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Abstract

National student loan debt reached \$1.2 trillion in 2015. With forty million Americans carrying an average student loan debt of \$27,000, many are demanding change to the current system, and are looking to the 2016 Democratic and Republican presidential primary candidates for a solution. When candidates campaign for office they address many public policy issues in their speeches and frame these issues in particular ways to attract support. How do the 2016 Democratic and Republican presidential primary candidates frame the issues of higher education and student debt? Using content analysis to analyze candidate websites and speeches, this study found that in spite of the rising debt crisis most candidates did not address student debt specifically, and only briefly mentioned the cost of higher education for today's families. If candidates do not address some issues on the campaign trail, it is unlikely that those issues will be part of that person's legislative agenda once in office. As a result, the lack of the issue being addressed by most of the candidates in the 2016 primary election does not bode well for the issue being resolved any time soon.