

As a former college chief administrator, I am deeply proud to represent my district, my State, and the higher education community on the Education and Workforce Committee; but I am not particularly proud of the reauthorization bill we produced.

We have had the past 8 years to build on the Higher Education Act of 1998. Today, we have an opportunity in this reauthorization bill to give young Americans and aspiring students more opportunities to attain the dream of a college education.

Indeed, we have a choice to expand access and the reach of the Federal Government's helping hand to those who cannot afford skyrocketing tuition, rising fees, room and board, textbooks, and so many other soaring costs and sacrifices associated with going to college.

But the choice we made late last year to cut student loans to the tune of \$12 billion weakened our commitment to students. With those cuts in the budget reconciliation bill, we sent a message to America's students and their families that they are no longer among this Nation's top priorities.

As a consequence, the rapidly expanding gap between the amounts of available student aid compared to the cost of attaining a college education is growing out of control. And yet, while this administration's response is that colleges should simply charge less, it is not making the same demands of other industries that are equally critical to our economy's infrastructure and competitiveness.

This month, as high school seniors across the land receive their college acceptance letters, their proud parents are calculating how they can squeeze college costs into their budget. It is an uphill climb for most families that is made tougher by the President's budget cuts, which freeze Pell grants for a fifth year in a row; recalls the Federal portion of the Perkins Loan Revolving Fund that could extract another \$600 million out of the student aid system each year; and freezes funding for SEOG and work study.

If we want to maintain our edge in the global economy, we cannot afford to undercut the administration's competitiveness initiative. But the promise of a more competitive workforce is simply incompatible with budget proposals to freeze Pell grants for a fifth year in a row and recalling a portion of the Perkins Loan Revolving Fund.

This hypocrisy builds on the Republicans' record on student aid: \$12 billion in cuts to student loans; failure to extend the tuition deduction for higher education; and a 3-year long impasse over this reauthorization bill. Deep cuts in the President's budget will most likely carry over into the budget resolution we consider next week, further compounding the Republican hypocrisy. Similarly, the reauthorization bill moves America in the exact opposite direction of where our competitive workforce should be heading.

In fact, cuts to student aid threaten to return the state of higher education to the pre-World War II era, when only 5 percent of Americans had earned a college degree, compared with nearly 30 percent today. If we are to sustain our leadership and competitive edge in the global economy, we cannot afford to enact policies which will lead to only the elite being able to afford to go to college.

The so-called "education President" has put forward a woefully inadequate budget, and our leaders in this Chamber have presented a short-sighted reauthorization bill that falls short of what America's students, their parents, and our workforce deserves.

Mr. Speaker, I will be offering several amendments this week to address some of the shortfalls of H.R. 609. One bipartisan amendment, cosponsored by my colleague on the Education and Workforce Committee, Mr. SOUDER, would strike intrusive language in the bill dictating how colleges should carry out transfer credit policies.

An amendment sponsored by another colleague on the committee, Mr. HOLT, would correct a problem with the State tax allowance tables that deprive over 1 million students out of their fair share of Pell grants and reduce, if not eliminate, their eligibility for other types of need-based aid.

I will also offer amendments to preserve the Perkins Loan Revolving Fund, extend the expired tuition deduction claimed by middle-class families, and increase oversight on the administration and grading of ability to benefit exams.

Mr. Speaker, I am hopeful that the Rules Committee will make these amendments in order. They are not partisan or political but, rather, commonsense amendments, making a weak bill better and keeping America's college students a top priority for this Nation.

ENERGY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, I think most Americans are pretty interested, very concerned about the high cost of energy, particularly fuel.

At the present time, we are nearly 60 percent dependent on foreign oil. OPEC provides the largest part of that oil that we are importing. We currently have a very large trade deficit, and petroleum is really the major part of, at least the largest single entity in that trade deficit, and this is a major threat to our economy. Right now, the purchase of foreign oil contributes about one-third of that trade deficit that we are now experiencing.

The United States has only 3 percent of the world's petroleum reserves. So we are highly dependent on the rest of the world. We are now using more petroleum than we are discovering. So we

are on a downhill slope. Obviously, we have to do some things differently than what we have been doing, and I think the energy bill we passed here in the Congress last summer was certainly a step in the right direction.

Many people may remember there was a renewable fuel standards in it that was fairly significant. There were incentives for wind, solar, hydrogen fuel cells which may be the wave of the future, something that is not a renewable fuel standard, but also some nuclear incentives were in there. We have not done much nuclear production for a long time, whereas Europe has moved ahead, and much of the energy in Europe is now due to nuclear power.

A couple of the major issues in a renewable fuel standard have to do with ethanol and biodiesel, and the remainder of my remarks will be addressed mainly to those topics.

First of all, a renewable fuel standard adds \$51 billion to farm income over 10 years, and the good news for taxpayers is that this reduces government farm payments by \$5.9 billion over that 10-year period. That is money that otherwise would be paid by the taxpayer. It also reduces the trade deficit of the United States by roughly \$34 billion, and it significantly reduces air pollution as well.

So we think that obviously there are some tremendous benefits to the renewable fuel standard. Currently, we are producing roughly 5.9 billion gallons of ethanol this year, 2006; and the energy bill mandates by the year 2012, just 6 years from now, that we produce 7.5 billion gallons; but, actually, we will far exceed that at the pace that we are now producing ethanol.

□ 2000

By 2025, there is a goal on the part of many of us to become independent of the oil that is produced in the Middle East, which would mean we would need to produce roughly 60 billion gallons of ethanol, biodiesel, and those types of fuels. And this is doable. It is going to take a concerted effort, a commitment on the part of our country, but we can do that. Technology is changing rapidly.

One thing that I think is important to show is that we often hear that, well, ethanol is okay, but it actually burns up more energy than it produces. And that is not true. Ethanol, for every Btu of fossil fuel used, yields just about 1.4 Btu's of energy because a lot of the energy in ethanol comes from the sun. In contrast, gasoline, for every 1 Btu of fossil fuel used to produce it, yields about eight-tenths of a Btu. So there is an energy deficit.

The same is true of MTBE. And, of course, MTBE is rapidly being phased out, so there is a tremendous demand now for ethanol to fill that gap. So, anyway, the technology is certainly changing.

Something that is on the horizon is cellulosic ethanol. This is ethanol that would not necessarily be made from

corn, but would be made from switchgrass, rice, wheat, corn stover, so corn stalks, wheat stalks, and rice stalks can be used. These are things that are currently sometimes burned or thrown away. Also wood chips. So there is a tremendous opportunity out there in parts of the country that are not necessarily in the Corn Belt to be in some form of the ethanol industry.

Biodiesel is now where ethanol was about 10 or 15 years ago. It is on the cusp of really becoming a major part of our fuel supply and shows great promise. There are many spin-offs and by-products from ethanol. For instance, biodegradable plastics can be made in the process of wet milling. And right now a great deal of our packaging stores, like Wal-Mart and others, are now using biodegradable plastics.

So we think there is a great future here. And, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to address the House.

COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge and lend support to the well over 1 million people who marched across American cities and towns in a peaceful, nonviolent way for fairness, dignity, and humane and respectful treatment of immigrant workers in our Nation. This ground swell of humanity wanted some very simple things. They wanted the principles of fairness and equal protection under the law to be applied in a fair and just way.

The people who marched are for comprehensive, reality-based immigration reform by this Congress, a reform that acknowledges the economic value, necessity and, yes, indeed, the codependency of our economy on the immigrant workforce; that also recognizes the inherent value of human beings and reaffirms the process of rigorous examination and process to attain permanent legal status and eventually citizenship. And it reaffirms a reality-based immigration reform, reaffirms the need for security in this country by assuring that the people that work here, that function here, are not hidden in the shadows but part of the workforce, integrated into that workforce and protected by the same laws and principles that all working people in this country enjoy.

I think what is happening in this country on the question of immigration is really about the future of our country. We have, as a Congress, a choice on immigration reform. We should not continue on the path set by this Congress in the Sensenbrenner bill, a bill that asks us to criminalize 11 million human beings in this country, that raises the specter of mass deportation and that ignites a flame of intolerance and division that this country is not about.

We don't need a path to create second-class citizens. We don't need a path that hides from our economic reality. We don't need a path that ignores the business interests. We don't need a path that forgets fairness and equity under the law. And we don't need a path that creates division and discrimination as a rule of law.

We cannot shun our values as an immigrant nation. This is a wrong path. And while possibly it is a short-term political victory based on division and based on creating a wedge issue that splits people in this country, it is a long-term defeat for this Nation.

I believe that we can do better. We can create a situation for the people of this country and for the immigrant workers in this country that is not blanket amnesty, that is not about open borders, that understands security is a priority issue, but also understands that comprehensive reform is the most important way to deal with this issue.

So let us not, as we debate this issue and as we continue to grapple with this very vexing and complex issue, let us not forget we are dealing with human beings, let us not ignore our economic reality, and let us put together a comprehensive package that accommodates both those realities and at the same time reaffirms the traditions, the values, the hopes and the aspirations of immigrants that have made this country what it is, that will strengthen it in the future, and that will continue the progress and the enlightenment this Nation needs.

OCALA NATIONAL FOREST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. KELLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KELLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to strongly oppose the Bush administration's proposed sale of 300,000 acres of national forest lands, which include 1,000 acres of the Ocala National Forest in my congressional district.

The Bush administration's rationale for selling our national forest lands is to raise money for rural roads and schools. While our budget shortfall is temporary, ruining pristine national forest lands is permanent. That is why all four of the living former chiefs of the U.S. Forest Service sent a letter to Congress on March 13, 2006, strongly opposing the auctioning off of 300,000 acres of national forest lands.

Mr. Speaker, our national forest lands are worth protecting. Millions of Americans each year use our national forests to go hiking, fishing, hunting, camping, swimming, canoeing, and enjoying the outdoors. The Ocala National Forest also provides a habitat for thousands of animal species, including rare birds and black bears.

Now, what does the administration say about these forest lands to be sold? Well, Under Secretary of Agriculture Mark Rey, who directs national forest

policy, said "These are not the crown jewels we are talking about." Well, they say a picture is worth a thousand words, so let me show you a photograph of some of the actual land in the Ocala National Forest which is marked for sale by the administration.

Look at the green plush forest. Does this look ugly to you? Does anybody really believe that this would look better as a strip mall or a condo project? I think it is a crown jewel.

And let me show you who else thinks this land is pretty important. This is a photograph published in my local newspaper, the Orlando Sentinel, of a black bear that lives in the Ocala National Forest. Now, this black bear is being relocated from one location to another location. Look at this cute little black bear. Does anybody really believe that we should sacrifice this little black bear's habitat on the altar of budget deficits?

This fire sale of forest lands is literally unbearable. It is also financially shortsighted. We cannot sell national forest land every time there is a budget shortfall. This is a dangerous precedent for Congress to set. Our financial problems need to be addressed over the long term, not through the shortsighted sale of national treasures to the highest bidder.

The proposed sale of the forest land is not even an adequate budgetary solution. The money raised from this nationwide sell-off would not even be enough to cover the short-term school and road needs of the communities near Ocala National Forest, let alone other areas of the country.

Well, what can we do about it? There are three things: First, I circulated a letter to the Florida delegation asking them to oppose the sale of our Nation's forest lands, especially the nearly 1,000 acres in the Ocala National Forest. I am proud to report today that this letter was signed by both of our U.S. Senators, Republican and Democrat, and by a bipartisan majority of our House Members. On March 1, 2006, this letter was submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture as part of the official comment period to voice our strong opposition to the sale.

Second, Congressman BEN CHANDLER of Kentucky and I are currently circulating a bipartisan letter asking Members to oppose the sale of 300,000 acres of forest lands all across the country in 41 separate States. Thus far, 52 Congressmen have signed on to our letter, and we encourage others to sign on tomorrow. After tomorrow, we will send this letter to the leaders of the House Budget Committee to urge them to oppose the administration's budget request and to encourage them to find alternative funding for rural schools and roads.

Finally, if we are unable to block this sale on the front end by having the administration withdraw this proposal, the plan would still have to be approved by this Congress, and I would encourage all of my colleagues to vote not just "no," but "heck no."