

# National Service is part of Riley's education agenda

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Education Secretary-designate Richard Riley pledged Jan. 12 to promote greater student access to America's colleges and universities and link two issues important to youth — education and national service.

"We must establish a new covenant which gives both greater access to postsecondary students for those who have earned an opportunity to go on, and also provide incentives for young adults to serve their community and their nation," Riley said at his confirmation hearing before the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee. Riley was expected to win nomination Jan. 19 without difficulty.

The former governor of South Carolina, who had been serving as an adviser to President Clinton, also outlined plans to design a new, pro-active approach to education policy after a decade of research and study.

Riley termed these new ideas "a participatory, positive approach for turning from a nation at risk to a nation on the move."

The Congressional Research Service found increases in both Scholastic Aptitude Test scores and the number of high school students going on to college as a result of these policies.

Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., the panel's chairman, urged Riley to check on the status of Bush administration regu-

lations that could undermine the use of race-specific college scholarships to promote diversity.

"I urge you to make sure that something isn't put into effect (on the scholarship issue) during your watch," Kennedy said.

Riley said he believed race-based scholarships were legal if designed to promote diversity, not discrimination. "My view is that it's valid, it's good and it's legal," he said.

On other issues, Riley said he favored expanding Pell Grants for needy students. But he acknowledged that increases will be hard to afford, given the government's budget deficit.

The former governor sought a middle ground on the issue of direct student loans, operated without the help or participation of banks. Riley favored the pilot program on direct loans enacted last year, but he is awaiting the findings of more research. Riley said he also hoped such a program could significantly reduce federal costs.

Riley was quicker to endorse the idea of community service in exchange for student loan forgiveness, an idea championed by President-elect Clinton.

In addition to community service, Riley said former students should be able to earmark a certain portion of their earnings specifically to repay student loans.



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