

surrounding today's sentencing guidelines. In federal prison alone we have over 179,000 men and women incarcerated of which 85 percent are first time, nonviolent offenders. The ABA recommended: "That states, territories and the federal government ensure that sentencing systems provide appropriate punishment without over-reliance on incarceration. Lengthy periods of incarceration should be reserved for offenders who pose the greatest danger to the community and who commit the most serious offenses. Alternatives to incarceration should be provided when offenders pose minimal risk to the community and appear likely to benefit from rehabilitation efforts."

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS), who is the head of the Women's Caucus, and, as such, has worked hard for many years on this project.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I thank our ranking member, and I thank Chairman SENSENBRENNER also for the opportunity to provide my strong support of H.R. 3402, which includes a Violence against Women Act reauthorization.

I want to also pay tribute to the Women's Caucus, the bipartisan Women's Caucus. We heard from GINNY BROWN-WAITE, who also spoke, and we worked very diligently on this issue, and also to the advocates throughout the country who worked laboriously for the last year on trying to seek amendments that could be provided and placed into this piece of legislation.

I am very happy as cochair of the Congressional Caucus For Women's Issues that we were able to work together. This is one fine accomplishment that we can go home to our districts with.

I am proud to have been able to author two provisions that were included in the final version of this very important act that will help women of color and women who are victims of domestic violence. One provision would provide an outreach campaign to attempt to service those underserved communities where we find a disproportionate number of women who are not in the forefront in terms of receiving this kind of information about prevention activities and domestic violence, and also with respect to court assistance. Because when women enter into the court, sometimes that court system is not very friendly, and it can be very intimidating. So I am very pleased we were able to get that provision also in the bill.

Women of color, as you know, are less likely to report incidents of domestic violence, and particularly immigrant women are even at a greater disadvantage when they are found to be in an abusive situation. Many times their spouses or loved ones will intimidate them with reporting them to the immigration to be deported. So we know that this legislation will go very far in providing protections for these women and their families.

By addressing domestic violence in communities of color in a way that un-

derstands their culture and language and values, we greatly increase the chances of making a difference, not only in the lives of women but of their children and also other family members.

Mr. Speaker, I thank again the ranking member, Mr. CONYERS, Chairman SENSENBRENNER, and their staffs for working with us on a bipartisan level to help to provide a comprehensive Violence Against Women Act reauthorization. I urge all my colleagues today to support H.R. 3402 and put an end to domestic violence against women in our country.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, this is an example of the fact that there is bipartisan and bicameral cooperation in this Capitol. I think that the news media would kind of like to ignore the fact that sometimes we do get something done around here and do get something done that is good and that everybody agrees is good.

So in wishing everybody a merry Christmas, happy new year, or happy holiday season, as the case may be, I would like to wish the news media equal joy and hope that they report the fact that we did do something that was really very difficult to accomplish in reauthorizing the Violence against Women Act and passing only the second reauthorization of Justice Department programs since 1980.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, the bill before us today reauthorizes a historic piece of legislation first enacted in 1994. The Violence Against Women Act has served as the major source of federal funding for programs to reduce rape, stalking, and domestic violence.

Since this legislation was enacted, we have seen dramatic increases in the resources available to victims of exploitation and abuse. Since 1995, states have passed more than 600 laws to combat domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, and all states have passed laws making stalking a crime. Since 1996, the National Domestic Violence Hotline has answered over 1 million calls. It receives over 16,000 calls a month and provides access to translators in almost 140 languages.

Hundreds of companies have joined the fight against abuse and created programs to help victims of violence. Despite this tremendous progress, however, there is much more work to be done to end domestic violence.

Today's reauthorization extends key provisions of the original Violence Against Women Act and provides new tools to combat domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. It also provides new tools to combat violence against children and youth.

Mr. Speaker, violence against women and children destroys the roots of society. Every one of us has a moral obligation to fight this evil and protect its victims. I urge my colleagues to stand up for the innocent and support the bill.

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the Bureau of Justice Assistance has acquired con-

siderable expertise in the administration of the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Act since its enactment in 1976, and courts have properly accorded the Bureau's interpretations of the Act great deference.

Among other things, H.R. 3402 clarifies statutory provisions relating to the requirements that "rescue squad or ambulance crew" members be public employees, and that "enforcement of the laws" refers to the criminal laws, by making the text conform more clearly to the legislative intention, which has been correctly reflected in the Bureau's longstanding interpretation of the Act.

These clarifying changes should not be understood to effect any substantive change in the Act, as interpreted by the Bureau.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOOZMAN). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill, H.R. 3402.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the Senate amendment was concurred in.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS PARITY EXTENSION

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4579) to amend title I of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act, and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend by one year provisions requiring parity in the application of certain limits to mental health benefits.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4579

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. ONE-YEAR EXTENSION FOR PROVISIONS REQUIRING PARITY IN THE APPLICATION OF CERTAIN LIMITS TO MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS.

(a) AMENDMENT TO THE EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT INCOME SECURITY ACT OF 1974.—Section 712(f) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (29 U.S.C. 1185a(f)) is amended by striking "December 31, 2005" and inserting "December 31, 2006".

(b) AMENDMENT TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE ACT.—Section 2705(f) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 300gg-5(f)) is amended by striking "December 31, 2005" and inserting "December 31, 2006".

(c) AMENDMENT TO THE INTERNAL REVENUE CODE OF 1986.—Section 9812(f)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (relating to application of section) is amended by striking "December 31, 2005" and inserting "December 31, 2006".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER) and the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members

may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4579.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the bill will extend provisions under ERISA, the Public Health Services Act and the Internal Revenue Code regarding mental health parity for 1 year until December 31, 2006.

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Washington, DC, December 17, 2005.

The Hon. JOE BARTON,  
Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN BARTON: I write regarding our mutual understanding for the consideration of H.R. 4579, a bill amending the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), the Public Health Service Act (PHSA), and the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) to extend certain provisions on mental health benefits. The provisions of this bill amending ERISA are within the sole jurisdiction of the Committee on Education and the Workforce. The provisions of this bill amending PHSA are within the sole jurisdiction of the Committee on Energy and Commerce. The provisions of this bill amending IRC are within the sole jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means.

As you and I understand the importance of extending the provisions to each of these Acts, we have agreed to the scheduling of this bill for consideration in the House of Representatives. However, I agree that we have done so only with the understanding that this procedural route should not be construed to prejudice the jurisdictional interest and prerogatives of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, the Committee on Ways and Means, or the Committee on Energy and Commerce, respectively, on these provisions or any other similar legislation, and will not be considered as precedent for consideration of matters of jurisdiction to each committee in the future. Finally, I would support your request for appointment of conferees on the provisions in your Committee's jurisdiction should a conference arise with the Senate.

A copy of our exchange of letters will be inserted in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on this bill. Thank you for your consideration and cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

JOHN A. BOEHNER,  
Chairman.

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Washington, DC, December 17, 2005.

The Hon. BILL THOMAS,  
Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN THOMAS: I write regarding our mutual understanding for the consideration of H.R. 4579, a bill amending the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), the Public Health Service Act (PHSA), and the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) to extend certain provisions on mental health benefits. The provisions of this bill amending ERISA are within the sole jurisdiction of the Committee on Education and the Workforce. The provisions of this bill

amending PHSA are within the sole jurisdiction of the Committee on Energy and Commerce. The provisions of this bill amending IRC are within the sole jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means.

As you and I understand the importance of extending the provisions to each of these Acts, we have agreed to the scheduling of this bill for consideration in the House of Representatives. However, I agree that we have done so only with the understanding that this procedural route should not be construed to prejudice the jurisdictional interest and prerogatives of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, the Committee on Ways and Means, or the Committee on Energy and Commerce, respectively, on these provisions or any other similar legislation, and will not be considered as precedent for consideration of matters of jurisdiction to each committee in the future. Finally, I would support your request for appointment of conferees on the provisions in your Committee's jurisdiction should a conference arise with the Senate.

A copy of our exchange of letters will be inserted in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on this bill. Thank you for your consideration and cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

JOHN A. BOEHNER,  
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS,  
Washington, DC., December 17, 2005.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,  
Chairman, Committee on Education and the Workforce, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN BOEHNER: I am writing concerning H.R. 4579, a bill "To amend title I of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act, and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend by one year provisions requiring parity in the application of certain limits to mental health benefits," which was introduced on December 16, 2005, and referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce and the Committee on Ways and Means.

As you know, the Committee on Ways and Means has jurisdiction over matters concerning the Internal Revenue Code. Section 1 of H.R. 4579 amends Section 9812(f)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 providing for an extension of parity in the application of certain limits to mental health benefits, and thus falls within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means. However, in order to expedite this legislation for floor consideration, the Committee will forgo action on this bill. This is being done with the understanding that it does not in any way prejudice the Committee with respect to the appointment of conferees or its jurisdictional prerogatives on this or similar legislation.

I would appreciate your response to this letter, confirming this understanding with respect to H.R. 4579, and would ask that a copy of our exchange of letters on this matter be included in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD during floor consideration.

Best regards,

BILL THOMAS,  
Chairman.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY).

Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from

California for yielding me time, and I thank the chairman as well.

Mr. Speaker, what we are doing here today is simply renewing an act that will allow mental health insurance to have the same limits in insurance coverage as every other insurance legislation that you would ever have for a physical illness. However, the problem is that we keep doing this each year without addressing the fundamental problem. The fundamental problem is that we have here in the Congress a bill that would require parity in insurance coverage, meaning equal copay, equal deductible, equal premium for those illnesses, for those mental illnesses, when it comes to insurance coverage as there would be for any other physical illness.

Mr. Speaker, I have two major illnesses. I have asthma, which is a chronic illness; and I have an EpiPen, and I have prednisone, and I also have bipolar disorder, and I have Prozac and I have lithium.

Now, I am fortunate enough to have insurance coverage where when I go to get my coverage for my medications, I do not have to pay a higher copay for my mental health drugs as opposed to my asthma drugs. Do you know why? Because the Congress of the United States has mental health parity. Yes, Members of Congress are not discriminated against when it comes to mental illnesses.

However, you in the public out there in America, when you try to go and try to get treatment for bipolar disorder, for schizophrenia, for major depression, for any number of mental illnesses, you are told you have to pay a higher copay, a higher deductible, and you are told that you have to pay a higher premium on top of that, all because this country still treats mental illness as if it is not a physical illness.

Mr. Speaker, I have a chart here that shows that mental illness is a physical illness, for those that do not truly believe it. Here we can see in what is an x-ray called a PET scan the difference between two brains, each differentiating from the other based upon a difference in the disorder that the illness represents. In this case, we have bipolar disorder, and you can see that there is greater activity in one part of the brain here for those that do suffer from it, as opposed to this brain.

The physical qualities of mental illness are well known, so why do we not have parity in this country? Well, we do not have parity because some think that it is going to cost us more money.

Well, the tests are in, the studies have been done, and, quite frankly, to my colleagues who think that this is going to cost the Chamber of Commerce more money, all they need to do is look at The Wall Street Journal for evidence to the fact that it actually saves businesses money. It saves businesses money because it costs us \$31 billion a year, \$31 billion a year in productivity lost because businesses do not ensure adequate coverage for their employees in mental illness.

Just understand this: anyone who has depression, are you truly able to make it at work and focus on what you are doing? That is called presenteeism. That is when you are at work, but you really are not at work because you cannot concentrate. That is called presenteeism. Then, of course, you have absenteeism. Of course, that is easy to measure.

The fact, my friends, is that an average person who has depression loses 5 hours a week of productivity compared to one that does not. So would you not think that some mental health coverage for the person suffering from depression might actually improve productivity?

Guess what? It does. The studies are in, and, frankly, that is why I cannot understand why the majority of this House has not even brought to the floor of this House a mental health parity bill that will allow us to end the discrimination that currently exists in this country.

We are sanctioning discrimination. We are basically saying, like, for example, cancer, well, we are not going to cover cancer because it is costing too much. That is essentially what we are being told by those who do not want to cover mental illness. We are basically being told "your illness costs money."

Well, if it is about saving money, why not just cut out cancer coverage, because, you know, that costs us a lot of money. That is a foolish argument. And equally as foolish is the fact that we would cut out from insurance coverage mental illness simply because of stereotypes and because of stigma in this country.

□ 1730

This legislation today is simply one part of a farce to make people think that we are actually doing something on mental health parity when, in fact, with this legislation what we are doing today, all it does is allow the insurance companies to play the game where they do not actually have to provide the coverage. They can organize various days that actually can be utilized and the number of appointments that someone can have or the kind of drugs that they are prescribed. This legislation might as well have been written by the insurance industry when it comes to coverage for those with mental illness.

So, Mr. Speaker, let me just conclude by stating a few facts. Those who are 65 or older are the highest rate of suicide in this country; 65 and older have the highest rate of suicide in this country. The third leading cause of death for young people is suicide. This year alone we are going to see 1,400 young people take their lives in colleges and universities in this country.

We are not taking this issue, this illness, seriously enough. And if it pulls your heart strings and it is simply about whether you think it is going to save money or not, you can see from these charts that even the Surgeon

General of the United States has said that mental illnesses comprise the second leading cause of morbidity, meaning the lost days in life, productive life; and the World Health Organization has ranked it number one.

So how could we be so blind to look at such a significant part of our health care system and then just look the other way when it comes to insurance coverage?

I hope my good friend from California will help me in getting his leadership to help bring to the floor of the House a parity bill that will allow us to finally end the stigma and discrimination that still exists in this country towards those with mental illness.

Let me just say, with respect to our veterans coming back and suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, when we say that we are not going to cover mental illness, we are making an implicit message out there to America that somehow it is not real, somehow it is not real health care, it is something on the order of cosmetic surgery. You know what that does? That means that there will be fewer veterans coming forward and asking for help. Ninety-six percent of the veterans coming back from Iraq right now are not signing up for any mental health consultation whatsoever. And the reason they are not is because of the stigma.

And by not bringing a bill like parity to the floor, another thing that we do that is unjust is we reinforce the image in America that if you are mentally ill there is something wrong with you, that you ought to just get up, pull yourself up by your bootstraps, and you ought to get with the program, and that it is some moral failure of yours as opposed to it actually being a physical disorder with its roots in the biology of the brain.

I thank the chairman and my good friend, the ranking member from California, for giving me this time to speak. There is so much here to discuss. I would not have all the time that I would need to discuss it. But hopefully if we do get a parity bill on the floor one of these days, we can have an even fuller discussion of this issue.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his statement but, more importantly, his incredible advocacy on behalf of those suffering from mental health diseases.

He is quite right: we can do better than simply renewing this law that is now 10 years old. The Senate did pass a meaningful update in this law in 2001 that would have prohibited all forms of discriminatory coverage of mental health services, including day and visit limitations and co-pays and deductibles, and would not allow a plan to opt out by citing increased costs. This bill simply does not do that.

It is as the gentleman from Rhode Island has pointed out, it is absolutely insufficient in terms of treating the

needs of millions and millions of Americans and their families who need parity in terms of the kinds of treatment and the coverages of the cost that are associated with this.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Rhode Island for his moving testimony today on the issue of mental health. I would be the first to agree that the mental health parity bill that we have will now, as Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California says, and has for the last 10 years been an important step in the right direction.

Is it enough for most people? Probably not. And I think that all of us are aware that Congress and the American people have been in this debate for a long time. We have 45 million Americans who have no health insurance at all, and we know that every time we mandate a benefit on employers' insurance policies, we raise the cost of those policies. And what is the result of higher health insurance policies? More uninsured Americans.

So there is a balance, and I realize that people want more mental health coverage. The debate will continue here in the Congress; but in the meantime, I think it is important for us to make sure that the mandate that is in the current law that does provide some coverage for mental health illness that is going to expire will do so unless we extend this provision. And that is all the bill before us does is extend the provisions already in law to make sure that at least there is a foundation of coverage in the law as people have come to expect.

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support H.R. 4579, legislation that would continue for a year the requirements that insurance companies provide mental health services on the same par as health services. Discrimination against those with mental illnesses or cognitive impairments is well documented. Treatment for these conditions can last a lifetime. Not surprisingly, insurance companies do not want to provide coverage for needed treatments.

The bill we are passing today would ensure that coverage for mental health care receives parity with coverage for physical conditions. The current requirement expires at the end of the year. While ideally we should make this a permanent feature for all health insurance policies, today we are only extending it for one year.

While this legislation will ensure some protections for Americans, the House-passed reconciliation bill includes provisions that would reduce coverage for mental health care under Medicaid. That bill would allow States to charge higher out-of-pocket costs to those needing these services and it would allow States to strip these benefits for beneficiaries, including from children. Medicaid accounts for 44 percent of the Nation's public mental health spending. It plays a critical role in protecting those who need mental and behavioral health services, and fills the gaps that private insurance does not cover.

While the bill today will offer some protections for individuals with mental health needs in private insurance, we also must ensure that the budget reconciliation bill does not erode protections in Medicaid, which provides coverage for those for whom private insurance coverage is not enough or those who have no private insurance.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOOZMAN). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4579.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### SECOND HIGHER EDUCATION EXTENSION ACT OF 2005

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4525) to temporarily extend the programs under the Higher Education Act of 1965, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4525

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

##### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Second Higher Education Extension Act of 2005”.

##### SEC. 2. EXTENSION OF PROGRAMS.

(a) GENERAL EXTENSION.—Section 2(a) of the Higher Education Extension Act of 2005 (P.L. 109-81; 20 U.S.C. 1001 note) is amended by striking “December 31, 2005” and inserting “March 31, 2006”.

(b) EXTENSION OF LIMITATIONS ON SPECIAL ALLOWANCE FOR LOANS FROM THE PROCEEDS OF TAX EXEMPT ISSUES.—Section 438(b)(2)(B) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1087-1(b)(2)(B)) is amended by striking “January 1, 2006” each place it appears in clauses (iv) and (v)(II) and inserting “April 1, 2006”.

(c) EXTENSION OF EFFECTIVE DATE LIMITATION ON HIGHER TEACHER LOAN FORGIVENESS BENEFITS.—

(1) AMENDMENT.—Paragraph (3) of section 3(b) of the Taxpayer-Teacher Protection Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-409; 20 U.S.C. 1078-10 note) is amended by striking “October 1, 2005” and inserting “June 30, 2007”.

(2) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—Section 2 of such Act is amended by inserting “of the Higher Education Act of 1965” after “438(b)(2)(B)”.

##### (d) EFFECTIVE DATES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), the amendments made by this section are effective upon enactment.

(2) EXCEPTION.—The amendment made by subsection (c)(1) shall take effect as if enacted on October 1, 2005.

##### SEC. 3. ELIGIBILITY PROVISION.

Notwithstanding section 102(a)(4)(A) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002(a)(4)(A)), the Secretary of Education shall not take into account a bankruptcy petition filed in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York in July, 2005, in determining whether a non-profit educational institution that is a subsidiary of an entity that filed such petition

meets the definition of an “institution of higher education” under section 102 of that Act (20 U.S.C. 1002).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER) and the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

##### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4525.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very simple bill that extends the Higher Education Act of 1965 for 3 months until March 31, 2006. While the committee has passed the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, it is not completed. The Senate concluded their Higher Education Act amendments in their reconciliation bill, and we expect part of this higher education reauthorization to occur in the reconciliation process. But there will be a balance of it left that does need to be dealt with, and I am hopeful that early next year Congress will, in fact, complete the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act authorization.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Second Higher Education Extension Act of 2005. The bill before us today, as the chairman has noted, temporarily extends the laws that govern higher education and student aid while the Congress continues to work to reauthorize the Higher Education Act. I would also like to note for the record that the Department of Education has informed us that they have no objections to the manager’s amendment offered by Mr. BOEHNER to this effort.

I rise in support of the second Higher Education Extension Act of 2005.

The bill before us today temporary extends laws that govern higher education and student aid while Congress continues to work to reauthorize the Higher Education Act.

It also extends the partial closure of the 9.5 percent loan loophole and teacher loan forgiveness provisions.

There has never been a more important time than right now to help students and their families afford a higher education.

Despite the tremendous personal and economic benefits of a college education, however, millions of American students and families struggle to pay for college.

Last year the maximum Pell grant scholarship was worth \$900 less than the maximum grant 30 years ago.

The typical student borrower now graduates with \$17,500 in debt, while more and more

students are working long hours to pay for college.

Even with increased borrowing and longer work hours, millions of students and families continue to fall short when paying for college.

But rather than help to make college more affordable and accessible, this weekend the Republican leadership plans to raid the student aid programs by nearly \$13 billion—the largest cut in the history of the programs.

As a result, students and families will be forced to pay even more for college.

Rather than work to build a better, stronger America for future generations, they chose to cut our national commitment to a college education for every qualified student.

The Republican leadership plans to use the nearly \$13 billion in cuts to deal with Congress’ budget mess.

It is wrong to force America’s students and families to pay for the irresponsible management of the Nation’s budget.

We should be doing more, not less, to significantly increase affordable college opportunities.

For years, Democrats and others have been demanding that the majority join us in stopping excess lender subsidies—such as the 9.5 percent loans—and re-deploy those billions of dollars in savings to students and their families struggling to pay for college.

Billions in taxpayer funds were squandered on super-sized lender subsidies that the majority party is only now, under great pressure, conceding should be constrained.

Unfortunately, the raid on student aid misses a golden opportunity to re-direct billions of dollars in savings by recycling the excessive subsidies paid to student lenders into additional grant aid for students—without any additional costs to taxpayers.

I support this temporary extension today because it ensures that the nearly 11 million students who rely on student grants, loans and work-study to finance their college education will continue to receive this much needed aid in a timely fashion.

However, I urge the Republican leadership and my colleagues to recognize that this is only the first step towards boosting affordable college opportunities and ensuring the Nation’s global competitiveness.

The next step is to stop the raid on student aid and to reinvest all of the savings found from eliminating excessive student lender subsidies towards boosting grant aid, lowering interest rates and fees for student borrowers.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to note for the record that the Department of Education has informed us that they have no objection to the manager’s amendment offered by Representative BOEHNER to reinstate St. Vincent’s Nursing Schools of Brooklyn and Queens, New York.

The St. Vincent nursing schools lost eligibility for Federal student aid in November of this year due to the fact that their parent company, Saint Vincents Catholic Medical Centers of New York, filed for bankruptcy.

Under the Higher Education Act, once a school, or parent company of a school, files for bankruptcy they automatically become ineligible for Federal student aid such as student loans and Pell grants.

It is our understanding that the representatives for the parent company did not understand that filing for bankruptcy would result in students attending the two nursing schools losing their Federal student aid.