Dear Colleague:

I would like to bring attention to the following article and editorial that was published recently in the Duluth News Tribune. The initial article highlighted Rep. Chip Cravaack’s visit to Cloquet High School where a TRIO student questioned his support of the FY 2011 bill that cut funding for the TRIO programs. The second piece is an editorial written in response to the article, commending the student for questioning the Congressman’s commitment to TRIO as well as questioning the Congressman’s voting record. This is an excellent example of TRIO in the media and using the power of a student’s voice to carry our message.

Sincerely,

Heather Valentine
COE

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Cloquet students question Cravaack

Cloquet High School student Sara Bush took the opportunity Thursday morning to ask U.S. Rep. Chip Cravaack why he voted for a bill that would take away $26 million in funding from the TRiO programs, which help students like her go to college.

By: Jana Peterson, Pine Journal

Cloquet High School student Sara Bush took the opportunity Thursday morning to ask U.S. Rep. Chip Cravaack why he voted for a bill that would take away $26 million in funding from the TRiO programs, which help students like her go to college.

“There are a lot of other programs associated with that,” he told the senior, referring to the federal program designed to help low-income, minority and first-generation students go to college. “I understand it’s not going to be easy. But right now we’ve got $14.3 trillion in debt. If we don’t do something, here’s what’s going to happen to TRiO programs: We won’t have a TRiO program. We’ll be broke.”
The Republican freshman lawmaker visited with two Cloquet High School government classes as he traveled around Minnesota’s 8th District during the spring recess for Congress. The last time he’d visited Cloquet High School was before the November 2010 election, when he defeated long-time incumbent Rep. Jim Oberstar.

“I remember that was right before a debate,” Cravaack told the students. “You helped me prepare for that.”

While the freshman representative focused most of his comments on his own background and on the federal deficit — citing that as the primary reason he got involved in politics — the students asked an array of questions.

“What do you like to do in your free time?” Annabel Morrisroe asked.

“I don’t have free time,” the congressman replied, launching into a description of his typical day at the Capitol, where he arrives at his office around 7 a.m. and tries to leave by 11 p.m.

Marcos Hunt, who is going into the Marine Corps after he graduates, wanted to know what Congress was doing to make health care more affordable for active military and veterans.

“Keeping our promises,” Cravaack told the senior, noting that it is a mantra on Capitol Hill that the government should always keep its promises to veterans.

During Cravaack’s meeting with the first government class, Danielle Prince asked about general cuts to education.

“I was flabbergasted when I went to Washington, D.C., and I see these massive Department of Education buildings, huge campuses,” Cravaack told both classes in response to the questions from Price and Bush. “The average salary in the Department of Education is $103,000. What’s happening is, the money that should be going to our kids in the classroom is heading up to Washington, D.C., and our very large federal government.

“My feeling is we should shrink the Department of Education and make sure that money that’s going to Washington, D.C., gets down to our teachers and classrooms.”

He didn’t explain how the money would be shifted to local schools, and Cloquet Superintendent Ken Scarbrough said he was unaware of any legislation that would “actually shift that Washington, D.C., infrastructure money to the schools or states.”

About 12 percent of the Cloquet school district’s revenue comes from the federal government, Scarbrough said.

Bush — who has been accepted to study pre-medicine at the College of St. Scholastica — thanks, in part, to TRiO funds — didn’t completely let Cravaack off the hook for his TRiO vote.

“This also gives up the opportunity for 90,000 people to go to college,” she pointed out.

Cravaack responded with a story of how his wife came from a family with little money, and worked three jobs to put herself through school twice: first for her undergraduate degree and then for her master’s degree.
"You can work, and you can work hard," he told her. "When you get your degree, you can be very proud because you worked harder than some of the other people to get that degree."

Reader's view: Cravaack supports misguided spending on fighter engine

Kudos to the Cloquet High School student who asked U.S. Rep. Chip Cravaack about his vote to take $26 million from TRiO programs, which would result in 90,000 fewer students going to college; and kudos to the student who questioned Cravaack about general cuts to education (“Cloquet students question Cravaack, April 22).

By: Lee Peterson, Duluth News Tribune

Kudos to the Cloquet High School student who asked U.S. Rep. Chip Cravaack about his vote to take $26 million from TRiO programs, which would result in 90,000 fewer students going to college; and kudos to the student who questioned Cravaack about general cuts to education (“Cloquet students question Cravaack, April 22).

We need to note Cravaack’s voting record because, so far, it doesn’t seem to reflect the values of the people of the 8th Congressional District. Contrasting his anti-TRiO vote with his reported support for building a second engine (by GE) for the F-35 fighter provides a good example of his disconnect from the 8th District and his affinity to connect with the defense industry and lobbyists. The extra engine, as I understand, has been opposed by Presidents Obama and George W. Bush, by the past two secretaries of defense, and by three branches of the service that would use the plane. Imagine that! Cravaack knows better? The extra engine reportedly has cost us $3 billion so far. Cutting it would save $450 million this year alone, according to my research.

It helps Cravaack that GE reportedly spent $39 million lobbying Congress last year. How much does anyone think low-income students spent lobbying to keep TRiO funded?

Anyone who Googles “second engine for the F-35” can see it’s a poster child for government waste. Research into TRiO produces information about educational funding programs that help strengthen our nation and our student’s futures.

The U.S. House of Representatives defeated funding for the second engine in February, but it could come alive again through the efforts of people like Cravaack. Sacrificing $26 million from TRiO while passing another $450 million of pork to GE is not good leadership.

I was impressed with the students from Cloquet. I’m not impressed with Cravaack’s apparent spending priorities.

By Lee Peterson