

# Voter Guide 2014: Education Spending

*National Priorities Project examines issues related to the federal budget in time for the 2014 election.*

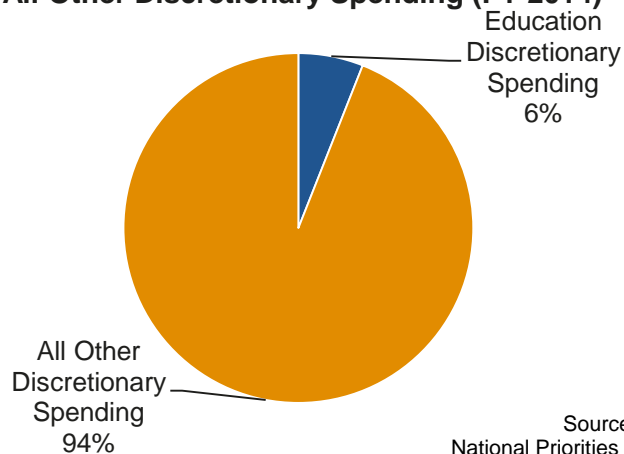
## What is the Federal Government’s Role in Education?

The federal government provides funding for education programs that serve students at all stages in education, ranging from Early Head Start, to early-childhood education, to the Title I program for underserved public schools, to Pell grants and Stafford loans for college students. The federal government also supports education through programs like school nutrition that offer free or reduced price school lunch and breakfast.

## Federal Spending on Education

- By the end of fiscal year 2014, federal spending on elementary, secondary and higher education will reach about \$70 billion.<sup>1</sup>
- Spending on elementary, secondary and higher education in 2014 accounts for just six percent of discretionary spending, a figure that has not increased for decades despite consistent polling that shows education is a top priority for Americans.<sup>2</sup>
- Major education programs funded by the federal government include Title I grants to struggling public schools, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) grants to states, and Pell grants for college tuition.
- In 2011-2012, more than 9 million students received Pell grants. The average grant was \$3,555.<sup>3</sup>
- Almost half of all public schools receive Title I funding, which totaled \$14.4 billion in 2014.<sup>4</sup>
- Head Start, the federal government’s only pre-kindergarten program, was funded at \$6.4 billion in 2014, and served over 813,000 children. Early Head Start, which starts at birth, received \$1.37 billion and served nearly 116,000 infants and toddlers in 2014.<sup>5</sup>

**Projected Discretionary Spending on Education and All Other Discretionary Spending (FY 2014)**



Source: OMB  
 National Priorities Project

## Challenges and Opportunities in Education

States have made deep cuts to education funding in recent years, and the nation's young adults fell from first to 12th globally in educational attainment.<sup>6</sup> As for higher education, the maximum Pell Grant once covered three-quarters of the annual cost of the average four-year public school; today it covers less than a third.<sup>7</sup>

### Public Opinion

More than half of Americans (53 percent) say they are dissatisfied with the quality of education children are receiving in kindergarten through high school<sup>8</sup> and 69 percent say improving our education programs should be a top priority for the president and Congress this year.<sup>9</sup>

#### What Americans Say

*"As a teacher, for me to make sure my classroom operates, it's more and more out-of-pocket expenses because we're told the budgets are being shrunk."*

*-Conrad (Austin, TX)*

### What to Ask Your Congressional Candidates

What is the best role for the federal government in improving early childhood, elementary and secondary, and higher education in this country?

**To Learn More about Education Spending:** [bit.ly/nppeducation](http://bit.ly/nppeducation)

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<sup>1</sup> Office of Management and Budget, 2015 President's Budget.

<sup>2</sup> Office of Management and Budget, 2015 President's Budget.

<sup>3</sup> National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. National Student Aid Profile: Overview of 2014 Federal Programs.

<sup>4</sup> National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. National Student Aid Profile: Overview of 2014 Federal Programs.

<sup>5</sup> Federal Education Budget Project, [Head Start](#).

<sup>6</sup> John Michael Lee Jr et al., [The College Completion Agenda 2011 Progress Report](#), College Board, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> [Congressional Budget Office](#), "The Federal Pell Grant Program: Recent Growth and Policy Options," September 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Gallup [poll](#), conducted August 9-12, 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Pew Research Center [poll](#), conducted January 15-19, 2014.