

Today, I would like to recognize a man in particular who is not counted in the 2,000. Sergeant Tom Bagosy, a combat veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan, took his own life on May 10, 2010, at Camp Lejeune marine base in North Carolina. Tom's wounds were mental, but he is no less a casualty of the war in Afghanistan.

That Tom is not counted in this 2,000 number speaks to the fact that our country does not fully understand the effect that a generation of war has had on those who've fought it. We do not understand the future cost of caring for over 300,000 returning veterans with mental wounds.

Tom's death, like those of the 154 Active Duty servicemembers who took their lives at a rate of one per day this year, was preventable.

Tom left behind a wife, Katie, and two children. Today, Katie is working towards becoming a mental health counselor so she can support the thousands of veterans coming home today with mental wounds. We should be inspired by her efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I want to share with the House a letter that Katie wrote to her husband, Tom, who had died in May. And she wrote this letter August 23 of 2011. These are her words:

I wonder what life would be like if you didn't die that day. I wonder what we would be doing right now in this very moment instead. I hate playing the "what if" game, but I'm playing it anyway right now.

I could really use a hug and kiss from you. I love the way you kiss me. I wish your arms were around me right now. Guess wishing is all I can do.

Love always, Katie.

Mr. Speaker, it's time now that our Congress stands up and says let's bring our troops home now; let's start the process. If we brought them home now, it would still take months, maybe even years. But 2014 is the date that the President says we'll start bringing them home.

Then, there's also going to be a security agreement with Afghanistan; 10 years, spending about \$4 billion a month.

We need to be spending that money to take care of our wounded, both physically and mentally, veterans. We need to start spending that money here in America to build our streets and roads and bridges.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that the Congress does its job based on the Constitution. We have the authority based on the Constitution.

I don't know how many—this poster of Sergeant Bagosy and his wife, Katie, how many, how many are coming back from Afghanistan, and those who came back from Iraq, that are mentally wounded. It's time that this Congress starts thinking about the wounded and thinks about the families who lost loved ones in Afghanistan and Iraq. Let's not cheat them out of their benefits because we want to spend money in Afghanistan that we can't even account for by the Inspector General.

Mr. Speaker, I will, at this time, ask God to please bless our men and women

in uniform, to please bless the families of our men and women in uniform.

I ask God, in His loving arms, to hold the families who've given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq.

I ask God to bless the House and Senate, that we will do what is right in the eyes of God for God's people today.

I ask God to bless the President of the United States that he will do what is right in the eyes of God for God's people today and tomorrow.

And three times I will ask God, please, God, please, God, please, God, continue to bless America.

RECENT U.S. SERVICE MEMBER DEATHS

Spc. Kedith L. Jacobs
Pfc. Leroy Deronde III
Staff Sgt. Alexander G. Povilaitis
Staff Sgt. Roberto Loeza
Petty Officer 2nd Class Sean E. Brazas
Cpl. Nicholas H. Olivas
Lance Cpl. Steven G. Sutton
Capt. John R. Brainard
Chief Warrant Officer Five John C. Pratt
Spc. Tofiga J. Tautolo
Spc. Vilmar Galarza Hernandez

□ 1010

STAFFORD STUDENT LOAN INTEREST RATES

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

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, unless Congress acts in the next 11 days, the interest rates for the subsidized Stafford student loan program are going to increase from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent. This is at a time when student loan debt now has topped the \$1 trillion number, which is according to the Federal Reserve Bank.

This is a program which will provide relief for over 7 million college students who literally today are already trying to budget for next fall's semester at colleges and universities—at 2-year colleges, at 4-year colleges. Yet this Congress left for 10 days, up until yesterday, for another recess—the ninth recess this year. This number, 11 days until the rate-hike increase, should probably be 6 days because that's all the number of days that the Speaker has scheduled between now and July 1.

How did we get to this point?

In 2007, when the Democrats controlled the Congress, we voted for the College Class Reduction Act, with Republican support, which cut the rate for the subsidized Stafford student loan program from 6.8 percent to 3.4 percent. That has helped over 15 million college kids over the last 5 years. It was a sunset measure, like many other bills that pass in this Congress; and last July 25, on that podium, President Obama challenged this Congress to avoid allowing that rate to double on July 1.

For 3 solid months, we had absolutely no action in this Congress—no hearings, no markup, no bill. Luckily, external pressure was exercised on this

Chamber. We had 130,000 college students drop off petition signatures to the Speaker, demanding action. Finally, the Speaker rushed a bill to the floor, without a hearing, without a markup—a totally hyper-partisan bill—that did delay the rate hike for 1 year, yet was paid for with a measure that was so unacceptable: cutting programs and funding for cervical cancer screening, diabetes screening, cardiac screening. It was a measure which was dead on arrival, but at least it was some response. It was at least a flicker of acknowledgment that there was a real problem out there for middle class families around the country.

Now, on January 5, when the President announced his challenge to the Congress, I introduced legislation before midnight that night which would have locked in the lower rate at 3.4 percent. We have 152 cosponsors in the House for that measure, and in the Senate there is a back-and-forth going on right now about a 1-year extension. So, again, there actually are some hopeful signs. Leader REID, HARRY REID, introduced a measure with a pay-for, which was not greeted with immediate criticism and denunciation, so there is actually a chance that between now and July 1 we can come together and do our jobs and actually be here to work on the people's business and to make sure that, again, 7 million college kids don't see their interest rates spike at a time when student loan debt has shattered all records.

The stakes could not be higher. U.S. graduation rates now have fallen to 12th in the world. We were No. 1 in the 1980s. There are a variety of reasons which explain that, but certainly the high cost of college is one of those reasons. We are seeing now an alarming trend of individuals who take on debt to go to college and then never get their degrees. Debt without a degree is almost a death sentence—a lifetime of struggling in terms of trying to get ahead. We as the Congress have the responsibility to make sure that that doesn't happen or at least that we don't add to the problem by allowing these rate hikes to go into effect on July 1.

Mr. Speaker, if you look historically at the Stafford student loan program, if you look historically at the Pell Grant program, if you look historically at the Land Grant College program instituted by President Abraham Lincoln, this is an issue on which we have always been able to put aside partisanship and move forward together in order to make sure that the real crown jewels of our country, which are our people—particularly our young people—are always protected. That test is now before us over the next 11 days.

Let's do the right thing; let's work together; let's compromise; let's come up with a plan to protect 7 million college kids, and for once send a signal to the people of this country that we are listening and that we are actually responding to the critical needs that face this Nation's future.

AN EMPEROR INSTEAD OF A PRESIDENT?

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, our Nation's income tax system is a giant mess. It's complicated; it's not fair; it's outdated—and not everyone follows the law.

Hypothetically, suppose tomorrow, the President issued an edict from the White House directing the IRS not to enforce tax laws for certain special people, for example, people under the age of 30.

Why? Maybe the President just doesn't like the law, so he issues that new order. Well, Mr. Speaker, last Friday, much to the surprise of all of us who believe in the Constitution and in the separation of power, something very similar did happen.

In his latest Friday afternoon surprise, the President issued a decree unilaterally discarding the immigration law of the land—a law passed by Congress and signed by a previous President. The President disagrees with the law; and since he had to have his way, in spite of the Constitution, he improperly ordered his way to be the law of the land. The President's temporary amnesty plan applies to those who are under 30 years of age. They also can obtain a work permit.

It would be nice if the President were as concerned about the 23 million Americans who are looking for work in America as he is about the 12 million undocumented individuals the President claims are looking for work in America. News reports even show 50 percent of new American college graduates can't even find work.

Mr. Speaker, here is the chart we all probably saw in ninth grade civics classes: a bill is filed in the House. If the House of Representatives debates it and passes the bill, it goes down the hallway to the Senate, and they discuss it and vote on the bill. If they pass the bill, it becomes the law if the President signs it.

We call that "the law of the land."

But the President, it seems, has ignored most of this and has just issued new orders from the White House to not pay any attention to the Senate or to the House of Representatives.

Mr. Speaker, like most of us learned in ninth grade civics classes, it is Congress' job to write laws and the President's job to execute the laws. That means: enforce the law. It doesn't mean he is supposed to ignore laws and then issue his own policies like kings used to do with their policies. He is to follow the law whether he likes it or not. Once upon a time, the President even claimed to believe in the Constitution.

Here is what he said last year:

With respect to the notion that I can just suspend deportations through executive order, that's just not the case, because there are laws on the books that Congress has passed.

But that was a year ago. That was then and this is now. If the President doesn't like a law, he believes he can ignore it and come up with his own set of rules.

Our Founders envisioned a country in which freedom was protected from government and was limited from the policies of kings. You see, old King George III of England constantly decreed new laws without the consent of the people. That was one of the reasons we rebelled against the merry ole King of England and his monarchy and his policies. Our ancestors structured the American Government in the Constitution. The last time I checked, it was Congress that makes laws and the job of the executive branch to enforce laws, not to ignore the ones it doesn't like.

The immigration system needs fixing. Congress should do its job and fix the problem. In the meantime, the President should do his job, not ours, and he should enforce the law. Otherwise, we have lawlessness in America.

The President says he can use prosecutorial discretion not to enforce immigration law. Mr. Speaker, the President is wrong again. I dealt with prosecutorial discretion as a former prosecutor and a judge. Prosecutorial discretion is when a prosecutor does not prosecute a specific case because the accused is innocent or there is insufficient evidence or witnesses have disappeared or the government has violated the rights of the accused, et cetera. Prosecutorial discretion cannot be used to ignore a specific law because the government just doesn't like the law.

It is true, through no fault of their own, that young undocumented individuals are here as a result of decades of a failed broken immigration system, but the President has no interest in fixing what is broken. He is more concerned with picking up a few votes to further his reelection. The law gets in the way, so his policies look like they come from an emperor instead of a President.

So what new orders will be issued next week from the President and the White House? Is he going to ignore the Tax Code for some in the name of prosecutorial discretion? I guess it depends on what political forces push the President to new orders and decrees.

We shall see.

Stay tuned for another day in the life of the Republic. It's time for the former constitutional professor to follow the Constitution, not to make up his own rules during his on-the-job training.

And that's just the way it is.

□ 1020

HELPING OUR CHILDREN ACROSS THIS NATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I've had the pleasure of

chairing the Congressional Children's Caucus for a number of years, having founded it almost a decade ago.

I'm delighted to have, as part of our agenda, a number of issues dealing with mentoring, nutrition, obesity, issues dealing with now a phenomena that is raging across our Nation, bullying, and introduced legislation just 6 months ago and now revised legislation that deals with renewing the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant, as well as providing intervention on these issues.

I'm looking forward to bipartisan support because, as we've seen statistics across America, children as young as pre-K and kindergarten now can interpret actions as bullying. We need to give help and relief to school districts and parents and families, and most of all, a public statement that that action is intolerable and that we want our children to go to schools and playgrounds and places that they will find comfort and enjoyment as a child.

That brings me also to my commitment to science, technology, engineering, and math. I was very pleased to be involved in a program that provided opportunity for sixth and seventh grade boys at risk. It gave them math and science in the morning with what we called the SMART board, and then in the afternoon they played with college football players and learned the skills of football with various sports leagues. Of course, we had the corporate support.

So I raised the question to my good friend, the company Halliburton, and asked for their CEO, who was supportive of this program last summer, to recognize the value of science, technology, engineering, and math, and respond to the needs of these inner-city boys in Houston, the place where the company is located with so many employees. I'm reminded of going to give comfort to many of their employees when KBR was owned by Halliburton and they had tragically lost employees in Iraq. It was my chance to go and respond to that crisis and to give my sympathy. That's the way we are as neighbors, but they are not acting neighborly now. And there are a number of boys, the same kind of children that I see that come here to Washington all the time. Of course, these at-risk boys have probably never been out of the city of Houston, but they are in school districts across the city. Isn't it a shame that we can't get a response, with all the great employees that I know care about the city, to be able to support these children? I ask for the CEO to respond to these at-risk boys. I'll certainly be looking forward to engaging and making sure that that happens. It's very important.

I understand that there has been some question about an executive order that deals with helping children again across this Nation, children who have come to the United States not of their own accord, who were brought by their parents and have been here since the age of 16 and have attempted, like