

The Ribbon Forum

June/July 2008
Volume 42, No. 3

THE AMERICAN CLASSROOM

How it is changing, what it
will look like, and how it
can be improved

With essays by Rod Paige, Newt Gingrich,
Buck McKeon, Stephen Joel Trachtenberg,
David Longanecker, Reg Weaver,
Marc Lampkin and others

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Volume 42, No. 3, June/July 2008

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A Note from the Chairman Emeritus

Washington produces more reports than any other city on Earth. Most of them, even the good ones, end up collecting dust on a shelf somewhere. Occasionally, one is released that commands attention.

Twenty five years ago this spring, the Reagan Education Department released “A Nation at Risk,” a landmark study which found that America’s educational system was failing our students and, in the process, putting our future in jeopardy.

According to current Education Secretary Margaret Spellings, the study was a “call to arms” for the Nation, one that “began a national movement, inspiring state-level pioneers to think about standards and accountability in education.”

In this edition of the FORUM, we examine what this movement has created by looking at the American classroom – how it has changed, what it will look like, and how it can be improved.

We do so with the assistance of some of the most talented thinkers in the field of education today, including former President of George Washington University Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, who assesses U.S. high schools and asks a critical question — *are they world class?* David Longanecker of the WICHE Institute writes about how schools are changing demographically, while former Education Secretary Rod Paige discusses how the American classroom may change in the future.

Buck McKeon, the lead Republican on the House Education Committee, discusses the need to reauthorize the No Child Left Behind Act, while former Speaker Newt Gingrich argues that the U.S. needs to do more to strengthen math and science education.

We also take a look at the issue of merit pay for teachers with a pro/con debate featuring Reg Weaver of the National Education Association and Marc Lampkin of Strong American Schools.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the FORUM, and encourage you to write us at editor@riponsociety.org with any comments or questions you may have.

Bill Frenzel
Chairman Emeritus
Ripon Society

The Changing Face of the American Student

DAVID LONGANECKER

Wow! Is the face of the American student changing. Recently, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), of which I am the President, published its seventh edition of *Knocking on the College Door*.

This report examines recent enrollment trends of students enrolled in and graduating from high school in each of the fifty states by race/ethnicity, and projects enrollments and graduations for the next fifteen years based on current population and participation trends.

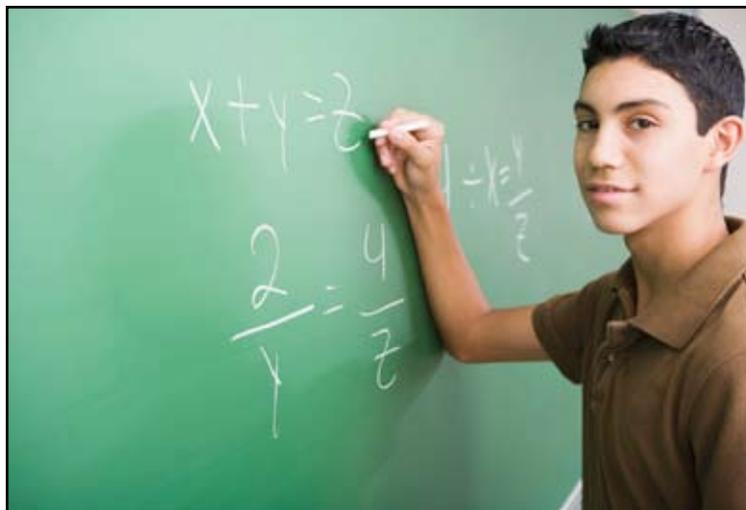
If you haven't been paying close attention to the changing demographic characteristics of students in your state or region, you may find some of these current statistics and projections for the future to be quite startling. Two themes dominate these trends: (1) changes in the overall population of students from state to state, region to region, and for the country as a whole, and (2) the escalating diversification amongst these students, with these changes differing substantially again from state to state, region to region, and in the aggregate.

As reflected in Chart 1, this year's high school graduating class will be the largest in the history of our country, capping nearly two decades of continuous and substantial growth. For at least the next decade, however, we can expect the number of high school graduates, all else being equal, to decline gradually, after which they will again begin to rise until the number peaks in about 2020 at roughly the same level it will be this year.

The kicker, of course, is that casually stated assumption, "all else being equal," because we do not project the likely effects, intended or not, of changes in

policy or practice that might impact these estimates. For example, if the federal No Child Left Behind program has the intended effect of increasing the success of students in completing high school, our projections will prove too low. On the other hand, if the financial difficulties many states and the federal government are experiencing lead to reductions in the support of education, our projections could turn out to be too high.

Nonetheless, it is useful to understand what the likely result of current policy and practice will produce, given the population of students to be served; and our projections suggest that such a scenario for the country as a whole will lead to a modest decline in students; nothing to get exercised over but a pretty significant change in the environment compared to what the country has experienced in recent years.



These fairly benign changes at the national level, however, hide some much more significant variations from region to region

and state to state. The South and West, for example will continue to grow in population, initially quite modestly and then more rapidly, whereas both the Northeast and Midwest will decline (Chart 1). Within each region, however, we find more significant likely variations in enrollment and graduation trends than we see between regions. Arizona and Nevada, both Western states, are projected to face the most rapid increases over the next decade (34 and 37 percent respectfully), whereas the two states with the largest projected declines in enrolment and graduates, Vermont and North Dakota, will see declines of 23 and 19 percent over the same time period.

While the challenges facing these two scenarios differ

greatly in nature, they differ little in significance. In a state facing rapid growth, it will be extremely difficult to provide the public funds necessary to sustain current levels of funding on a per student basis, thus quality may be at risk. And in a state facing a substantial decline, particularly a state that already suffers from the absence of economies of scale in rural schools, it will be difficult to sustain a quality experience even if funding on a per student basis can be maintained.

So, overall, the states fall roughly into three categories: those that will face modest increases or decreases that should be quite manageable in public policy terms; those that will face more significant increases or decreases that will require quite intentional changes in public policy; and those that will face such substantial increases or decreases that only quite radical departures from current policy and practice will meet the magnitude of the challenges these states face.

These overall trends, however, are not the real WOW factor in this story. The huge story is in the demographic composition of these students. As noted in Chart 2, today 37% of high school graduates (projected) come from communities of color. A decade from now we project

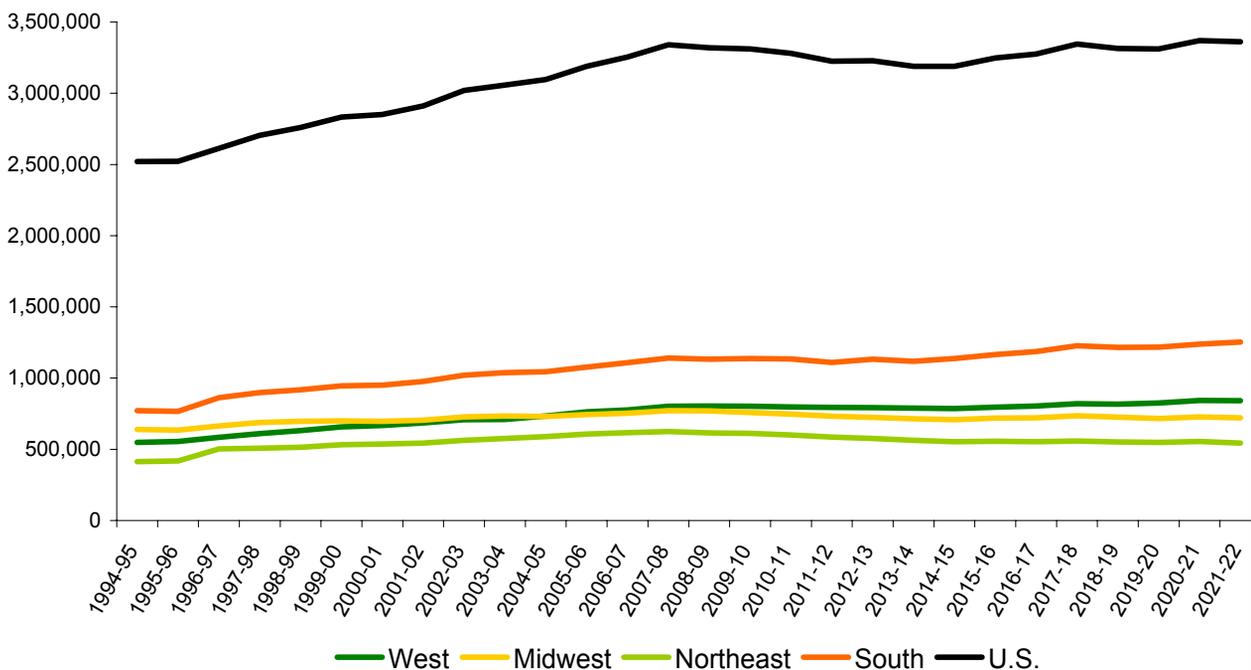
that share will have increased to 46%, with virtually all of the growth coming from increases in Hispanic/Latino students. In fact, the number of Black and Anglo students will actually decline.

As with the aggregate statistics, however, these trends vary substantially from region to region and state to state. The West, for example, will become majority minority in the high school graduating class of 2010, with the South following in 2017. California, Hawaii, New Mexico, Texas and the District of Columbia already fit that description, and Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Mississippi, and Nevada will gain this distinction within the next eight years. In all of these states, increases in Hispanic/Latino students are driving these trends.

These changes have significant implications for all of education, but particularly for higher education. Simply put, higher education currently serves best those students who are becoming a smaller portion of our population and serves least successfully those populations that are growing most rapidly. If we don't improve our success in serving these emerging populations, not only will our education systems fail us, but the entire fabric of our society will be at risk because

...today 37% of high school graduates (projected) come from communities of color.

Chart 1: Public and Nonpublic High School Graduates for the U.S. and by Region, 1994-95 to 2004-05 (Estimated); 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



our nation's competitiveness in an increasingly global knowledge-based economy requires that we achieve higher levels of educational attainment than ever before, and our ability to do so will rest on these new majority students who we have traditionally not been successful in serving.

Yet it is not only these trends in newly minted high school graduates that are changing American higher education. Today, the face of American higher education is getting much older. More than one-third of today's 17½ million college students are 25 years of age or older, and this group is projected by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to grow by nearly 20 percent over the next decade. The challenges facing these students are often as great as those facing the growing number of young students from groups that higher education has traditionally not served well. Adults face a college environment still designed for the full-time young adult. As a result, they often face class schedules, faculty expectations, and curricular requirements that simply don't make sense for a seasoned adult who has gained knowledge in a variety of ways and

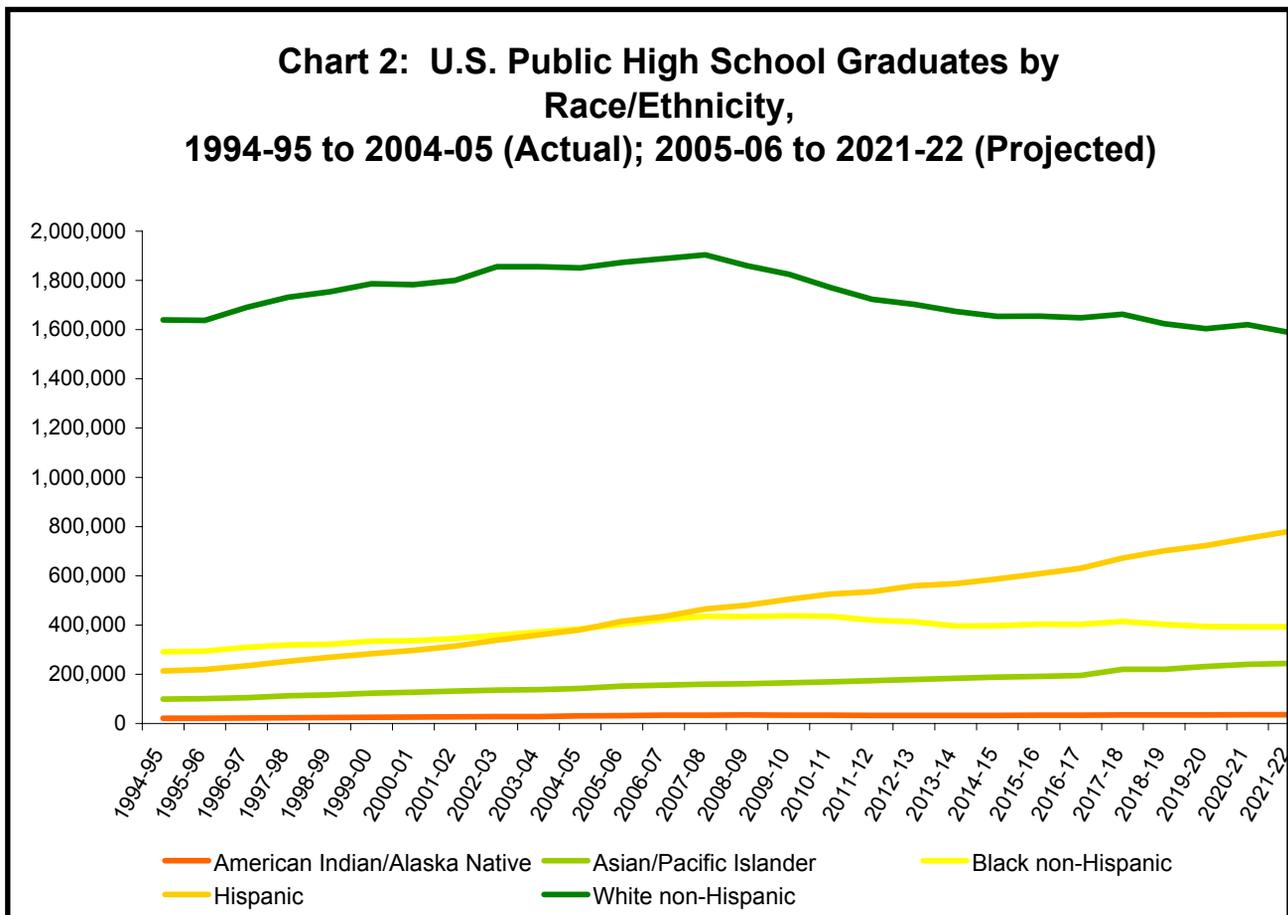
faces unique family and other adult constraints that are not well accommodated in many college environments.

Yet, the evidence is clear that to remain economically competitive America will need to do a better job of educating not only the new and changing young entrants to college, but also these older adults, many returning for a second chance at college and the world of work and others continuing their education for the first time.

So, higher education has both a challenge and a responsibility. The challenge is to change in ways that better serve the new and different faces of their student bodies. Both our public and private institutions of higher education must do this well for all Americans, not only because that is their "public trust" responsibility, but also because America's future depends on it. **RF**

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David A. Longanecker is the president of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education in Boulder, Colorado. Previously he served for six years as the assistant secretary for postsecondary education at the U.S. Department of Education,



What are "WORLD CLASS" SCHOOLS?

STEPHEN JOEL TRACHTENBERG

Let me begin to answer the question proposed to me — are American high schools world class? — by muddying the waters with some facts and figures.

There are 17,662¹ school districts in the United States, 98,579 schools, 49,588,626 students, and 3,145,078 teachers or full-time equivalents. In the 100 largest school districts, which educate about a quarter of all high-school students and are mainly in California, Texas, Florida, and New York, spending per pupil ranges from \$4,351 in Puerto Rico to \$17,337 in Boston. In the same districts, the “averaged freshman graduation rate” is 70.2 percent. Citing more statistics would add even more confusion.² Even without reporting to the last integer or decimal point, these are daunting numbers.

How does anyone conclude that American schools are world class or something else, presumably not as good? How do we sort out so many schools and districts — or rather their results? How do we evaluate secondary education in a continental nation that, from Maine to California, is more than twice the distance from Paris to Moscow?

We do not because today we cannot. We do not have a national policy on curriculum and standards of teaching and learning. Since the founding of the Republic, we have left such matters to the States to control locally. We do not have the tools to measure, and ultimately grade, the outcomes of education. The “science” of pedagogy is still in development. We know that the laws of physics and French grammar, for

example, are the same in Rhode Island and Louisiana, but we have no confidence that they are being taught equally well or just equally, even in two Louisiana parishes or two Rhode Island counties.

We have favorable evidence about specific schools and school districts. The Bronx High School of Science and Stuyvesant High School in New York are celebrated as great successes in a vast American school non-system that often leaves a great deal to be desired. All the schools in Winnetka, outside Chicago, have for years had a reputation for offering some of the best public education anywhere in America. We can add examples, including Scarsdale in New York and Fairfax County in Virginia. Most of these communities are extremely well-to-do. There are specific schools in affluent neighborhoods in Washington, D.C., where, in general, the schools are unsatisfactory,³ that are doing better than expected because parents are contributing cash to pay for art and music programs, for example, and contributing time to student activities.

It is foolish to conclude that money alone buys quality and the exemplars I have offered are comparatively scarce. The \$17,000 that Boston spends on each pupil has greatly improved public education over the last 20 years or so, but it’s a slow track. And no one example is typical of other large school districts. Affluent districts or individual schools seem to have better results. It’s not just a bigger budget. It’s also the concern that money represents, the environment it creates. It is not fair to compare a rich school or district to a poor one. Beyond wealth, sociology plays its part. The background students developed at home,



Stephen Joel Trachtenberg

1. A more common number is 16,025, but the National Center for Education statistics include Puerto Rico, Bureau of Indian Education, and Department of Defense dependents schools in this total and the other totals in this paragraph. Data available at nces.ed.gov/pub2008/2008335.pdf.

2. To avoid other confusion, I have limited my observations to public schools while understanding that private schools often perform better.

3. I hasten to note that Mayor Adrian Fenty and Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee are heroically trying to dismantle and rehabilitate the schools in the District of Columbia.

which they have when they first open the school door, impacts on all later school achievement.

But this obvious statement points to another problem in education and in assessing its success or failure. From one district to another — even in adjoining districts — the resources devoted to education can vary. Some states are taxing richer communities by capturing some of their real-estate taxes and transferring them to communities with smaller, and scantier, tax bases. (Naturally, this has provoked lawsuits.) I will offer a preliminary conclusion that we cannot possibly have a blended world-class education when some schools are starved and some enjoy more than enough.

Consider, after all, the burdens placed on the schools. Sex education, driver's ed, and hot meals have become the province of schools, not parents, so budgets have to be found, often at the expense of instruction. In many districts, the students may be speaking one of 50 or 100 languages at home, and dealing with their problems cannot be done on the cheap, let alone for free. In the largest cities, many of the children are from poor households, often shattered ones, where the basic preparation for learning — such as reading to children or children seeing their parents read — is unknown. Dealing with these problems, and others as familiar, while delivering a first-rate education is beyond the means of most schools. Absent a national policy for financing public education and making it as high on our national agenda as defense, we can have no reasonable expectation of having world-class education anytime soon.

Let me offer a different kind of evidence. When I was still a university president, I wondered about offering a bachelor's degree in three years instead of four as is the case in most of Western Europe.⁴ The economic arguments were strong, but the academic arguments were not dispositive because the high-school graduates arriving on most American campuses were simply not uniformly prepared to do sophomore work. We have known this for years. Many freshman courses are admittedly introductory. Too many others, like first-year writing programs, are covertly remedial. I cannot see how students who have a wobbly command of English grammar, often no second language, no knowledge of American history, or calculus, for example, can possibly be considered the offspring of a world-class educational enterprise.

We know that when American students take international math and science tests, they do not come out anywhere near the top. This may explain the demand of Ph.D. candidates for Indian engineers and Japanese biologists by American

universities. And later businesses. This may also help to refine the slippery definition of “world class.” It is borrowed from sports, usually referring to athletes who compete in the Olympics and other worldwide competitions. In our context, it seems to refer to the ability of American high-school graduates to compete intellectually and professionally with their counterparts abroad. The evidence we have on their competitive status is mixed.

It would help, as I have suggested, to support education more generously and broadly, but money alone will not solve the problems that our vast and complex educational enterprise is not solving. But I have a modest proposal to get us started.

I would like to see tests provided that students might take at their discretion and that would measure their accomplishments in disciplines that permit comparison against international standards. Like the old New York State Regents' exams, there could be separate examinations in different subjects: math, physics, chemistry, Arabic, English and so on. The reward for taking the test, not acing it, would be additional support for further education. Scholarships. This would help good students get even better. The reward, moreover, would only go to the students, not the schools or districts.

These terms are important. The tests required by No Child Left Behind leave teachers and schools frightened that they will be punished if their students do not do well. The results are negative all around: administrators and school boards feel bullied; teachers teach to the test rather than training young people how to read, write, calculate, and think; and in a globalized

world, the tests do not measure our students against those abroad and, consequently, do not tell us if their education is world class or not.

By rewarding the students, we take away the threat of punishment from administrators and teachers. By making the test voluntary, we do not oblige the unwilling to participate — and avoid an inevitable political battle that would crush the idea under the weight of pointless debate and endless bickering.

The test would give us more than a measure of what a world-class education is. It would advance the idea in uniquely American terms, compelling no one, rewarding the willing, and — I am hopeful — begin to move our young people a little more rapidly in the direction of world class. Small victories taking us forward one step at a time — now that may be a big idea. **RF**

Stephen Joel Trachtenberg is Chairman of the higher education practice at Korn/Ferry International. He is also President Emeritus and University Professor of Public Service at The George Washington University.

**...we cannot possibly
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4. The Bologna Accords of 1999 included this provision, part of its goal of harmonizing the “architecture of European higher education.”

The American Classroom in 2028:

It's not just the role of technology that will change.
It's also the role of parents.

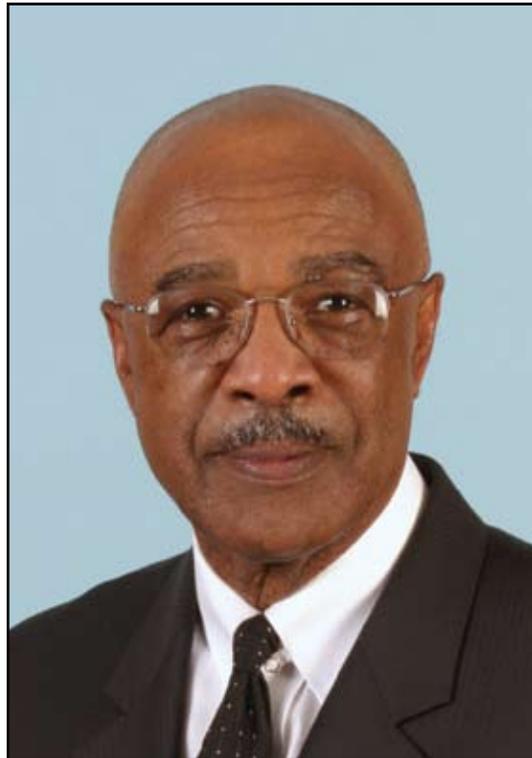
ROD PAIGE

Today's classroom looks nothing like that which greeted bright-eyed students twenty years ago in the mid 1980s. Way back then the model for educating children was little changed for over 150 years – students sitting at desks dutifully taking notes, teachers in front of a chalkboard conveying information gleaned from textbooks or other published material. The “factory model” of education had worked to teach generation after generation of American children the fundamentals of reading writing and mathematics and helped propel this nation to the forefront of economic and democratic leadership in the world.

Yet our education system was about to be caught up in a transformation that was cascading through every crevice of our society. Technology was becoming popularized, no longer limited solely to the large budgets associated with military, scientific, or corporate applications. For education, this introduction to the classroom came first through the appearance of bulky, oversized, and (from current perspective) simplistic calculators, machines limited to the most basic of mathematic functions. But that was just the beginning. Little did they know back then how those machines would presage a movement that would challenge at its core the education model that had performed so well for so long.

The introduction of technology changed our education system in three fundamental ways. First, the delivery of the information was transformed. With the advent of

computers and the internet, no longer are students limited to what is presented in the classroom or read in a textbook. Indeed with the internet the student's learning experience can continue and expand while at home, afterschool or on the weekends. Second, technology allows greater access to information by more students and teachers. In the past, a school's geographic location or neighborhood wealth often determined the depth of exposure to information and knowledge. Now, students and teachers from everywhere, from urban areas to remote rural communities can access the same information (and opportunities) as many of their more affluent peers. Finally, technology has helped make our education system more transparent. Reams of data on student performance, school culture, and revenue and taxing information are just a click away, and it is a rare home purchaser that does not examine and compare this data before investing their savings in a new home (or committing their child to a new school). All of these are useful contributions that have made a fundamental change in the way we educate our children.



...it is the transformation of the parent that will have the greatest impact on our education system in the next few decades.

It would be easy to talk about the future of education in the United States solely in terms of the continued contribution technology will make in

education. For example, I have no doubt that by the year 2028 classrooms will be wired and interconnected in ways that today are unfathomable.

But to limit ourselves to highlighting technology focuses our attention only on a tool in education, albeit an important and useful contribution. Rather, I believe that a more fundamental change will be in place by 2028, one that will bear little resemblance to operations of our current system. It is a change that will alter the delivery, governance, and financial relationship under which we currently operate.

The students of the 2020s will be in a society that bears little resemblance to that experienced by countless generations that have come before. Their parents – born during the onset and explosion of the digital age – will be much more aware of the options, and demanding of the choices, than what we who have preceded them are accustomed to. Thus, it is the transformation of the parent that will have the greatest impact on our education system in the next few decades, a transformation that the system itself has little power to stop.

These parents will be a different breed, different because their perspective on life will be one that is grounded in choices. They will look back with fondness on the days when there were only 110 channels to choose from on cable, when an iPod could store only 1,000 songs.

Most important, they will tell their children about how it was in the old days when kids used to go to school and be presented their education through a cookie cutter approach, with little customization to the individual needs or expectations of the individual student. They will regale their youngsters with stories about children going to school where they were told to go to school and studying what the school told them to study. If the curriculum was too tough (or easy) for some students there was not much anyone could do to help them. If the school offered Spanish as the foreign language and the child was interested in learning Chinese, there was little room for debate.

In other words, they will be talking about a system that was controlled by the producers of the product, rather than the consumers -- a system of limited options, little

accountability, and little impetus to address the needs of individual students.

Having not been brought up in such a stifling environment for all other aspects of their livelihood, the parents of the future will not acquiesce to that approach for the education of their children. They will seek out an educational experience that will be customized to meet the peculiar needs of their child; one that plays on a student's strengths and interests, one that supports the student in academic areas where they might struggle, or challenges them when they can accomplish more.

Parents will be empowered, and the education system will be forced to address their needs. Public education will be redefined in such a way that rather than providing a centralized approach geared to mass dissemination of information and knowledge, the system will be tailored to meet the individual needs of the student.

Ultimately the key question for education leaders is how we get there – how we transform a system created in the 19th century to meet the needs of the 21st century learner. Will the education establishment leaders recognize the new reality and move to meet the needs of their changing customers, or will they take defensive postures to protect their monopolies and control the levers of power that they have reigned over for so long? At this stage, it is too early to say, for there is much at stake, and there is the belief in some corners that the system will withstand change

much as it has withstood calls for reform in the past.

But one thing is for sure – it's a tide that cannot be held back. The next generation of parents will be unlike any prior to it. They will be used to the liberty to choose, with the knowledge and opportunity to make the choices that best meet their needs. And they will not be satisfied if that liberty applies to all aspects of their lives – except the education of their children. **RF**



These parents will be a different breed, different because their perspective on life will be one that is grounded in choices.

Dr. Rod Paige served as U.S. Secretary of Education from 2001 to 2005. He is currently the chairman of the Chartwell Education Group LLC.

The No Child Left Behind Act: Six Years Later, Now What?

HOWARD P. "BUCK" MCKEON

Ask any voter or policymaker for their top legislative priorities and improving their children's schools will almost surely appear on the list. Ask these same individuals how that education reform should be accomplished and the number of different answers is likely to match the number of individuals asked. Education reform is difficult; finding consensus, even more so.

It is in this environment that we approach renewal of the No Child Left Behind Act. NCLB is a law with fierce advocates and equally fierce opponents. But it is also a law with a premise that is impossible to reject – namely, that all children in this country, regardless of economic background, or race, or geography, deserve a high-quality education.

Signed into law more than six years ago, NCLB was intended to bring accountability to education. Accountability has many meanings, but chief among them in the context of NCLB was the notion that policymakers were finally going to demand results in exchange for the billions of taxpayer dollars invested in our nation's schools.

From 1965 until NCLB's enactment in 2002, the federal government spent more than \$227 billion on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the precursor to NCLB. Unfortunately for parents and taxpayers, that investment was made without any corresponding expectation that it would expand

educational opportunity or drive an increase in academic achievement.

The most startling representation of this lack of accountability is a comparison of federal education spending, rising on a steep incline over those years, and student achievement, which remains a virtual flat-line during the same time period.

However, there was more to this bleak achievement picture than initially met the eye.

Underneath the appearance of overall test score stagnation was the stark reality that while some children were succeeding, and even excelling, others were falling further and further behind. Disadvantaged children, those learning English, and children with disabilities would all too often be allowed to fall between the cracks of our

educational system. Thus, a system that showed acceptable student performance on the whole could be masking a continual downward slide of at-risk populations.

The purpose of NCLB was to address this disparity head-on by calling on states and local communities to ensure all children were held to the same state-developed standards of academic achievement. To achieve that goal, NCLB was built on four key principles: accountability for results; flexibility and local control; expanded parental options; and funding for what works.

By some measures, the law has been a marked



Education Committee Ranking Member McKeon, with Committee Chairman George Miller, at a hearing on reauthorizing NCLB last year.

success. Student achievement in reading and math is at its highest level ever, and achievement gaps between disadvantaged students and their more affluent peers are narrowing. All 50 states have developed their own systems of accountability based on their own achievement goals and assessment systems. And all over the country, students and parents are benefiting from new educational options like free tutoring and public school choice.

However, despite its early successes, it is clear that much work remains. This is particularly true in the law's pledge of new parental options, which promises that children in schools needing improvement will be able to transfer to better performing schools or benefit from supplemental educational services in the form of free tutoring to students. Although participation in these options has increased ten-fold since the first year of the law's implementation, far too few parents are aware of and able to exercise their right to make these decisions about their children's education. By some estimates, less than one percent of eligible children have transferred to better performing schools.

Looking to the future, there are ample opportunities to strengthen this law by correcting its shortcomings and building on its successes — not just with lofty rhetoric and broad-based principles, but concrete proposals to empower parents, support states and local communities, and improve classroom instruction.

One such effort is a regulatory package unveiled by U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings earlier this year to expand access to NCLB's public school choice options. Her proposal requires local schools to ensure parents are fully aware of their options under the law by investing in effective outreach, which includes a requirement that parents be notified of their options earlier, at least 14 days before the start of the school year.

Separately, I have introduced legislation to give students access to free tutoring even sooner,

after their school has been identified as 'in need of improvement' for two years. My proposal also eliminates perverse incentives in the law that reward schools for failing to fully invest available resources in these programs that offer extra help to struggling students.

These choice-focused proposals are just the beginning. Policymakers are also taking steps to make accountability systems more nuanced; to further empower states and local communities with enhanced flexibility and control; and to improve teacher quality through innovative strategies like performance-pay and an adjunct teacher corps.



**Looking to the future,
there are ample opportunities
to strengthen this law [NCLB] by
correcting its shortcomings and
building on its successes.**

Education has traditionally been a responsibility of states and local communities. Even today, six years after enactment of NCLB, the federal government is responsible for only about nine percent of all elementary and secondary education spending, and rightly so. The role of the federal government is not to solve all of society's ills with bureaucratic mandates and layers of red tape. It is to act as a good steward of taxpayer resources and to maintain a focus on those priorities that rise to the level of national significance. One of those priorities is ensuring a quality education for all our children.

When it comes to improving our nation's schools, there are no easy answers. Stakeholders of goodwill can disagree about the best approach to ensure that all children are afforded educational opportunity and no child is left behind.

But the foundation on which NCLB was built is solid, and it remains the blueprint for educational opportunity into the future. **RF**

Howard P. "Buck" McKeon represents the 25th District of California in the U.S. House of Representatives. He is the Senior Republican Member of the Committee on Education and Labor.

The Unheeded Threat

Failure of U.S. math and science education system is a vulnerability for our nation

NEWT GINGRICH

I was proud to help create the Hart-Rudman Commission on National Security and later serve on it once I stepped down as Speaker. Our report, released in early 2001, stated that the greatest threat to America's national security was a weapon of mass destruction going off in an American city, most likely from terrorists.

Very few paid attention to the findings, but that changed a few months later when the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, showed just how vulnerable we are. Spurred by the attacks, the United States has made significant investments to address this threat, many of which were adopted from the recommendations found in the report. There is no doubt that the issue of our security will be a significant part of our political debate for years to come.

Tragically, the same cannot be said for what the report found to be the second greatest threat to America's national security -- the failure of America's math and science education system. Little focus has been paid to just how dangerous it is to allow other countries, especially non-democracies, to become the high-tech centers of the world.

This is especially dangerous because Hart-Rudman was hardly the first report to warn us of the threat posed by the failure of our education system. "A Nation at Risk" released in 1983 said, "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves." Little more than marginal change has been enacted since these reports were issued, and it is unlikely there will ever be a September 11th type of wake-up-call in the realm of math and science education that will motivate us towards dramatic action.

The result of our inaction is obvious. The United States continually ranks near the bottom in OECD rankings of

student mathematical achievement. The National Science Foundation found that in 2005 only 35% of U.S. eighth graders were deemed to be proficient in math. China and India graduate five times as many engineers as the United States.

There are those who will argue that the solution is more money for our schools. The facts show that money alone is not the answer. When President Reagan received the "A Nation at Risk" report in 1983, the United States was in the midst of a massive increase in education spending. Per pupil expenditures in constant dollars had increased from \$4,060 dollars in 1970 to almost \$6,000. "A Nation at Risk" showed that regardless of this nearly 50% increase in spending there was little progress to report. Despite President Reagan's warning, national education spending per pupil in constant dollars has increased again by approximately 50% since 1983, with 2005 spending at \$9,266. Meanwhile, test results have continued to flat-line.

So, as we look for solutions to rapidly improve math and science education in the United States, it is important that we distinguish between merely investing more in our current education bureaucracies and actually investing in math and science education. The former would simply be doing more of what we are already doing and expecting a different result. Albert Einstein defined this as the definition of insanity. The latter will require bold leadership to force through needed

changes in the current system and to develop new systems of learning that are very different than what we are used to and totally outside the current education system.

School choice must be included in our set of solutions. In addition to the urgent national security need for improving our educational system, there is also the moral imperative of liberating students in poor neighborhoods from an environment that will cripple their lives. School choice will



provide immediate relief to those trapped in failing schools. Furthermore, introducing market forces to our education system by forcing schools to compete for students will inspire improvement faster than the slow, cumbersome movement of the education bureaucracy.

We should also experiment with offering direct incentives to students to accelerate their pace of learning beyond what is expected of them by school curricula. Imagine if students who finish high school early were given the cost of their remaining years in the form of scholarships. This would cost the taxpayers nothing and motivate students – especially those in poorer neighborhoods – to learn as rapidly as possible.

A more radical idea is to pay students directly for getting a B or better in their math and science classes. The idea offends many who either believe learning should be its own reward or don't think we should place special value on math and science over the arts, humanities, and social sciences. However, if we are serious that the failure of our math and science education is the second greatest threat to America's national security, there is nothing wrong with providing extra motivation for students to succeed in areas where we have the most urgent need. Money is a powerful motivator in every other area of American life. Why should education be any different?

Of course, an essential part of allowing students to learn on their own, independent of the set path of the school curriculum is developing a clearinghouse of knowledge that is accessible to everyone for free. The federal government can play a role by contributing to the Library of Congress online learning programs that teach basic math through trigonometry and calculus as well as the physical sciences.

This initiative would be especially powerful combined with initiatives like Nicolas Negroponte's One Laptop per Child, which has produced a durable, \$189 laptop specifically designed for young children. These laptops operate on an innovative peer-to-peer networking system that allows near-universal internet access over large areas despite a lack of traditional wireless coverage. Much focus has been paid in recent years to putting computers

in the classroom. Instead, we should focus on putting the classroom in the computer. Compare the cost of these laptops to what most schools spend on textbooks, and you begin to see how such an investment would pay immediate dividends. Furthermore, immersing all students from a very early age in an interactive, dynamic learning environment—accessible from anywhere where students are allowed to learn at their own pace on the paths of their choice—will do more to build a culture of independent, life-long learning in America than any of the normal, bureaucratic, curriculum-based education models we have in America today.

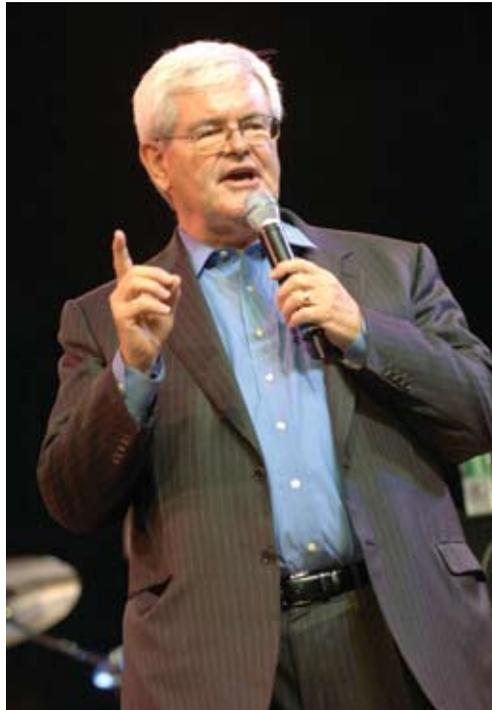
By empowering parents to remove their children from failing schools, allowing every child access to sources of instruction and knowledge from a young age, providing the proper incentives, and allowing them the freedom to learn at their own pace and path, we can rapidly develop a culture of learning that produces math and science expertise far faster and cheaper than we could possibly hope to achieve inside the current education bureaucracy. Of course, these solutions will still provoke enormous opposition from those with vested interests in the current education system. They will recognize that such alternative systems of learning represent a threat to their livelihood.

However, after decades of trying to achieve substantial reform within the current education system, developing alternative, competitive learning systems has to be a substantial part of our strategy to rapidly improve math and science education. Without an enormous push from our nation's leaders to educate Americans about the urgency of bold action, we can expect a "slow bleed" of our technological dominance until our national security apparatus lags far behind

that of China or even Russia or India.

This would be a far more dangerous world than the one America has known for the last half century. **RF**

*Newt Gingrich is a former Speaker of the House of Representatives and author of *Real Change: From the World that Fails to the World that Works*.*



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Is Merit Pay for Teachers a Good Idea?

Yes, it will reward educators for their performance and help keep talented teachers in the classroom

MARC LAMPKIN

Performance pay is a powerful policy lever to reward teachers who perform exceptionally in the classroom and to attract new talent to the teaching profession. The traditional teacher pay schedule, which is used by approximately 95 percent of schools, not only lacks a motivational component, but it rewards complacency. Incentive pay encourages effective teachers to remain in teaching, as they seek out professional and monetary rewards, and it forces ineffective teachers out when they are repeatedly denied bonuses.

Most school districts struggle to continuously recruit effective teachers. Several organizations, like The New Teacher's Project, are exploring avenues to recruit teachers from a variety of professional backgrounds. And some states and districts offer bonuses for teachers who accept positions in high-need schools, or who offer high-demand skills, like expertise in math and science.

Many talented young teachers are driven from the teaching profession because of the lack of opportunity for career advancement. The typical school structure contains the principal at the top of the pyramid, while the teachers form the base, with equal responsibilities and salary (with minor salary adjustments for experience and education level). If a teacher is given the same professional duties after ten years of teaching as he was in his first year of teaching, then the ambitious teacher will leave for

a job that provides opportunities for advancement and increased respect.

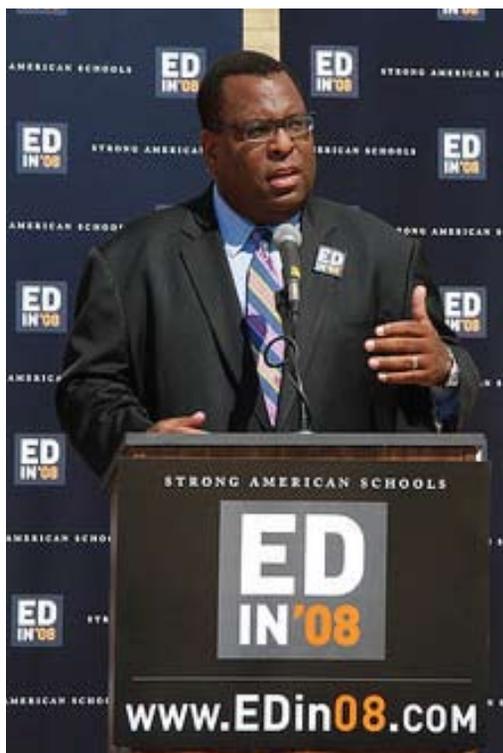
Many performance pay systems, such as Q-Comp in Minnesota, create a career ladder for teachers that allow

incentives for teachers to improve their performance. Other industries regularly give bonuses to high performing employees. Why don't schools? Wouldn't a teacher be more likely to stay up all night grading essays and refining lesson plans if there was the possibility of a cash reward? The prospect of a financial reward, and the professional respect that accompanies it, will encourage teachers to continuously tweak their lesson plans and instructional techniques to best serve their students.

Unfortunately, some teachers are content to climb the pay scale, without adding innovation to their classroom. Most teacher contracts and teacher's unions make it difficult to replace these teachers and they become a drag on a district's budget and a stifling influence on school culture.

This does not have to be the case. Recently, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and United Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten reached an historic compromise on teacher compensation reform: New York City public school teachers at over 200 high-need schools are now eligible for roughly \$20 million in bonuses. And union chapters at 86% of the qualifying schools voted to participate in the performance pay program. Benchmarks for student test scores will be the primary factor in deciding which high-need schools are awarded bonuses. Then, compensation committees comprised of two teachers,

(Continued on page 18)



Other industries regularly give bonuses to high performing employees. Why don't schools?

them to become mentors and teacher leaders. Consequently, teachers earn more money, take on more responsibilities, and gain more respect from their colleagues.

Performance pay also creates

Is Merit Pay for Teachers a Good Idea?

No, it will turn educators into competitors and make them teach to the test

REG WEAVER

At the center of a national debate about the quality of public education is the subject of teacher compensation. The issue among many is not whether to increase teacher salaries, but rather who among teachers should receive an increase and how they should earn it.

Merit pay is presented as a daring attempt to infuse public schools with the best practices from business and industry. Yet enthusiasm with the concept far outpaces the data supporting its effectiveness.

A 1998 Harvard Business Review article substantiates this fact. After surveying companies that experimented with merit pay, consulting firm William M. Mercer concluded that most individual merit-based pay plans share two attributes: they absorb vast amounts of time and resources, and they make everybody unhappy. W. Edwards Deming and management experts have argued strongly against using such schemes. Practical experience from the private sector, however, has done little to stem the growing fascination with offering merit pay to school employees.

In fact, merit pay has been touted as a panacea for what ails public schools for several generations. The reason it isn't already in place all across the country is that it doesn't work. It does nothing to improve teaching and learning, it makes teachers competitors rather than

Who determines merit: Is it the superintendent or school board? Or is merit based on the results of a one-size-fits-all standardized test? Similarly, what gets tested: physical education and music? Or only "core curriculum" subjects?

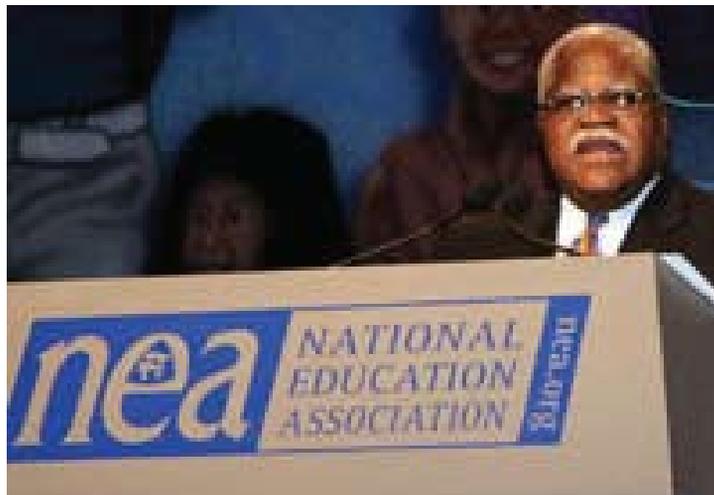
When it comes to merit pay, it is clear that folks have decided on a solution before they have defined the problem. The result is misguided policies that divert attention from addressing the root causes of teacher turnover and stagnant student achievement.

The question isn't how to differentiate pay between teachers. The question is how to pay teachers a salary that encourages the creation of great public schools for every child.

That means paying every teacher for more training and experience. It means paying a salary that is competitive enough to keep teachers from being tempted to leave

the classroom for other jobs. And it means paying an entry level salary that encourages people to enter the teaching profession. That's why NEA has called for a national beginning salary of \$40,000 for every public school educator.

In a 2006 MetLife survey, one
(Continued on page 18)



The question isn't how to differentiate pay between teachers. The question is how to pay teachers a salary that encourages the creation of great public schools for every child.

collaborators, and it takes the focus away from doing what we know does work — paying every teacher a living wage commensurate with their training and experience.

For the National Education Association, the questions about any merit pay plan remain the same today as they were decades ago.

(Lampkin, continued from page 16)

the principal, and a principal's appointee will determine the best way to split up the money among the teachers.

Performance pay systems, like the one in New York City, are often criticized when they are attached to student test scores. However, most modern performance pay programs, like the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), use multiple indicators to measure effective teaching, and student achievement on assessments is just one of those measures. TAP is seeing great results, and educators in over 180 schools throughout the country have adopted the program.

However, some teachers fear the loss of collegiality that performance pay systems create. Many successful teacher incentive programs are designed to overcome this challenge by promoting and rewarding teacher collaboration. In fact, Karen Bucher, a principal in a TAP school said: "In

the past, teachers worked mostly in isolation, often with little feedback on their performance unless there were real problems...With TAP, teachers are working together to improve their classroom instruction and they are getting timely feedback on their

Performance pay is a powerful tool to recruit and retain new talent in the teaching profession...

performance — a valuable component of teacher accountability."

In order to combat concerns of subjectivity, well-devised merit pay system must have transparent statistical indicators so that the evaluations are easily explained to the teachers. Evaluations should be 360 degrees, including feedback from students, teachers, parents and administrators.

Classroom observations should be conducted multiple times and evaluations should be completed by teams.

Performance pay is a powerful tool to recruit and retain new talent in the teaching profession, particularly in high-need districts and in high-demand subject areas. It also can make the teaching industry more professional by creating a career ladder that gives financial rewards to teachers who assume more responsibilities.

Using market-based incentives to attract and keep talented teachers will better reward our teachers, better educate our children, and improve our nation's schools. **RF**

Marc Lampkin is the Executive Director of Strong American Schools, a nonpartisan public awareness and advocacy effort aimed at elevating discussion amongst America's leaders about the need for education reform.

(Weaver, continued from page 17)

in four teachers cited low salaries and a lack of control over their own work as the primary reasons they will likely leave their jobs within the next five years. These teachers reported frustration and dissatisfaction with principals who did not ask for their suggestions, did not show appreciation for their work, and did not treat them with respect.

Merit pay can't substitute for a working environment that places a high value on trust and teamwork. And merit pay can't replace a perverse pay scale where the average earnings of workers with at least four years of college are now more than 50 percent higher than the average teacher's wages.

At schools that are struggling and failing to make adequate yearly progress, educators are crying

out for smaller class sizes, better professional development, more parental involvement, and updated textbooks and technology. In this environment, merit pay is just an oversimplified approach masquerading

...merit pay can't replace a perverse pay scale where the average earnings of workers with at least four years of college are now more than 50 percent higher than the average teacher's wages.

as school improvement.

After 150 years of working to improve the pay for America's school employees, NEA knows there is a better model for attracting and retaining qualified teachers and improving student learning.

Pay teachers for the knowledge and skills they gain. Compensate teachers for mentoring newer colleagues. Reward teachers who stay in hard-to-staff schools and accept extra assignments. Provide group incentives that give teachers the opportunity to obtain greater autonomy and discretion in all school matters.

Sadly, it is often simpler to tinker with merit pay than to exercise the judgment and courage necessary to reform teacher quality at its core. Does an ill-advised strategy of pushing merit pay best serve the children of America? Absolutely not. **RF**

Reg Weaver is president of the National Education Association, which represents 3.2 million teachers and other public school educators.

Mortgaging Our Future

RICHARD VEDDER AND
ANDREW GILLEN

Americans in general and college students in particular are showing concern about the rising college student loan debt burden and the growing possibility that students will have difficulty borrowing funds this fall.

While the immediate causes of the loan crisis are discussed later in this essay, it is important to state upfront that the real culprit has been the long run explosion in college costs – not just to students, but to society at large. If college costs had not risen sharply faster than the rate of inflation, there would be no student loan crisis today, since borrowing would have been very small.

The cost explosion is the result of a variety of factors, such as third party payments that reduce student sensitivity to costs, the non-profit nature of most colleges (which reduce incentives to be efficient), and the lack of good information on the outcomes of college students, making it virtually impossible to measure college productivity.

As the cost of providing higher education has exploded, real state government appropriations per student has remained relatively constant over

long time periods, forcing public universities to depend on tuition more than in the past. It is worth noting, however, that tuition fees have also exploded at private schools which are

largely unsubsidized by state government.

This increased reliance on tuition fees (especially at public universities) means that today the typical high school graduate does not have enough money to pay hefty tuition charges. The solution has been to borrow, much of it through federally subsidized loan programs. Seventy percent of all federal aid to students is in the form of loans, with many states and private lenders offering them as well.

The College Board estimates that students and parents borrowed \$78 billion for the 2006-07 school year (double the amount of a decade earlier), of which almost \$60 billion was borrowed either directly from the federal government in the Federal Direct Student Loan Program (FDSLSP), or through another of its programs, the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP).

With the exception of students, who were piling up more and more debt as tuition rates continued to increase, everybody (i.e., lenders, colleges, politicians) was happy — until last fall, that is, when two events conspired to derail the whole show.

The first was the crisis that spooked financial



As the cost of providing higher education has exploded, real state government appropriations per student has remained relatively constant over long time periods, forcing public universities to depend on tuition more than in the past.

markets. Until recently, investors were willing to buy packages of student loans from lenders. After getting burned by foreclosures from mortgage lending, however, investors have become wary about making such purchases, reducing funds available for loans by big lenders such as Sallie Mae.

To make matters worse, Congress passed legislation that cut both the interest rates that lenders could charge, as well as the fees that they received for originating a loan. The cuts were so drastic that a third of lenders stopped making loans altogether, and Sallie Mae, the largest lender, started losing money on every loan that it made. The implications of this can be seen by looking at Stafford loans, which make up most of the

federal loans.

Essentially, the FFELP program (where students borrow money from private lenders) was being destroyed, which left FDSLPL (where students borrow directly from the government) to

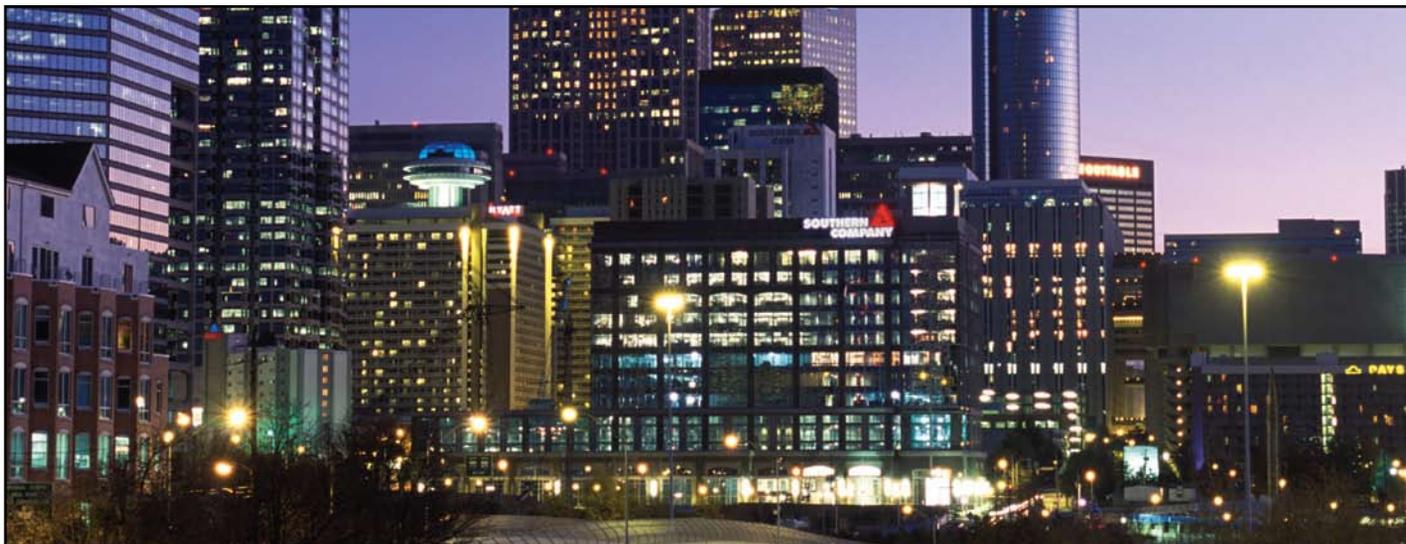
...for the first time, the average debt of students exceeds 50% of the median income of recent college graduates. This is up from less than 35% as recently as 2000.

pick up the slack. But FDSLPL was ill-prepared for the task. In 2006-07, it made only 20% of loans compared to 80% for FFELP, and

would have to come up with around \$40 billion more just to replace the Stafford loans that previously went through FFELP.

To try and entice lenders they have driven out of the FFELP program, the government now wants to buy loans from lenders. A Wall Street Journal editorial summed it up nicely: "Congress mandated a return on student loans that is too low to attract private capital in the current market. So Congress will now use your money to create artificial investor demand."

It seems clear that changes need to be made, but it is equally clear that a return to the status quo is not acceptable either. The Project on Student Debt reports that by the time they graduate, students owe



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\$21,100 in loans on average. We have estimated that for the first time, the average debt of students exceeds 50% of the median income of recent college graduates. This is up from less than 35% as recently as 2000. This much debt cripples the financial future of many students, who are increasingly postponing traditional milestones of adulthood such as marriage, purchasing a home, and having children.

Someone once said, "When we see the light at the end of the tunnel, the government goes and adds more tunnel." That seems to be the case here. One partially governmental created "crisis" (the mortgage problem) led to a second problem (in student lending), which is being corrected by further inefficient taxpayer bailouts. Perhaps it is the time to restore our faith in the power

of markets, not governments, in lending.

Above all, however, we must stop the major long-term problem: excessively rising college costs. This requires a fundamental change in the way we deliver

Perhaps it is the time to restore our faith in the power of markets, not governments, in lending.

higher education services in the United States.

We must revise the nature and magnitude of third party payments by governments (perhaps by moving to subsidizing students, not institutions), encourage

new for-profit entrepreneurial ventures, provide consumers with information on how colleges spend money and what students learn, etc.

Colleges are organized and run today the same way they were a century ago – and arguably not more efficiently. This must change. **RF**

Richard Vedder is the Director of the Center for College Affordability and Productivity and Andrew Gillen is its research director. Dr. Vedder is also a Visiting Scholar, American Enterprise Institute, and Distinguished Professor of Economics Ohio University, while Mr. Gillen is a doctoral student in economics at Florida State University.

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On Teaching War: The Future of Professional Military Education

JAMES JAY CARAFANO

Dickens was right, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” No statement better captures the state of professional military education and the prospects for the future.

Professional military education encompasses all the Pentagon’s efforts to imbue the enlisted and officer ranks with the knowledge, skills, and attributes they need to serve the nation. This includes everything from pre-commissioning education at the military academies like West Point and individual soldier basic training to instruction targeted at the most senior generals and NCOs. Military education includes preparing service members for the jobs they are doing, the ones they are about to undertake, and positions they will assume as senior leaders.

On the one hand, American professional military education has never been under greater stress. The war tax, the Pentagon’s annual ritual of raiding institutional budgets to pay for military operations until supplemental appropriation are approved; plucking staff out of stateside schools for staff jobs overseas; a relentless operational

tempo that leaves little time to send the right people to schools at the right time; and outsourcing teaching and thinking to private sector companies are undermining



American professional military education has never been under greater stress.

the world’s finest military education system.

On the other hand, the military schools in all the services from basic training to the war colleges have preformed

yeoman’s services trying to reorient education courses to give warriors the skills, knowledge, and attributes they need to fight the Long War. At the same time, they have experimented with distributed learning and other techniques and technologies to deliver education to the field. The armed forces have also tried hard, despite the demands to field a combat force, to get more leaders to civilian graduate schools to learn the non-military technical and critical thinking skills required to complement warfighting knowledge.

Compounding the ambiguous state of teaching the military craft is a long list of lessons learned from the first years of the Long War. The services’ Cold War practice of linking promotion and education proved a tragic mistake. Post-Cold War military operations have been highly decentralized, requiring men and women at all levels and throughout the force to exercise complex leadership and management tasks. It turns out in the new world disorder, everybody, not just the best and the brightest destined for generalship, requires a very high-degree of professional military competence.

Neglecting the professional education of the reserves, particularly in regard to joint education, was a painful lesson as well. Reserve soldiers serve in staffs at every level on every battlefield and they need to be educated to the exact same standards as their active duty counterparts.

Perhaps the most difficult lesson learned was what the real scope of professional military education should be. The military's role in warfighting was always unquestioned, but its responsibilities in peace operations are both controversial and poorly understood. This reflected the military's traditional approach to post-conflict missions, homeland security, and other interagency operations (where soldiers have to work hand-in-hand with a variety of civilian agencies), which have always been ad hoc and haphazard. The old adage that the military's job is to "win the nation's war" was just stupid. Nations, all the parts of the nation that contribute the war effort, win wars. And, "winning the peace" is part of winning the war as well, and many parts of the nation, including the military, have a role here as well.

When American forces prepare to undertake post-conflict missions, they try, as much as possible, to make them mirror traditional military activities. Such an approach can result in the misapplication of resources, inappropriate tasks and goals, and ineffective operations. In addition, the armed forces largely eschew integrated joint, interagency, and coalition operations, as well as ignoring the role of non-governmental agencies. The result is that most operations

lack cohesion, flexibility, and responsiveness.

Changing a Military

Saving professional military education from the relentless budgetary pressures to fund other military priorities is a continuing challenge. Folding the lessons learned from the Long War into the professional military education system is another. Sustaining the education system is largely a question of maintaining adequate defense budgets — a major battle that will have to be fought in the years ahead. Institutionalizing the lessons of the Long War,

Saving professional military education from the relentless budgetary pressures to fund other military priorities is a continuing challenge. Folding the lessons learned from the Long War into the professional military education system is another.

however, will require both money and change.

The obstacles to making the military learn more effectively are largely cultural in origin. Therefore, changing military culture could well require a set of initiatives that cut across the services' education, career professional development patterns, and organization.

To start with, the skills needed to conduct effective post-conflict tasks require "soft power," not only the capacity to understand other nations and cultures, but also the ability to work in a joint, interagency, and multinational environment.

These are sophisticated leader and staff proficiencies, required at many levels of command. In the present military education system, however, much of the edification relevant to building these attributes is provided at the war colleges to a relatively elite group being groomed for senior leader and joint duty positions. This model is wrong on two counts.

First, I think these skills are needed by most leaders and staffs in both the active and reserve components, not just an elite group within the profession. Second, this education comes too late in an officer or NCO's career. Virtually every other career field provides "graduate level" education to members in their mid-20s to 30s. Only the military delays advanced education until its leaders are in their mid-40s. That has to change.

Each armed service also need special schools specifically designed to teach the operational concepts and practices relevant to post-conflict missions, homeland security and other critical national security tasks. The services already have advanced schools (such as the Marine Corps School for Advanced Warfighting) for instructing in the operational arts at their staff colleges. These courses train the military's finest planners. The curriculum in these courses should be expanded to include post-conflict missions.

In the future, the attribute most needed by military officers is the critical thinking skills that come from a graduate education program. Thinking skills are the best preparation for ambiguity and uncertainty. Virtually any graduate program would suffice. In fact, the military should seek

as broad a range of graduate experiences as possible as a hedge against unexpected operational and strategic requirements.

To build a well-educated, diverse officer and Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) corps, the military should use the free market. A requirement for educating a large pool of military officers will create a vast new demand. Officers and NCOs should have a wide variety of options and opportunities.

The primary goal of military education is to teach officers how to think. What or where officers are learning is less important than the types of skills that they are developing — skills that will serve them well in a wide spectrum of situations and conflicts. An officer, for example,

can gain the same critical analysis skills from a political science course as from an advanced engineering course.

Finally, moral and political issues are part of war, not a

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separate sphere that military leaders can ignore. Officers and NCOs will have to engage in the struggle of ideas against terrorism and other ideologies that may

emerge in the 21st century. They will have to understand the political dimensions of war and the complexities of civil-military relations. Thus, every program must include at least some element of a classical liberal education to prepare leaders skilled in both the art of war and the art of liberty.

Educating a diverse, well-educated officer corps armed with graduate-level critical-thinking skills may be the most important contribution that the Pentagon can make to transforming the military. **RF**

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Time to RETHINK ETHANOL

JERRY TAYLOR

Rising food and fuel prices have prompted many to reconsider America's bipartisan campaign to ram corn ethanol down the market's throat via ham-handed consumption orders and subsidies galore. This is all to the good; little thought has been given to the unintended consequences of a policy explicitly designed to raise corn prices for farmers and to mandate a fuel so expensive that refiners would not willingly use it in large quantities absent government intervention.

The suspicion that the corn ethanol program has increased food prices is pretty well founded. In 2005, when the ethanol jihad began in earnest, corn was selling for a bit less than \$2.00 a bushel. Today, it's selling for almost \$6.00, and the impact of that price spiral ripples through a number of commodity and food markets. Endogenous increases in demand have of course played a role in that price hike thanks to global economic growth, and high production costs stemming from

rising energy costs have likewise been a factor. But to maintain that the massive increase in the demand for corn to meet fuel needs has been a non-factor is risible. Cornell economists Harry de Gorter and David Just calculate that elimination of the federal corn ethanol program would reduce

as of May 22. Conventional 87 Octane, by comparison, was selling at \$3.08 per gallon on those same markets. How does mandating more expensive ethanol reduce fuel prices?

The story told by the ethanol lobby is that the ethanol program reduces the demand for – and thus,



In 2005, when the ethanol jihad began in earnest, corn was selling for a bit less than \$2.00 a bushel. Today, it's selling for almost \$6.00...

corn prices by \$1.88 a bushel.

The belief that ethanol subsidies reduce fuel prices is problematic. After adjusting for the differential in energy content, E100 is selling in wholesale spot markets at \$4.07 per gallon of gasoline equivalent

the price of – oil, and given the steep demand elasticities that characterize petroleum markets, the oil price reduction reductions that follow more than offset the increased cost of ethanol. There is some truth to this. The aforementioned de Gorter and Just (who have easily performed the most concrete analysis on this matter) calculate that eliminating the ethanol program would likely raise fuel prices by 15 cents per gallon, but

that's a static analysis that assumes oil producers do not adjust their behavior to accommodate ethanol's contribution to transportation fuel markets. There is good circumstantial evidence, however, to suggest that ethanol mandates

have led some oil producers to cut back on oil production and investments in future production. If so, the oil price declines that follow from the ethanol program are being offset by declines in oil supply (and corresponding oil price increases) that likewise follow from the ethanol program.

Regardless, the observation that the ethanol program may reduce gasoline prices by a modest amount is not a good argument for the program. After all, farm programs lower the price of corn, wheat, and soybeans to consumers but do far more harm than good by gouging taxpayers and creating tremendous inefficiencies in agricultural markets. The observed retail price “savings” are swamped by the unobserved wealth losses.

The widespread belief that ethanol is a more reliable source of energy that reduces price volatility in fuel markets is assertion masquerading as analysis. An analysis of U.S. corn production data from 1960-2005 finds that corn yields varied almost twice as much as did oil imports over that period. Displacing gasoline with ethanol thus exchanges geopolitical risk with yield risk and history suggests that the latter is about twice as great as the former.

Buying ethanol rather than oil will of course keep more money in the United States than might otherwise have been the case, which leads many to suggest that ethanol likewise keeps money out of the hands of international “bad actors” like Iran and Islamic terrorists. That may be, but there is no evidence at all to suggest that this makes much difference. A regression analysis of cross-border Islamic terrorism and oil prices (a good indicator of oil profits) finds absolutely no correlation between the two.

That’s probably because most analysts believe that the limiting factor to terrorism isn’t money; it is manpower and technical expertise. Likewise, there is no obvious correlation between oil prices (and profits) and “bad behavior” from oil producing regimes that we don’t like.

Finally, the environmental costs associated with ethanol production greatly outweigh the benefits. And that’s the case whether we’re talking about conventional air pollution or greenhouse gas emissions – to say nothing about ethanol’s impact on groundwater resources, or ecosystem health.

While it’s true that ethanol reduces carbon monoxide

If ethanol has economic merit, no government support is necessary. If it doesn’t, then no amount of government support will change that fact.

emissions, there are no areas in the United States today that violate federal air quality standards for carbon monoxide. When evaporative emissions are taken into account, however, ethanol increases emissions of hydrocarbons, nitrogen oxides, non-methane organic compounds, and air toxic emissions (particularly acetaldehyde, formaldehyde, ethylene, and methanol) relative to conventional gasoline. Those emissions contribute significantly to low level ozone (summer time urban smog).

Scientists are now almost uniformly of the opinion that the total greenhouse gas contribution of corn ethanol throughout its fuel cycle is far greater than the

greenhouse gas contribution of gasoline through the same. There are two reasons for their shift of opinion on this matter. First, earlier studies that reported modest greenhouse gas emission reductions from ethanol were found to underestimate the nitrous oxide emissions produced by biofuels. Nitrous oxide is a potent greenhouse gas, and Nobel Prize-winning scientist Paul Crutzen and others report that these recently discovered nitrous oxide emissions offset 90-150 percent of the relative cooling associated with the CO₂ emission reductions from corn ethanol consumption. Second, previous studies on greenhouse gas emissions from ethanol had assumed that growing corn and other biofuels removes carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, an assumption that, once plugged into the models, served to offset the larger energy inputs associated with biofuel production vis-à-vis gasoline production. Yet those studies ignored the carbon emissions that occur as farmers worldwide respond to higher crop prices and convert forest and grassland to new cropland to replace the grains diverted to biofuel production.

There is simply no reason for the federal government to rig the market to favor ethanol investments. If ethanol has economic merit, no government support is necessary. If it doesn’t, then no amount of government support will change that fact. The alleged “social benefits” of ethanol are phantasms marshaled by supporters to keep the money flowing to corn growers and ethanol producers. **RF**

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Profile

Name: Jon M. Huntsman, Jr.

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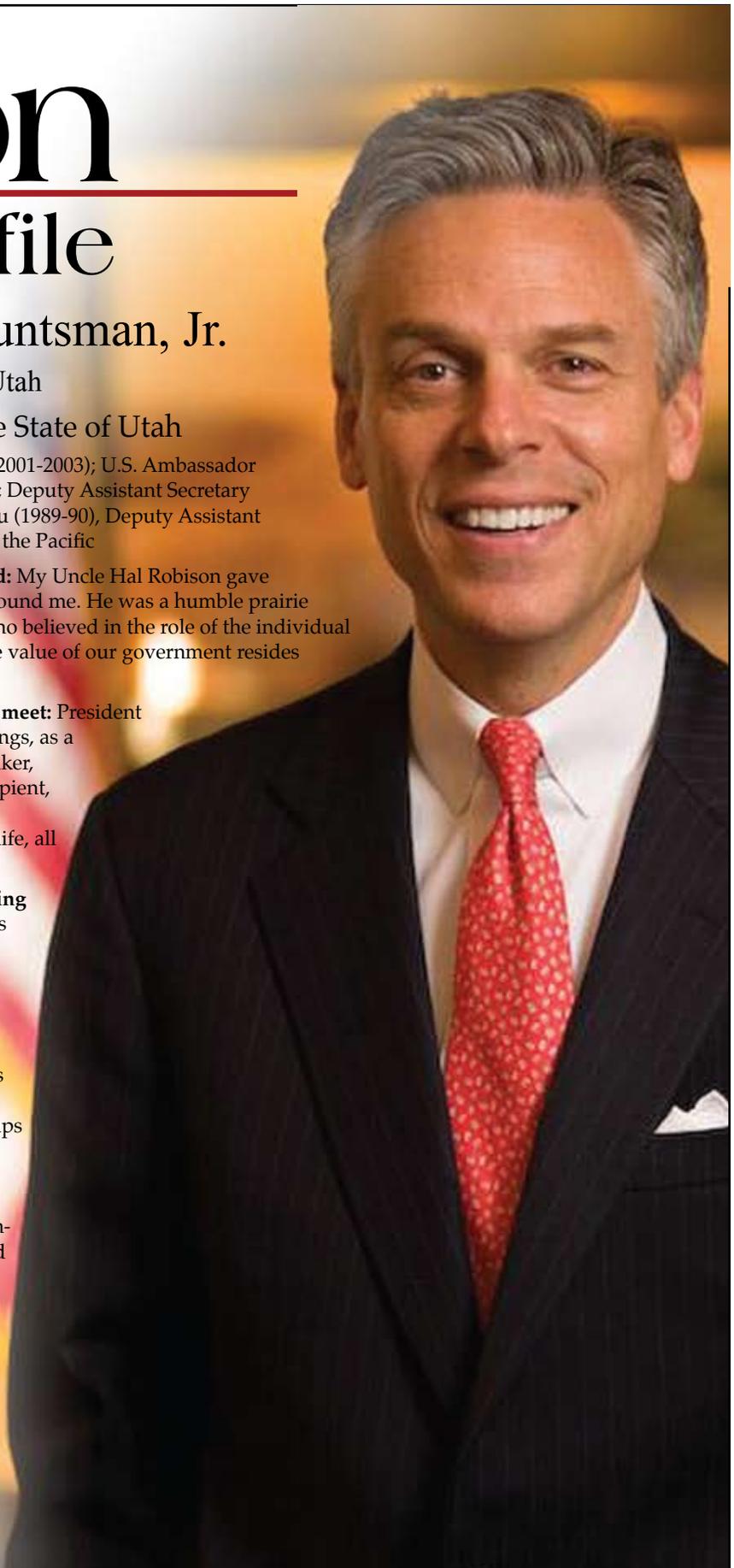
Previous Jobs: U.S. Trade Ambassador (2001-2003); U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Singapore, (1992-1993); Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce, Trade Development Bureau (1989-90), Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for East Asia and the Pacific

Individual(s) who inspired me as a child: My Uncle Hal Robison gave me better perspective about the world around me. He was a humble prairie philosopher and World War II veteran who believed in the role of the individual in our society. I learned from him that the value of our government resides with the people it serves.

Historical figure(s) I would most like to meet: President Theodore Roosevelt. He was so many things, as a great head of state, philosopher, peacemaker, environmentalist, father, Nobel Prize recipient, just to begin. He managed to accomplish everything one could ever want to do in life, all before the age of 48.

Issue facing America that no one is talking about: The most fundamental of all issues for government is to provide support for basic scientific research. It is research that will ultimately address our needs in transportation, environment, medical science and health care, and by doing so we will spawn the new generation of jobs and economic success for our country. Government should engage in partnerships with the private sector to fund strong research institutes to focus innovation and creativity around the big issues affecting us. We need to invest in a nation-building exercise, in the form of basic and advanced research, in our own country.

What the Republican Party must do to be successful in the elections this year: We need to reestablish our foundation as the Republican Party, focusing on our commitment to free markets, a strong defense system and confident foreign policy. The existence of our party rests on actively listening to the voter and providing equal doses of inspiration and solutions.



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