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September 2008

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your interest in hearing from me about the issues that matter to Ohio. This email is meant to update you about efforts in Ohio and Washington to strengthen our communities and build Ohio's middle class.

In addition, I invite you to visit my website at <http://brown.senate.gov>, or click any of the links below to learn about other important issues. Don't hesitate to [email me your questions, concerns, and comments](#). Together, we can work to make sure Ohio's needs are heard on Capitol Hill.

Once again, thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Sherrod Brown

Investing in Higher Education

Between 2001 and 2008, the cost of college nationally increased 28% at four-year public colleges and nearly 16% at four-year private colleges. During this same time period, the median household income in Ohio has decreased 2.7%. So it's not surprising that two-thirds of all 2004 graduates of Ohio four-year colleges left school with some student loan debt. The average Ohio student is burdened with a \$20,000 debt by the time he or she graduates.

I am proud to report that Congress took action to address these rising costs and to increase access to college. On August 14, 2008, the President signed the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. This law capitalizes on investments Congress made last year by simplifying the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, requiring greater oversight of the student loan industry, and eliminating conflicts of interest between lenders and school officials. It also ensures that parents and students have access to accurate and objective

What We Can Do

As your United States Senator, my top priority is ensuring the best constituent services possible. My office is able to help you with concerns and questions you have about the federal government. We can also help you navigate federal programs and interact with federal agencies. [Click here](#) »

Website

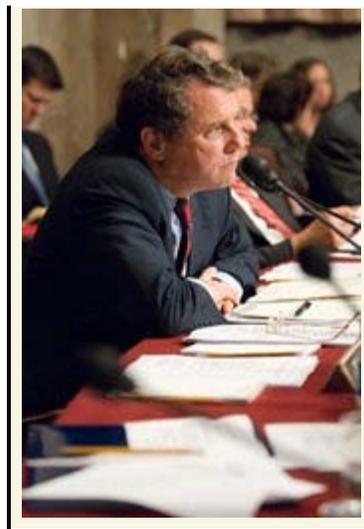
I am proud to serve as your United States Senator. To better serve you, I have created a website that is as much a "virtual office" as it is a source for information about your government. [Click here](#) »

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data on college costs.

As a member of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, I was able to play a substantial role in the drafting of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. For instance, after learning about Cleveland State University's successful veterans' assistance program, I fought to create a similar program on the federal level. This program, which has now become law, will help schools provide student veterans with a one-stop shop for help with financial aid, class selection, VA benefits, and other services.



Everyone who wants to go to college should be able to do so. I will continue to work for increased student aid in the form of grants and low-interest loans so that all students are able to achieve the dream of a college education.

Jobs Training Bill

Since January 2007, I have held 115 roundtable discussions in communities all over Ohio. One of the recurring themes I hear – from workers and employers, business and labor leaders, teachers, school administrators, and veterans – is that we need to do a better job providing workers with the skills necessary for careers in burgeoning Ohio industries like health care, biotechnology, and alternative energy manufacturing.

That is why I recently introduced the Strengthening Employment Clusters to Organize Regional Success (SECTOR) Act (S. 3368). This bill, which I worked on with Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME), would focus resources on worker training within certain industry "clusters," a term used to describe the groups in a common field and region. The bill would require four principal organizations to be part of any training program: industry, labor unions, workforce investment boards, and community colleges.

Cluster strategies have been endorsed by several distinguished organizations, including the Aspen Institute, the Workforce Alliance and several state and regional coalitions.

Supporting Ohio Agriculture at the State Fair

As Ohio's largest industry, agriculture has a proud history and a bright future. Nothing showcases that future better than the Ohio State Fair, which features farm products from all 88 counties.

I had the chance to attend the fair and visit with the 4-H and FFA members who work all summer long on their fair projects. Their dedication and enthusiasm are truly extraordinary. I remember as a teenager showing cattle at the Richland County Fair, so I know how much it means to the participants and how much effort goes into the projects.

This year, for the first time in its history, the Ohio State Fair also boasted a farmers' market. I left with a shopping bag full of Ohio products and a renewed commitment to "buying local."



While at the fair, I even ran into an old family friend who had brought one of his Guernsey cows to show. Coincidentally, this Guernsey was bred from a cow raised on my family's farm near Mansfield.

With one out of seven Ohioans working in agriculture, I am proud to be the first Senator from Ohio to serve on the Agriculture Committee in nearly 40 years. Even though Congress passed the 2008 farm bill this past June, there is still work left to be done. I will continue to fight for Ohio farmers by promoting renewable energy, encouraging local food production, and supporting our rural communities through infrastructure investments.

Improving Ohio's Aging Water and Sewer Systems

I've traveled all across our state over the past 20 months. No matter where I am – whether it's a rural community like Paulding or Defiance or a larger city like Cincinnati or Akron – I always hear the same question: how do we ensure safe and clean water while keeping utility rates affordable for taxpayers?

To help answer that question, Senator George Voinovich and I introduced the Clean Water Affordability Act (S. 3443) in August. This legislation would create federal partnerships with communities across Ohio to help them modernize aging water and sewer lines. By taking this common sense step now, we can help reduce large rate hikes in the future.

Ohio communities – and families – are in need of critical water and sewer upgrades to keep the public safe and protect our water sources from pollution and contamination. Current programs are underfunded and are spread too thin to help the communities that need them most. The Clean Water Affordability Act would help ensure that Ohio communities struggling to update their water and sewer systems have the resources and flexibility to do so.



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