

Education

Mike believes

that every child should have the opportunity to receive a high quality education, regardless of their background or financial situation. This includes strong childcare and preschool programs; challenging early, middle, and high school curriculums that prepare students to succeed; dynamic career and technical education that provide skills needed in today's world; and affordable post-secondary education that maintains our nation's competitiveness. Mike believes the federal government has an important role to play in supporting local school officials and citizens as they seek to maintain and improve their schools, as well as provide the funding these schools need to meet federal mandates.

In this section:

- Early Childhood Education
- No Child Left Behind and IDEA
- Making Higher Education More Affordable
- Education for the Future
- Education for Veterans

Additional resources:

- U.S. Department of Education
- Maine Department of Education

Early Childhood Education

Preschool

and elementary education provides an essential foundation for our students. Unfortunately, low-income children in Maine

and throughout the nation often lack the necessary resources for successful education. Head Start provides comprehensive education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low-income prekindergarten-aged children and their families. Mike voted for the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 which became law in December 2007. This legislation reauthorized the program and provided 10,000 more children with access to important Head Start services.

Mike has also called for substantial increases in funding for a number of programs, including Head Start, Early Head Start and Child Care and Development Block Grants. Child care and development grants are another extremely important source of support for the early education of children in low-income families.

[Return to top](#)

No
Child Left Behind and IDEA

Before Mike was elected to Congress, No Child Left Behind passed and was signed into law with the great promise of a new federal commitment to education. Unfortunately, the federal government has continued to underfund local and state education efforts, even failing to support programs mandated by the federal government. Since the passage of No Child Left Behind, states and localities have been given billions of dollars less in federal funding than what was promised.

Mike has cosponsored legislation that would fully fund the No Child Left Behind Act. He has also cosponsored legislation that would fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which was enacted back in 1975 to ensure that all children, including disabled students, have access to free and appropriate public education. At the time, the federal government promised to pay 40% of the costs. But, the federal government has never made it even to 20%, forcing local and state governments to fund the rest.

[Return to top](#)

Making
Higher Education More Affordable

A strong system of college and university education has always given the United States an edge over other countries. For too many in Maine and throughout the nation, a college degree remains out of reach. Skyrocketing tuition costs have prevented many from getting a post-secondary education and saddled many of those who are able to attend with crushing levels of student loan debt.

In Congress, Mike is working to make sure that the potential to pursue a college education is available to every child in Maine regardless of his or her economic background. In order to achieve this goal, Mike supports increasing the maximum Pell Grant award and making affordable financial aid more accessible. Mike also supports increased funding for GEAR UP, which encourages middle school students to become college-ready, and TRIO programs such as Upward Bound.

Mike has been a strong advocate of legislation that makes higher education more affordable. He was proud to cosponsor and vote for H.R. 5, the College Student Relief Act, which will reduce the interest on federally subsidized student loans by 50%, saving the average borrower \$4,400 over the life of his or her loans. Mike also voted for H.R. 4137, the College Opportunity and Affordability Act of 2008, which includes provisions to encouraging colleges to rein in price increases.

Mike voted for and helped pass the College Cost Reduction and Access Act, legislation that increased funding for Federal Pell Grants by more than \$11 billion. This increase will raise the maximum Pell award to \$5,400 by 2012. It also establishes a new loan forgiveness program. Under this program, a student's debt is discharged after ten years and after 120 payments are made while employed in certain public service jobs.

Mike also voted for and helped pass H.R. 5715, Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act. H.R. 5715 was signed into law on May 7, 2008. It helps struggling families pay for college by increasing the annual loan limits on federal unsubsidized student loans by \$2,000 for undergraduate students, and by increasing the total loan limit over the course of a student's education to \$31,000 for dependent undergraduates and to \$57,500 for independent undergraduates. In addition, it gives parents the option to defer repayment until up to six months after their children leave school, giving families more flexibility in hard economic times. It also gives the Secretary of Education the temporary authority to purchase loans from lenders in the federal guaranteed loan program, if there is a determination that lenders are unable to meet the demand for loans. This will ensure that lenders continue to have access to capital to originate new loans.

[Return to top](#)

Education for the Future

Mike has always been a big supporter of the STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.) It is within these disciplines that the future lies. Everything from answers to our energy crisis and the solutions to global warming, to the cure for cancer and other debilitating diseases, will be discovered by bright men and women who are knowledgeable in these areas. We must work to strengthen our scientific programs and open these fields up to underrepresented groups, including women and minorities.

Mike supported passage of H.R. 2272, the America COMPETES Act of 2007. This bill would deliver more highly qualified teachers in the classroom in the fields of mathematics, science, engineering, technology, and critical foreign languages through grant programs that provide degrees in these areas with concurrent teacher certifications. In addition, it authorizes competitive grants to establish programs focused on math for elementary and secondary schools including training for teachers with a focus on serving high-needs schools.

Mike is also a strong supporter for increased funding for career and technical education programs. In 2008, he signed a letter to the Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education, calling on the subcommittee to support these types of programs under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. The skills that these programs teach students are not only important if we want to remain competitive in a global economy, but are also required for some of the fastest growing jobs in America.

[Return to top](#)

Education for Veterans

Mike has also been involved in improving educational opportunities

for veterans. He is a proud co-sponsor of H.R. 5684, the Veterans Education Improvement Act of 2008. This bill amends the Montgomery GI Bill by increasing the rates of basic educational assistance for veterans. H.R. 5684 provides a stipend for individuals using such assistance to pursue a program of education at an institution of higher learning and authorizes the use of such assistance for business courses and seminars, courses taken to prepare for licensing or certification tests, and the repayment of federal student loans.

[Return to top](#)