

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 29, 2008

The Honorable Kent Conrad
Chairman
Senate Committee on the Budget
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Judd Gregg
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Budget
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Conrad and Ranking Member Gregg:

As the Senate Budget Committee begins consideration of the Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Resolution, we write in strong support of the highest possible increase in the maximum Pell Grant award and ask you to provide that increase in your budget assumptions for fiscal year 2009. In addition, we urge you once again to reject the President's proposed cuts in other valuable higher education programs that expand access for low-income students, including the Leveraging Education Assistance Partnership program (LEAP), the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant program (SEOG), and the Perkins Loan program.

Pell Grants currently provide need-based aid to over five million undergraduate students and have helped open the doors of higher education to millions of students who otherwise might not have been able to attend college because of financial constraints.

Strengthening the Pell Grant program has strong bipartisan support, as demonstrated by expansion of the program in both the enactment of the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007 and the passage of the Higher Education Act reauthorization by both Houses of Congress.

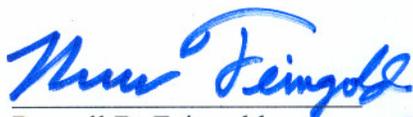
Those two bills take important steps to strengthen the Pell Grant program, but much more needs to be done to ensure it continues to grow in years to come. One step we can take now is to provide a sizable increase in funding for the program, in order to raise the maximum Pell Grant for 2009-2010. Increased funding for Pell Grants will also help ensure that we stop the erosion in the ability of Pell Grants to cover the cost of attending college. In 1975, the maximum Pell Grant award represented approximately 80% of the cost of attending a four-year public institution, but in 2001-2002, it covered only 42% of those costs, and by 2005-06, it covered just 33% of those costs. As a result of this erosion, large numbers of students have been forced to obtain student loans or forgo attending college all together.

Congress must continue to support increased funding for Pell Grants and other need-based aid programs so that hard-working students can take advantage of the full range of opportunities that higher education offers. Therefore, we request that you include the highest possible fiscally responsible increase in the maximum Pell Grant award in your

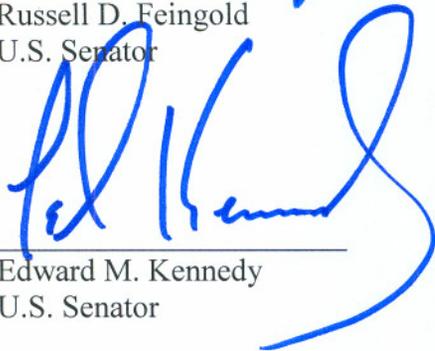
budget assumptions for Fiscal Year 2009 and reject proposed budget cuts in other need-based programs such as LEAP, SEOG, and the Perkins Loan program.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,



Russell D. Feingold
U.S. Senator



Edward M. Kennedy
U.S. Senator



Susan M. Collins
U.S. Senator



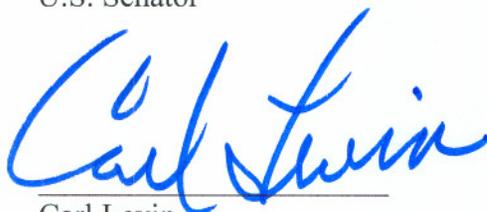
Norm Coleman
U.S. Senator



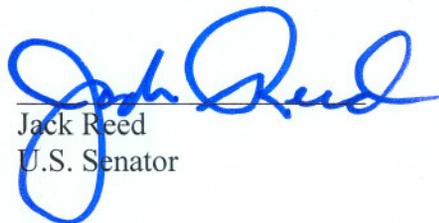
Daniel K. Akaka
U.S. Senator



John D. Rockefeller IV
U.S. Senator



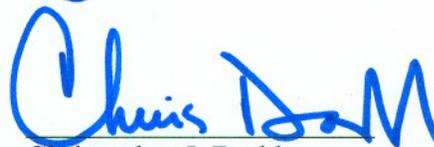
Carl Levin
U.S. Senator



Jack Reed
U.S. Senator



Herb Kohl
U.S. Senator



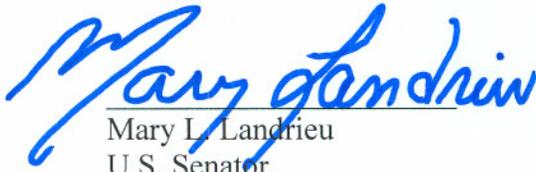
Christopher J. Dodd
U.S. Senator



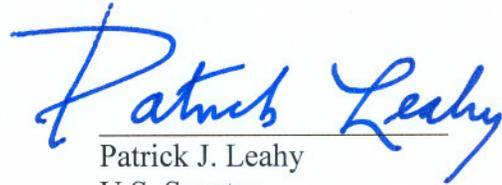
Joseph I. Lieberman
U.S. Senator



Barbara A. Mikulski
U.S. Senator



Mary L. Landrieu
U.S. Senator



Patrick J. Leahy
U.S. Senator



Ken Salazar
U.S. Senator



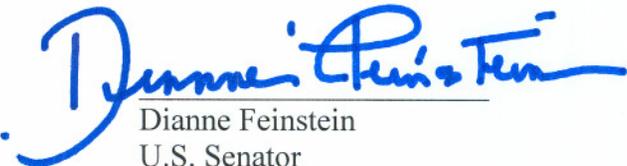
Bernard Sanders
U.S. Senator



Blanche L. Lincoln
U.S. Senator



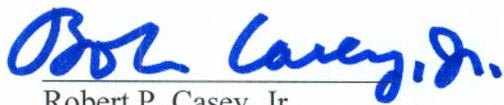
Benjamin E. Nelson
U.S. Senator



Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator



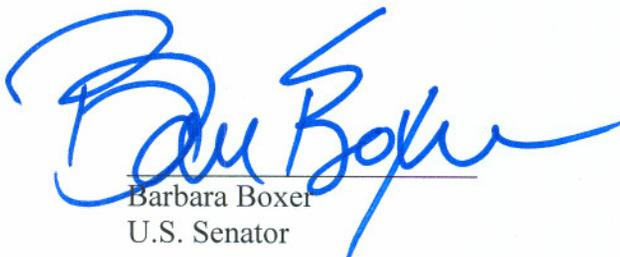
Tim Johnson
U.S. Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
U.S. Senator



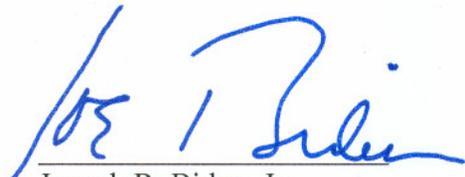
Hillary Rodham Clinton
U.S. Senator



Barbara Boxer
U.S. Senator



Debbie Stabenow
U.S. Senator



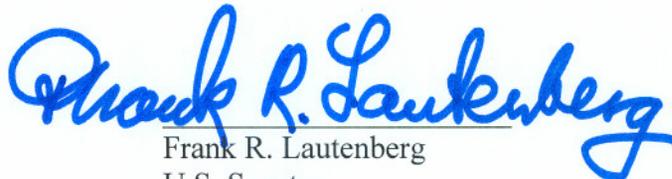
Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
U.S. Senator



Barack Obama
U.S. Senator



Maria Cantwell
U.S. Senator



Frank R. Lautenberg
U.S. Senator



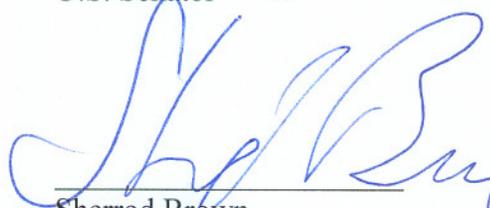
Richard J. Durbin
U.S. Senator



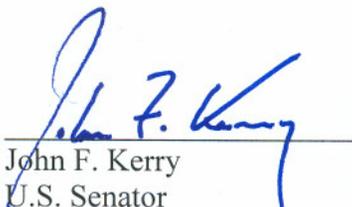
Robert Menendez
U.S. Senator



Gordon H. Smith
U.S. Senator



Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator



John F. Kerry
U.S. Senator



Claire McCaskill
U.S. Senator