

STUDENT LOANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPS) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, we all know if Congress doesn't come together soon, interest rates on student loans will double on July 1. Rates will go from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent.

Right now in our country, student loan debt is higher than credit card debt. This is a huge challenge and barrier facing students, their families and our economy. We cannot have our graduates leaving school with crushing debt. It limits the careers they can pursue, and we certainly don't want young people shying away from continuing their education because they know they'll never be able to afford it. We must keep open the doors of opportunity for all and, in the process, produce a well-educated workforce that's going to grow our economy.

But, if Congress doesn't act soon, more than 7 million low- and middle-income students nationwide will be required to pay more for their student loans. This would mean adding thousands of dollars to a college bill, and that's why I am a proud supporter of legislation to address this issue. I support ending some of the lavish subsidies we give to extraordinarily profitable oil companies and using that money to keep student loan rates from doubling and, at the same time, reducing our deficit by billions of dollars.

We must get our priorities straight. We should be investing in our students and bringing down our deficit instead of handing over taxpayer dollars to some of the richest corporations in the world. I urge my colleagues to join in this effort.

VA COMMUNITY-BASED
OUTPATIENT CLINICS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BOUSTANY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BOUSTANY. Mr. Speaker, I recently received the first monthly update from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs since the announced delays associated with the Lafayette and Lake Charles VA Community-based Outpatient Clinics. VA Secretary Eric Shinseki's office followed through on my request for detailed monthly updates of the progress the VA is making with regard to these clinics in both Lafayette and Lake Charles. The errors in the contracting process were solely the VA's fault, and they've admitted it. I will remain vigilant in overseeing the expedited process to deliver south Louisiana veterans the local care they need and deserve.

I am pleased to announce that there are new and much-needed services for veterans coming to Lafayette in early May. These services include home-based primary care, imaging and x ray services, prosthetics and dental care.

For the veterans in Lake Charles, a mobile clinic providing primary care services is expected to begin June 4, and the selection of a location is under way. This will be a first for our veterans in Lake Charles who have had to travel far to get basic care. According to the VA officials, the Veterans Affairs' clinic primary care services will be available in Lake Charles 3 days per week also beginning June 4. Women's services will be provided 1 day per week in Lake Charles beginning then as well.

We need to do more, and we're going to do more. These are all very important services the veterans of south Louisiana deserve after sacrificing so much for our country. They should not have to wait any longer for this very much needed medical care. Expediting this process must remain a top priority for the VA.

Having cared for veterans in the VA system during my medical career, I know localized, personalized outpatient facilities and care are best for our veterans. This is a critical priority for our area. This is the least we can do for those who have fought on behalf of our country, and I am committed to ensuring that this unnecessary VA mistake does not repeat itself in the future. I will continue demanding accountability from the VA leadership on this and on other issues. I will continue to be the leading advocate for local veterans as we work to improve health care for our veterans in Lafayette and Lake Charles and in the surrounding communities of south Louisiana.

God bless those who have served our country. God bless America.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. MOORE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, I come humbly to the well today, under the "E Pluribus Unum," to ask that there be swift bipartisan action in reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act. VAWA's authorization, of course, lapsed at the end of the last fiscal year, on September 30, 2011.

□ 1100

Unfortunately, for every day that passes by, women pay the price. The annual National Census of Domestic Violence Services—a daily snapshot taken every year by the National Network to End Domestic Violence—found that in one 24-hour period in the United States, over 67,000 victims were served through emergency shelters, transitional housing, counseling, legal advocacy, and more. Over 22,000 hotline phone calls were answered and over 26,000 people participated in domestic violence prevention and education training.

For all these people who are served, unfortunately, in the same 24-hour period, there are nearly 11,000 unmet requests for services because these programs neither have the resources to

help these victims nor the authorizations based on best practices on how we need to change VAWA in order to meet the needs of women.

Our colleagues across the Capitol in the Senate are on the cusp of passing a bipartisan VAWA reauthorization bill that contains these provisions to strengthen our ability to combat not only domestic violence, but also sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. And I'm so proud to say that right here on this floor, 1 month ago, I introduced a companion bill to the Senate legislation that contains these badly needed updates to reflect the input of numerous stakeholders and lays a path forward for VAWA.

The vision is to protect all victims, no matter what their gender, sexual orientation, immigration status, or whether or not they reside in sovereign territories or in States. These updates have garnered criticism from our colleagues on the other side of the aisle that offer fundamental, simple rights that ought to be guaranteed by the 14th Amendment.

For example, this bill would recognize the tribes' authority to prosecute non-Indians or Indians who abuse their American Indian spouses or dating partners on tribal lands. Fifty-two percent of women who are beaten, battered, raped, or stalked on tribal lands are not prosecuted because tribes have no authority. And on tribal lands, there is no follow-up and no prosecution.

The bill would also provide equal opportunity for areas that are in traditionally underserved areas, including those who have barriers because of their religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation. It's absurd to say that because you are a homosexual that you don't deserve protection from being beaten, stalked, or raped. And, of course, the Hippocratic Oath would have us scoop up a person who may be lying in the street, hit by a truck. We don't ask people for their immigration papers in order to intervene in a life-saving intervention. Why would we demand this of immigrant women?

We have got to ensure a more comprehensive response to the continuing problem of enforcement, reporting, and services for victims of sexual assault.

In spite of the strides we have made toward a new and improved VAWA, just yesterday the House Republicans put their so-called "clean" reauthorization bill on the floor. Let me tell you this: it's clean, perhaps, because we don't want to sully our hands dealing with the beaten, stalked, murdered, and bullied butch-batterers, because we don't want to deal with homosexuality. We want clean reauthorization, a sleight of hand that keeps immigrant women in the shadows and keeps their pain and their battery and their victimization in the shadows and makes them invisible. We're actually sanctioning the abuse that occurs on tribal lands and providing a sanctuary for assailants who commit these crimes on

native lands by not providing this authority to tribal nations.

I urge my Republican colleagues to work together with House Democrats to craft a truly bipartisan update of VAWA.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 5 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. FLEISCHMANN) at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

Eternal God, we give You thanks for giving us another day. Lead us this day in Your ways that our Nation might be guided along the roads of peace, justice, and goodwill.

Grant strength and wisdom to our Speaker and the Members of both the people's House and the Senate, to our President and his Cabinet, and to our Supreme Court.

Bless as well the moral and military leaders of our country, and may those who are the captains of business, industry, and unions learn to work together toward the mutual benefit of all, walking in the ways of righteousness and working for the highest good of our beloved land.

Grant us the courage to develop a sound energy program for the good of all, and may our people respond with willing hearts to make that program work.

Bless us this day and every day, and may all that is done within the people's House be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from New York (Mr. HIGGINS) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. HIGGINS led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a bill of the House of the following title:

S. 1789. An act to improve, sustain, and transform the United States Postal Service.

The message also announced that pursuant to section 5 of title I of division H of Public Law 110-161, the Chair, on behalf of the Vice President, appoints the following Senator as Vice Chairman of the U.S.-Japan Interparliamentary Group conference for the One Hundred Twelfth Congress:

The Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI).

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

YUCCA REPOSITORY BILL

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, in 2002, Yucca Mountain was approved as the location for our Nation's nuclear repository, which was previously authorized by Congress in 1987. In 2010, sadly, the President placed party politics over the interests of the American people and began the wasteful process of stopping the project.

Consumers in South Carolina have paid over \$1.3 billion for the establishment of a national nuclear repository at Yucca Mountain. In order to establish accountability and to protect the people living in the Second Congressional District of South Carolina, I have introduced the Yucca Utilization to Control Contamination Act. This bill gives the administration two options: first, certify the Yucca Mountain project or, second, face fines to reimburse consumers across the Nation who have paid for its opening.

The President constantly talks about fairness. It is only fair that the people of South Carolina receive the services they have already paid for with hard-working taxpayer dollars promoting jobs.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

PATIENTS DESERVE CHOICE

(Ms. CHU asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. CHU. Patients deserve choice when selecting the right prescriptions and pharmacies for them, but powerful, unregulated middlemen, known as pharmacy benefit managers, or PBMs,

are limiting their options, and most people don't even know it.

These companies are telling doctors what drugs they can prescribe, limiting access to pharmacy patient care, and they're telling customers what pharmacies they can go to. That's not fair to patients. With the pending merger of two of the biggest PBMs, one company will control three-quarters of the private insurance market. This leaves us with even less competition, higher prices, and fewer choices.

That's why I support the Medicare Pharmacy Transparency and Fair Auditing Act. This bill will ensure that PBMs are transparent and fair when dealing with local pharmacies, and it will help make sure the Medicare part D prescription program works for seniors. It will be an important step in protecting pharmacy choice for patients.

SUGAR REFORM

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, last week, liberal MSNBC host Ed Schultz found himself agreeing with the Heritage Foundation and Mitt Romney. What issue could possibly unite liberals and conservatives? The answer is: sugar reform.

You see, sugar farmers and sugar processors benefit from a Federal sugar program that fixes prices and guarantees their profits. Indeed, Schultz noted that one of the biggest processors, American Crystal Sugar, makes \$1.5 billion in revenue and pays its CEO \$2.4 million a year in compensation.

While Schultz is, probably, mostly concerned about a labor dispute between American Crystal and its workers, I hope he will also consider the many other workers in sugar-using industries. The Federal program inflates the price of sugar in the U.S., placing American sugar users at a severe disadvantage to their foreign competition. In the last 15 years, more than 100,000 workers in sugar-using industries have lost their jobs.

I've been proud to work with Congressman DANNY DAVIS to reform this program and to make it fair for everyone. Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives agree that the government shouldn't be guaranteeing corporate profits at the expense of workers and consumers. I hope the Ag Committee will reform the sugar program as we deal with the farm bill.

HORSE SLAUGHTER

(Ms. SCHAKOWSKY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today about a serious issue: horse slaughter.

A recent poll confirms what many of us already know: 80 percent of American voters are opposed to slaughtering