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Below is a letter that was sent from NASSGAP President Theresa Antworth to the Editor of the Chronicle of Higher Education. The letter was submitted in July, 2005.

Dear Editor:

As President of the National Association of State Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP), I read with interest the Chronicle's July 7th article, "High HOPE's: Tennessee Expands Its Scholarship Program While Georgia Takes Protective Steps," and am concerned that your readers may get the wrong impression that states are expanding their merit aid and not continuing to support their commitment to need based aid, albeit both Georgia and Tennessee have expanded and protected their merit-based scholarship programs, both funded through lottery money.

It is also true that the majority of states have protected their need-based programs and the states' commitment to serving needy students remains strong, even as merit-aid has risen. This is consistent with our data. According to the latest NASSGAP Annual Survey Report, 74% of the student grant funds awarded by states in 2003-04 was need-based and 26% non need-based. That's almost identical to the figures from the previous year. In addition, some merit-based grants also have a need component where students with higher need receive higher award amounts.

There has been and continues to be a balance of both need-based and merit-based student grant programs among the states, as each has its place in helping families finance higher education. It's important that the Chronicle readers understand this commitment and balance of how the states are awarding their financial aid dollars.

Sincerely,
Theresa Antworth,
NASSGAP President