punishments. Struggling schools need money to decrease class sizes, increase teachers' salaries, and renovate decaying facilities. They need to become sources of community involvement, growth, and renewal. They do not need to be further disabled by Bush's misguided version of "tough love."

Around the country, schools are in need of Federal help for construction and emergency repairs at a cost totaling \$127 billion. Fourteen million children are learning in substandard schools in need of major renovation. Half of all schools have at least one unsatisfactory environmental condition, such as polluted drinking water or soot-filled ventilation. At the same time the schools are falling into disrepair, the number of students is growing (up nine percent since 1990), a generation of teachers is planning its retirement, and teacher compensation remains abysmally low, a reflection of distorted national priorities.

In Washington, I will do the following things to improve education in St. Louis and nationwide:

- I will fight for the funding to help communities repair their most rundown schools - improving education and providing construction jobs as well.
- I will propose a plan to provide incentives that inspire a new generation of great teachers, offering college loan forgiveness up to \$20K to students who commit to working in struggling

schools with acute teacher shortages such as those in inner cities, impoverished rural areas, and Native American reservations.

- I will fight to expand programs like Georgia's HOPE scholarship to every state, providing life-transforming educational opportunities to every American. Georgia's HOPE Scholarship Program helps provide a public, private or technical college education to hard-working Georgia students with no cost to taxpayers. A national HOPE Scholarship Program would work in the following way:
  - For students interested in attending a state public college or university a national HOPE Scholarship will provide tuition, mandatory fees and a \$150 per semester book allowance. To be eligible, a student must graduate high school with a "B" average and maintain a "B" average in college.
  - A national HOPE Scholarship would also provide eligible students wishing to attend a private college or university a \$3,000 per academic school year scholarship.
  - The program, like Georgia's, would be funded entirely by a national lottery and there would be no additional cost to taxpayers.
  
- I will also fight to expand opportunities for charter schools that provide a unique public school alternative in areas where regular schools are failing. Charter schools like the Confluence Academies encourage innovative teaching practices and community involvement in public education. Charter schools have high academic standards, small class sizes, and innovative pedagogical approaches. However, I will oppose voucher schemes that divert public money to parochial schools.