

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE
GLENN GROTHMAN
Wisconsin's 6th District

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Contact: Bernadette Green, (202) 225-2476

Grothman: Four-year college should not be only path emphasized to students

(Washington, D.C.) – Congressman Glenn Grothman (R-Glenbeulah) today emphasized the importance of young adults choosing a higher education path that will best suit their needs while incurring the least amount of student debt during an Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development hearing.

Grothman questioned higher education experts on the value of four-year degrees for all students, and the importance and technical colleges and trade schools in reducing student loan debt.

Excerpts of Grothman's remarks

"I think one of the reasons people are so frustrated today in their ability to live the American dream compared to 30 years ago is because so many people have been led down the path that a four-year degree is worthwhile. It hurts them twice; first of all, they spend time not earning money when they should be earning money. Secondly, they wind up deeply in debt.

"A recent New York Times editorial board [article](#) titled, Student debt's grip on the economy, made the argument I've been making for the last two and a half years: our current financing of higher education disincentivizes young couples from getting married, having children and buying homes.

“I recently talked to a young couple back in my district who, because of the income repayment schedule, they feel they can’t afford to get married given their huge amount of debt. They’re in their early thirties, and I don’t know how they’re ever going to be able to buy a house. It’s just horrible.

“The New York Times article raises another important question: we should be talking, in general, about the value of four-year degrees and if they’re worth it. Do you agree with the premise that we’re sending too many kids to four-year colleges – in part, kids who are underprepared for college, but in part just kids who may be making more money with their brains and work ethic somewhere else?

“The number of people out there with huge student loans and a degree that does not lead to a job – you run into them all the time. Like I said, a couple of weekends ago, I ran into a couple in their early thirties. The guy I don’t think ever graduated and is sitting there with tens of thousands of dollars of debt, and the girl with 50 grand in debt and a degree that is nowhere near related to the job she has.

“What percentage of people currently going into a four-year university, or of all the people getting four-year degrees, what percentage do you think should be getting four-year degrees in a traditional liberal arts college sort of setting? Should we peel it back by 20 percent? Thirty percent?

“Percentage-wise, compared to the number of students we currently have trying to work their way to a four-year degree, how many should be choosing that path?

“It is true that, if you talk to technical colleges, people go to technical college after a four-year degree that didn’t lead to a job. Same thing with trade schools; people, rather than beginning to go to trade school at age 18 or 19 where they could be off and running and making family-supporting wages at age 22 or 23 are going to the trade schools at 28 or 29. They’ve got a big student debt, and they finally get around to earning family-supporting wages when they’re 30 or 31.”

Click [here](#) to view Grothman’s full remarks.

Background

Currently in the U.S., 44.2 million Americans have a combined student loan debt of \$1.44 trillion due to an increased number of students entering four-year colleges. The average bachelor’s degree in the U.S. now costs \$127,000, while the average trade school degree costs \$33,000.

By 2018, it’s estimated the 47 million job openings will require an associate’s degree or certificate that can be attained through a career and Technical Education program. Workers with technical degrees can make upwards of \$90,000 depending on specialty.

Testimony from today’s hearing stated that 8 million Americans are in default on their loans today; one in four borrowers who take out a student loan this year will default in the future; and

40 percent of all borrowers whose loans have come due are in default, are delinquent or are in forbearance or deferment.

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U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman is serving his second term representing Wisconsin's 6th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives.