



Pelosi Speaks at ASU



In one of her first public appearances as Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi addressed the growing issue of higher-education affordability by supporting Democratic reform. At Arizona State University, Pelosi praised recent House bills that will affect student loan interest rates. The Democrat from California also backed the Dream Act, a bill that would offer tuition assistance for those without legal residency.

Pelosi joined three of Arizona's four Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives for the meeting on Monday in Tempe. Attending were California Representative Barbara Lee and Arizona Representatives Harry Mitchell, Ed Pastor, and Raul Grijalva.

Concern about escalating tuition prices has made college affordability a main tenet in recent Congressional platforms. The popularity of the topic has spurred newly appointed Democrats to move forward quickly on legislation and lobbying.

Within the upcoming months, more complete immigration-reform legislation will be established, including proposals to permit undocumented students who grow up in the United States and graduate from high school to attend college at the tuition rates afforded to in-state students.

Another worry faced by college students today is the prospect of graduating with the burden of large amounts of student loan and credit card debt. Currently, many students have to borrow high-balance loans in order to meet educational expenses. In fact, it has been reported that the average ASU student graduates with more than \$15,000 in debt.

For this reason, the push to increase federal funding has become stronger. A recent success with regard to this matter was the proposal to increase the maximum Pell Grant.

The annual amount of the maximum Pell Grant has been raised by \$260, bringing the new total to \$4,310. The ultimate goal is to raise the total to \$5,100 per year in increments over the next few years.

The Pell Grant plays an important role in financial aid and has supported millions of students in their quests to earn college degrees. Many low-income families are hesitant to borrow money, and grants afford them assistance without the pressure of debt. Breathing new life in the form of funding into the grant would create a resurgence of equal opportunities.

According to www.hewi.net, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi discussed the steps needed to make education affordable in front of a standing-room-only crowd at Arizona State University. "When it comes to the education of our young people, this was only a start, and there is more to come," Pelosi said.