

THE STATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN WISCONSIN



ELECTION 2016
GENERATION **PROGRESS**
ACTION

The vast majority of students in Wisconsin have student debt—in fact, the state ranks as one of the highest in nation for percentage of students with debt. [Under Governor Scott Walker](#), tuition costs have gone up, financial aid has become stagnant, and state funding for public education has been significantly cut.

Borrowers in Wisconsin are in crisis, and yet, there couldn't be a sharper contrast between the candidates on policies that would help borrowers and address college affordability. Young people are eager to see solutions to the student debt crisis, and we know that policies like debt-free college and student loan refinancing [would help young people especially](#).

We know that student debt affects 1 in 5 households in the United States, but let's see how it affects Wisconsinites:

- **815,000** Wisconsinites [have student debt](#)
- The [combined total student debt load](#) in Wisconsin is **\$19,304,275,000**
- Borrowers in Wisconsin have, [on average](#), **\$24,985** in student loans
- **70 percent** of four-year college students in Wisconsin [have student loans](#)
- **515,000** students in Wisconsin [would benefit](#) from student loan refinancing

Nationally, Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump has yet to produce any sort of comprehensive plan to deal with the student debt crisis. From what we can infer from his contradictory public statements, however, any version of a Donald Trump "plan" to address student debt would skyrocket interest rates for borrowers. By privatizing student loans, Trump's "plan" [could increase monthly payments](#) for Wisconsin borrowers by anywhere between 23.4 and 78 percent, costing them between \$6,609 and \$22,027 over the life of their loans.

In the Wisconsin Senate race, incumbent Senator Ron Johnson (R) has done nothing to address the student debt crisis in his state, despite rising tuition and funding cuts. Senator Johnson has blocked efforts like student loan refinancing that would help borrowers struggling with their loans, and has voted for budgets that slash programs like Pell grants that make college more affordable. Moreover, Senator Johnson has taken an active role in supporting and encouraging the growth of predatory for-profit colleges.

WISCONSIN IS....

- **19%** people of color (1)
- **2.8%** LGBTQ people (2)
- **50.3%** women (3)
- **0.7%** incarcerated people (4)
- **15.6%** seniors (5)
- **7.4%** college or graduate students (6)
- **6.9%** veterans (7)

Wisconsin has no law ensuring the accessibility of higher education for undocumented students.

**Donald Trump's
higher education
"plan" could cost
WISCONSIN STUDENTS
an extra
\$22,027**

The contrast with former Senator Russ Feingold (D) couldn't be clearer. He has campaigned on a platform to make college debt-free and wants to help borrowers by allowing them to refinance their student loans to take advantage of low interest rates.

Wisconsin needs a plan to not only help student loan borrowers in the state, but make higher education a public good again for all Wisconsinites, present and future.

Former Senator Russ Feingold (D) wants to:

- Let borrowers [refinance their student loans](#)
- Make [college debt-free](#) so that everyone can obtain a high quality, affordable education
- **Protect [Pell grants](#)**, a proven aid for needy students

As senator, Ron Johnson (R) has:

- Called for an [increase in the number of for-profit colleges](#), which take advantage of vulnerable students and veterans, in the higher education system
- Voted [against allowing student loan borrowers to refinance](#) their loans to take advantage of lower interest rates
- Supported the [elimination of federal student loans](#) and [opposed efforts](#) to lower interest rates for student loans
- Voted in favor of a budget that contained the [largest reduction in Pell grants](#) in history