

State of South Dakota

NINETY-FIRST SESSION
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, 2016

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SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 2

Introduced by: Senators Buhl O'Donnell, Bradford, Heinert, Hunhoff (Bernie), Parsley, Peterson (Jim), and Sutton and Representatives Hawks, Bartling, Bordeaux, Gibson, Hawley, Killer, Kirschman, McCleerey, Ring, Schrempp, and Soli

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION, Supporting efforts to ensure that students from South
2 Dakota have access to debt-free higher education at public colleges and universities.

3 WHEREAS, the economic competitiveness of the United States and South Dakota in the
4 global economy, requires a well-educated workforce; and

5 WHEREAS, students in South Dakota currently average \$26,000 in debt upon graduation,
6 which significantly hinders their ability to participate in the local economy; and

7 WHEREAS, current and future young people in the United States and South Dakota should
8 have the same opportunity offered to those who went to college in previous generations,
9 including the ability to attend state colleges and universities without taking on burdensome debt;
10 and

11 WHEREAS, in 2016, higher education is more important than ever because it is an essential
12 step to entering and remaining in the middle class; and

13 WHEREAS, because of the importance of higher education, the United States and local
14 governments should expand the opportunities to pursue and attain a higher education to more



1 people than had the same opportunities in the past; and

2 WHEREAS, public investment in higher education pays off, as evidenced by the fact the
3 G.I. Bill resulted in a 7-to-1 return on investment for our national economy and that workers
4 with college degrees earn more money, pay more taxes, and rely less on government services;
5 and

6 WHEREAS, student loan debt saddles the very students who most depend on a college
7 degree to level the economic playing field with a burden that constrains career choices and hurts
8 the credit rating of students, prevents people from fully participating in the economy by
9 purchasing goods and services, and threatens essential milestones of the American dream;
10 including the purchase of a home or car, starting a family, and saving for retirement; and

11 WHEREAS, the Schatz-Schumer-Warren U.S. Senate debt-free college resolution and
12 GrijalvaEllison-Clark U.S. House debt-free college resolution have gained national momentum
13 in recent months, have become central in the national dialogue around higher education; and

14 WHEREAS, a national goal of debt-free college would include significant federal aid to
15 states, including South Dakota:

16 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Senate of the Ninety-First Legislature of
17 the State of South Dakota, the House of Representatives concurring therein, that the Legislature
18 supports efforts to enact legislation that:

- 19 (1) Ensures all students have access to debt-free higher education, defined to mean
20 having no debt upon graduation from any public institutions of higher education;
- 21 (2) Supports efforts that increase support to states so states can increase investments in
22 higher education and bring down costs for students;
- 23 (3) Increases aid to students to help them cover the total cost of college attendance
24 without taking on debt;

- 1 (4) Encourages innovation by states and institutions of higher education to increase
- 2 efficiency, lower costs, and enable speedy and less-costly degree completion; and
- 3 (5) Reduces the burden of existing student loan debt.