A resolution

memorializing the President and Congress to enact a "New Deal for the New Millenium for Higher Education" to enable states to rebuild public higher education and to increase access to higher education.

WHEREAS, the recent global financial crisis has brought a renewed focus to the task of strengthening our public universities as the key to our country's long-term economic viability and continued prosperity; and

WHEREAS, individuals from all walks of life and of different political persuasions agree that broad access to high-quality higher education is a key ingredient to a positive economic outcome for the American people, and the very survival of a strong United States economy requires a highly educated workforce; and

WHEREAS, an affordable, accessible, high-quality education is good not only for an individual's personal finances, but more importantly, it is essential for our society's prosperity; and

WHEREAS, for years, stakeholders in Minnesota's education community have advocated proper funding for high-quality public higher education that is accessible and affordable for every Minnesotan; and

WHEREAS, unfortunately, due to increasingly dire economic conditions and only modest federal support, we have witnessed the persistent erosion of public resources dedicated to higher education; and

WHEREAS, declining state and federal support of public higher education has translated into fewer, larger classes available to students, compounding the costs and making students timely progress toward degrees more difficult; and

WHEREAS, the budgetary neglect over many years of the public higher education systems now warrants a bold approach by policy makers, just as decisive action has been taken to prevent the collapse of Wall Street; and

WHEREAS, during this economic slowdown, public higher education systems and institutions are grappling with a surge in applications as unemployment continues to rise and the need for workers to retrain and reenter the workforce continues to grow; and

WHEREAS, tuition and fees for students at public higher education institutions have increased dramatically; and

WHEREAS, students and families rely on Minnesota's public higher education to produce the future entrepreneurs, business owners, peace officers, educators, and public officials; and

WHEREAS, seven hundred billion dollars, the amount that the federal government has allocated to bail out Wall Street, is more than ten times the size of the United States Department of Education budget for the 2007 fiscal year, and could be used to send millions of students to a public university somewhere in the United States this year; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Legislature of the State of Minnesota that it calls upon the President and the Congress of the United States to increase support for public higher education in the United States and improve student access by enacting a "New Deal for a New Millenium for Higher Education" to enable Minnesota and other states to rebuild public higher education systems and to rebuild access for students to our nation's public universities and colleges and by providing a new federal program for higher education in the amount of seventy billion dollars, just ten percent of what the United States is spending on the financial crisis, to establish college-going grants similar to the World War II era GI Bill of Rights, and providing student loan debt forgiveness for all students who take jobs in public service.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of State of the State of Minnesota is directed to prepare copies of this memorial and transmit them to the President of the United States, the President and the Secretary of the United States Senate, the Speaker and the Clerk of the United States House of Representatives, the chair of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, the chair of the House Committee on Education and Labor, and Minnesota's Senators and Representatives in Congress.