

Vitter
Warner

Webb
Whitehouse

Wicker
Wyden

NAYS—1

Lee

NOT VOTING—11

Burr
Chambliss
Coats
DeMint

Harkin
Heller
Kirk
Lautenberg

Menendez
Portman
Rubio

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, will the Senator from Ohio yield for a unanimous consent request?

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Sure.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that at the conclusion of the remarks of the Senator from Ohio I be recognized as in morning business for such time as I may consume.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Madam President, I am pleased to work with Senator INHOFE on this matter.

STAFFORD LOANS

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Madam President, in 25 days, the cost of attending college, a trade school, a university, or a 2-year community college will increase for some 380,000 students in my State of Ohio. It is because without congressional action—something which we have tried to fix repeatedly on the floor of the Senate—interest rates for Stafford loans are scheduled to double on July 1.

Now, this was done 5 years ago. Bipartisanly, we were able to do this. President Bush signed legislation by a Democratic Congress—a Democratic House, a Democratic Senate—to freeze interest rates on Stafford subsidized loans for American college students for 5 years at 3.4 percent. That expires July 1, and it is something we need to do, we have tried to do. It has repeatedly been batted down by threats of a filibuster.

That is why today I met with students in Toledo, at Owens Community College. Jakki, CJ, and Megan all have dreams to attend, first, Owens, and then to move on to 4-year institutions. But they rely on Stafford loans to afford their tuition and other expenses.

I have been to Cuyahoga County Community College meeting with stu-

dents. I have been to Hiram College visiting students on their graduation day. I have been to the University of Cincinnati. I have been to Ohio State. I have been to Wright State University in Dayton speaking to students.

They understand if we do not act, future college graduates will see an average of about \$1,000 in extra interest fees per student per Stafford loan.

My colleague JACK REED, a Senator from Rhode Island, Senator HARKIN, and I have introduced the Stop the Student Loan Interest Rate Hike Act, which would keep college affordable for more students.

The act is fully paid for by closing a corporate tax loophole. We want to pay for this. We do not want to add to the debt of college students. We do not want to add to their personal debt by allowing this 3.4-percent interest rate to double.

I would like to make this more personal, if I could, and read some letters from students in Ohio schools. These higher interest rates affect students personally, of course. It also affects the families who are helping to pay for their college tuition in many cases. It also affects the community. We know, looking back at the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, the GI bill enabled literally millions of individuals—millions of young Americans who had fought for their country in World War II or Korea or in successive military involvements—to go to school and to afford their college tuition. What that meant was not just helping those students and their families. It helped raise the level of prosperity for the entire country because those were people who got to go to school. It meant they could start businesses and buy homes and get better jobs and give back a lot to our communities.

That is the same thing that will happen if we can lock in these 3.4-percent interest rates. It will mean students who might not have been able to buy a car or might not have been able to start a business or might have been more reluctant to start a family—they are less likely to do that if we cannot lock in these interest rates.

Before yielding the floor to Senator INHOFE, I would like to share three letters my office received recently, starting with Kasey from Union in Miami County, OH. Miami County is just north of Dayton.

Going to college was never a question for me—there was an unspoken understanding that it would happen.

Unfortunately, my parents could not afford to pay for college for all of their children, particularly after [we faced] foreclosure in 2007.

At 17, I faced responsibility for covering the \$10,000 per year gap of paying for George Washington University.

Over the past four years, I have taken out the maximum allowed in student loans—both subsidized and unsubsidized. I have held a federal work study job since October of my freshman year. Because both of my parents were unemployed at the time, I was forced to take out PLUS loans. This still left me with a gap, and I had to ask my parents to spend

a significant portion of their retirement fund to allow me to finish my degree.

At 21 years old, I have more than \$42,000 in loans to repay. I have received a world class education thanks to the opportunities provided to me by my scholarships, student loans, Pell grants and federal work study programs.

Students should not be punished for following the American Dream. There is a huge emphasis on the importance of education, but the soaring costs of private and public universities is making it harder and harder for my generation.

Doubling the interest rates on loans is not the solution. Making education harder to pay for will shut doors for students like me, and college will inch back toward being a privilege of the wealthy.

I have worked part time since I was 15, I did well in high school to win a substantial scholarship, I have maintained my grades in college to keep that scholarship, I have taken advantage of work study programs, and I have every intention of paying back my student loans in full as I enter the world of full time employment.

Please do not make it harder to pursue the American Dream.

Waylon from Fairborn, Greene County, near Springfield. The city of Xenia is nearby, outside of Dayton.

I am deeply concerned about the thought of an increase in student loan interest.

I am currently a student at Antioch University Midwest taking classes to pursue my license to become an Intervention Specialist. I also have two children who are finishing up their sophomore years in college at the end of May.

My sons, as well as myself, have student loan debt and an increase in the rates would certainly have a diminishing affect on affording an already higher tuition rate at the college itself.

Hasn't it been a big push for the people in our country to become more educated equating to a more resourceful and competitive country?

How will this ever be attained without an affordable education?

Gaining higher, more competitively paying jobs would also equate to more taxes being paid!

Isn't that what we should be looking at?

I believe that there is a disconnection between what people in Washington want—a more educated country and how they are willing to get it.

Sarah, from Dayton, writes:

I started college in fall 2003. As a foster youth fresh from emancipating, I took out student loans because I don't have any family that can help me pay for college.

9 years, 2 Bachelor of Arts (one in Criminal Justice and the other in Social Science Education . . .) and an almost complete Master of Arts degree later not only am I \$100,000 in debt with student loans I am still unable to find a job.

Since I am overqualified for jobs at places like McDonald's (who take one look at my application and reject it) and underqualified for positions using either of my degrees, I am forced to look outside of Ohio for jobs that will allow me to at least use my 1-2 years of secretary experience so that I have the salary to start paying on these loans.

My student loans are hindering not only my ability to possibly finish my Master's degree but also to potentially purchase a home and find a position near my family.

When I graduate I will not be able to move back home since my parents were the state so I will have to find a position outside what I went to school for and probably for minimum salary or even minimum wage just so

I do not end up homeless. I may even have to look overseas to find work.

I have hopes that the government will see stories like mine from people who have risen above their circumstances and are able to go to college to make their lives better and not be statistics and actually do something to help us.

These stories, obviously, speak for themselves. We are certainly leaving our children with far too much debt. Ten years ago we had a budget surplus, until this government—the House and Senate and the President in the last decade—made terrible mistakes and blew a hole in the Federal budget. We do not want to also leave them increased debt from student loans. My wife was the first person in her family to go to college, to Kent State University. She graduated with almost no debt, even though her family was not really able to help her much, because the State government was more involved, the Federal Government was more involved, and tuition was lower.

It is a moral question to me to make sure we can freeze these interest rates. We have no business saddling a more onerous debt burden on the young men and women of our country.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2012

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, it has been more than a month since the Senate came together to pass the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2012. This bill, commonly referred to as VAWA, reflects the tradition of bringing together people from both political parties to work with professionals in the field and address the needs of victims—all victims. More than two-thirds of the Senate, including 15 Republicans, voted for this common sense legislation. It is a rare feat in the Senate these days, as the distinguished Presiding Officer knows, but it demonstrates that the Leahy-Crapo reauthorization bill is about saving lives, not partisan politics.

Few laws have had a greater impact on the lives of women in this country than the Violence Against Women Act. Because of this law, the days of dismissing domestic and sexual violence crimes with a joke or a shrug are over. The resources, training, and law enforcement tools provided by VAWA over the past 18 years have transformed the criminal justice and community-based responses to abuse. It gave support and protection to victims who for generations had been blamed, humiliated, and ignored.

I had hoped the House Republicans would follow our demonstration of bipartisanship by moving forward with the Senate-passed VAWA reauthorization bill. Instead, the Republican leadership in the House chose to proceed with a bill that doesn't reflect the core values of VAWA.

I mention its core values because we worked—both parties in this body—to

reflect what is most important in VAWA. The House Republican bill does not include protections for all victims. It takes away existing protections that have proven effective in preventing domestic and sexual violence. In short, the House bill is not VAWA.

Regrettably, the House Republican leadership would not even allow a vote on the bipartisan Senate-passed bill, which truly does do the job. They would not allow open debate regarding the relative merits of the different versions of the bill—ours, which protects all victims, and theirs, which rolls back protections. Had the House had the opportunity to vote on the Senate-passed bipartisan bill, I believe the President would have signed it and it would now be law. Nearly two dozen House Republicans, along with most Democratic Members, voted against the restrictive House bill.

It is not surprising that the House Republican bill failed to gain support among those who actually work with victims, the people who see these victims on a daily basis in all parts of the country. When challenged on the House floor to name any law enforcement or victim advocacy organization that supported the House Republican bill, their lead sponsor could not name a single one. Why? More than 320 organizations that work with the victims of domestic and sexual violence opposed that bill.

By contrast more than 1,000 local, State, and national organizations supported the bipartisan Senate bill, including hundreds of law enforcement, victim advocates, and faith-based groups. Why? Because in our bill, we worked at it. We did it the old-fashioned way—Republicans and Democrats working together after months of discussion with stakeholders from across the country and all political persuasions from the right to the left. The provisions in our bill that protect battered immigrant women, Native women, and the most vulnerable among us who have had trouble accessing services were recommendations from those very professionals who work with crime victims every day. The bipartisan Senate bill is intended to respond to the changing, unmet needs of victims and to prevent future acts of domestic and sexual violence. Instead of picking and choosing, as they tried to, among who would get protection, we came up with a simple fact. We said a victim is a victim is a victim. If somebody has been victimized, the police don't go and say: Can we help this battered person, maybe even murdered person? We might be able to get involved in this, provided they are not an immigrant or provided they are not a Native American or provided only if they are straight. That is not the way it works.

I still have nightmares over some of the crime scenes I visited at 2 and 3 and 4 o'clock in the morning when I was a prosecutor and I saw people who had been badly battered, badly injured. I never heard a police officer say: Be-

fore we go any further on this, what category does this battered victim fall into? Because unless they fall into one of these specific categories—such as the House bill had—we can't do anything for them. No, no police officer ever said that in my presence nor in anybody else's presence.

It was law enforcement who educated us on the importance of the U visa to keeping our streets safe and encouraged us to support a modest improvement to this program. The enhanced consultation provisions in the bill were included after domestic and sexual assault coalitions and other victim advocacy groups told us that they wanted to coordinate their activities in a more effective way with VAWA state administrators and Federal agencies. Victim service providers also told us that the LGBT community experiences violence at the same rate as the broader community but faces a serious lack of available services. It was the Native American community that informed us about the epidemic of domestic violence in tribal communities and the need to increase local prosecution of these crimes. It is unacceptable that nearly three out of five Native American women have been assaulted by their spouses or intimate partners, yet the percentage of these cases that are prosecuted is appallingly low. That is why our bill provides law enforcement with additional tools to combat domestic and sexual violence in Tribal communities.

The Senate has already considered and soundly defeated a conscripted version of the bill, like the House Republicans' version, that would not help all victims. We voted 37-62 against the Hutchison-Grassley amendment last April. This was not a case where an amendment did not obtain a supermajority of more than 60 votes. The votes against it were bipartisan and more than 60. I do not understand why the House Republican leadership has gone to tremendous lengths to avoid debating and voting on the bipartisan Senate-passed VAWA reauthorization bill.

The House Republican leadership has refused to consider two House bills that mirror the Leahy-Crapo bill, including one introduced by a Republican. They also raised a procedural technicality as an excuse to avoid debating the Senate bill, even though the Speaker of the House has the ability to waive that technicality and allow the House to move forward to consider the bipartisan Senate bill.

The Majority Leader tried to move this forward 2 weeks ago by proposing a way to resolve the technical objection by House Republicans to considering the bipartisan Senate-passed bill, but the Republican leader objected.

Frankly, victims should not be forced to wait any longer. They will not benefit from the improvements made by the bipartisan Leahy-Crapo bill, unless both Houses of Congress vote to pass this legislation. The problems and barriers facing victims of domestic and