

May 11, 2010

To the Honorable Members of the Illinois Senate,
96th General Assembly:

Today, I return Senate Bill 365 to the Illinois Senate, vetoed in its entirety.

As Governor, I am committed to ensuring that the students of our State have access to the educational resources they need. Over the past year our State has not been able to adequately fund the Monetary Award Program (MAP) grants and has demanded that institutions of higher education do more with fewer resources. Because MAP grants have not been fully funded, more than 200,000 of our neediest students are being denied financial assistance for higher education, while others have been forced to make profound sacrifices to continue their quest for a degree. And some, unfortunately, have had to suspend their dreams of going to college.

Our colleges and universities face millions of dollars of unpaid bills. At a time when students are being deprived basic assistance and we are asking our institutions of higher learning to operate with scarce resources, I cannot affix my signature to a measure that allows student assistance to be based on anything other than need and merit.

This bill fails to adopt the fundamental reforms that are necessary to bring transparency, competition, and fairness to the General Assembly scholarship program. The General Assembly must do more than enact the provisions of this bill to ensure that the scholarships are awarded only to deserving applicants. A program that relies on the favor of a legislator rather than the merit of an applicant is not a program I can endorse. Accordingly, I must return this bill without my approval and ask that the General Assembly pursue an alternative reform.

The Illinois House of Representatives has taken an important step towards ending the abuses of the General Assembly scholarship program and preserving resources for higher education through passage of House Bill 4685. House Bill 4685 ends the General Assembly scholarship program, effective June 1, 2010. I commend the Illinois House of Representatives on the passage of that bill and ask for your support in passing this important initiative.

Therefore, pursuant to Article IV, Section 9(b) of the Illinois Constitution of 1970, I hereby return Senate Bill 365, entitled "AN ACT concerning State government.", vetoed in its entirety with this statement of objections.

Sincerely,

PAT QUINN
Governor