

U.S. Rep. Grothman: Introduces bill to encourage accelerated college completion rates

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(Washington, D.C.) – Congressman Glenn Grothman (R-Glenbeulah) introduced the Pell Grant Modernization Act, which would increase the definition of “full-time” Pell Grant eligibility from 12-units per semester to 15-units per semester, while reducing the amount of semesters a student is eligible to use his/her Pell Grant award—from 12 semesters to 10 semesters.

“In too many cases across the country, college students are taking six or more years to complete their college education,” said Grothman. “This unnecessary amount of time spent sitting in a classroom adds thousands of dollars to a student borrower’s loan balance.”

“To address this growing problem, I introduced the Pell Grant Modernization Act in hopes of accelerating college completion rates. The critical changes to the Pell Grant program included in this bill will ensure students are moving towards college completion, while saving taxpayers billions of dollars per year – which is especially important when our country is so deeply in debt.”

As a member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, Grothman hopes to make reforms to The Higher Education Act, which is currently up for reauthorization. Grothman is optimistic about the committee’s efforts to reauthorize the law to make federal student aid programs more accountable to taxpayers and affordable for students.

Background

Under current law, a Pell Grant recipient is considered a full-time student, and can maximize his/her Pell Grant award of nearly \$6,000/year, by taking only 12-units per semester. Additionally, Pell Grant recipients are eligible for this award for up to six years. This means that a student taking only 12 units of coursework per semester would have to be enrolled at their 4-year institution for at least 5.5 years in order to achieve 120 units of coursework, the typical graduation requirement for universities; and that time period could be extended by a student failing or dropping any courses along the way.

For a side-by-side comparison of current law and the Pell Grant Modernization Act, please see the charts below:

	Definition under current law in the <i>Higher Education Act</i>	Definition in the <i>Pell Grant Modernization Act</i>
Full-Time	12+ Hours	15+ Hours
3/4-Time	9-11 Hours	14-11 Hours
1/2-Time	6-8 Hours	10-7 Hours
Less than 1/2- Time	5 or Less Hours	6 or Less Hours

Eligible Semesters for Pell Grant Award Recipients

Current law under the <i>Higher Education Act</i>	<i>Pell Grant Modernization Act</i>
12	10

Additional facts about the Pell Grant program and college completion rates:

- According to The Education Trust, 50 percent of all Pell Grant students complete their Bachelor's degree in six years; 65 percent of all non-Pell Grant students complete their Bachelor's degree in six years.
- Since the year 2000, the federal government has spent over \$350 billion on Pell Grants. Since President Obama took office in 2009, the federal government

- has spent \$248 billion on Pell Grants, not including the 2017/18 academic year.
- According to the College Board, student borrowers who complete their college education are 56 percent more likely to repay their student loans than borrowers who do not complete their college education.