



Senator Herb Kohl

United States Senator for Wisconsin



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Today Wisconsin is host to two cabinet secretaries who will highlight the importance of agriculture education and college affordability. It's fitting that Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack chose to bring their discussion to our state, which has a proud history of agriculture excellence and some of the best colleges and universities in the country.

In Wisconsin, agriculture education is essential as we train the next generation of rural leaders. I am proud of Wisconsin's strong tradition of agriculture education – in and outside of the classroom. That's one of the reasons I recently asked Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis to reconsider proposed rules limiting youth participation in agriculture activities. We must ensure our kids can continue to work on their family farms, participate in FFA and 4H activities, and gain age-appropriate work experience and safety training. Our agriculture educators are some of our most innovative teachers, as they help students connect what they learn in the classroom with high-demand careers throughout the state.

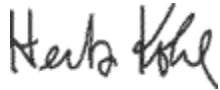
I have long advocated for increased access to higher education for all students, and am increasingly concerned with the rising price of tuition. I support Pell Grants, TRIO services for disadvantaged students, and federal student loans, but due to increased costs and decreased financial support for higher education, the cost of a college degree has exploded in recent years. I will continue to work with our higher education community to maintain the high quality of Wisconsin's colleges and universities, while increasing access so all students have the opportunity to pursue their educational goals.

Students who rely upon student loans to finance their education are counting on Congress to prevent the scheduled increase in student loan interest rates – from 3.4% to 6.8% – on July 1. This is not the time to increase the debt burden for our students and recent grads, when many young people are struggling to land their first job. I am committed to preventing this increase, and to doing whatever possible to maintain college access. Last year I introduced the Fast Track to

College Act which would make college more affordable by providing an opportunity for students to earn high school and college credits simultaneously, free of charge.

I will continue to make education funding a priority in the coming months and am encouraged that Education Secretary Duncan and Agriculture Secretary Vilsack are visiting our state today to raise awareness of these issues and to listen to the needs of teachers in Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Herb Kohl". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "H" and "K".