

that there are Members of Congress, there are people in Washington who want to work together and solve these problems. I pledge my support to my colleagues here, and we are going to work together as America's brightest days are yet to come.

□ 2020

Mr. RIBBLE. I thank the gentleman for his comments. And I just have to say if a Green Bay Packer fan like myself, Mr. Speaker, and a Chicago Bear fan like Representative LIPINSKI can get together and talk about things—if we can talk about that, we can talk about anything.

In fact, around Christmastime 2009, is when I became convinced about possibly running for Congress for the first time. I'm in my second term, Mr. Speaker. I came here to this Chamber not just to represent the citizens of northeast Wisconsin, but I came here because I believe that the fabric of trust between the American people and this government has been torn. But fabric torn can be mended. It can be mended by common thread that binds us together not as Republicans and Democrats, men and women, but common thread that binds us together as Americans.

Common thread can only be used if it's found; common thread can only be found if you seek it.

One of the reasons that I feel we sometimes can't repair this torn fabric is because it's so difficult to find the common ground. But common ground, indeed, can be found when representatives are willing to seek it out.

Mr. Speaker, our Founders established a representative Republic and instructed us. They said that if we can find agreement, do those things. But if we couldn't find agreement, they warned us as well. They said, Where you can't find agreement, it might be best for you not to do those things until you can, in fact, find agreement.

So we have to go out and we have to look for it, and I could talk to my Republican colleagues every single day. In many respects, it's like preaching to the choir, and I think that preaching to the choir is a fine thing. I mean, you often preach to the choir because you want them to sing. The fact of the matter is I have agreement with my Republican colleagues on most things—not everything, but most things. So therefore I must go and talk to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle.

The fastest way to mend that torn fabric is by meeting people, by building trust, by taking the time to understand them and then seeking the areas of common ground, to find the common thread that binds us together, and when we find that, we can begin to repair the torn fabric between the American people and its government. It's really what we've been sent here to do.

We've been sent here to find and solve problems, not to fight about them. Disagreement will happen. In fact, you can look historically into this

Chamber, and there's been a lot of disagreement. It dates back to the beginning of our Nation's founding. There's also been a lot of agreement.

Think about the differences from 1787 to today. Think about the America that exists today. Much of it exists because the men and women who were sent by the citizens of their districts to lead came here, and through statesman-like qualities, were willing to lead. They had the courage to make tough decisions and then lead this country to the place that it is today.

I am filled with hope about America. I'm filled with hope because of the colleagues that I work with here. I'm filled with hope, Mr. Speaker, because of men like you.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

#### CBC HOUR: HIGHER EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from New York (Mr. JEFFRIES) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. JEFFRIES. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 days to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor and a privilege to once again have this opportunity to anchor the CBC Special Order along with my very distinguished colleague, my good friend from the Silver State, Representative STEVEN HORSFORD, where for the next 60 minutes during this hour of power, members of the Congressional Black Caucus will have an opportunity to speak directly to the American people about the issues facing higher education here in America.

We are at a crisis moment as it relates to our capacity to make sure that we can provide an affordable college education to as many Americans as possible. The problem that we in this country confront is twofold. First, the cost of a college education keeps going up, but the amount of financial aid available to younger Americans keeps coming down. As a result, higher education is increasingly out of reach, particularly for low-income Americans or working families or the sons and daughters of the middle class.

A college education is a pathway to the American Dream. The fact that it's increasingly out of reach is incredibly problematic for this great country. Compounding that fact secondarily is the reality that the amount of student loan debt for younger Americans has increased exponentially. If the Congress does not act in advance of July 1, then the interest rate for federally subsidized student loans will double in its

amount. It will increase from its current rate of 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent. This increase will impact more than 7 million younger Americans. It's a crisis that we must confront.

The CBC today will lay out a vision for how we can deal with the immediate crisis that we confront that's approaching as we march toward July 1, as well as ideas for tackling the broader issue of college affordability. Many of our members will also lay out the problems with the GOP approach as represented in H.R. 1911, which will only make the problem worse—not better.

We're pleased that so many of my distinguished colleagues have joined us today to participate in this Special Order. To get us started is our eloquent and dynamic leader, the chairperson of the Congressional Black Caucus, Representative MARCIA FUDGE.

Ms. FUDGE. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I want to thank my colleagues, Congressman JEFFRIES and Congressman HORSFORD, for once again leading the Congressional Black Caucus Special Order. I cannot think of a more timely topic for today's Special Order as once again our youth are facing a student loan crisis.

Mr. Speaker, George Washington Carver once said, "Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom." Nowhere is this truer in this country, where we know for a fact that access to a quality education is the ladder to a better and richer tomorrow. Providing access to education is in America's very DNA, and it goes back to when two of our Founding Fathers, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, established State universities.

This tradition continued in 1862 when President Lincoln signed the Morrill Land-Grant Acts to create land-grant colleges, an effort to promote higher education for working class citizens. Nearly 100 years later, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Higher Education Act of 1965, and thus the Pell Grant was created.

Today, an affordable college education is more important than ever in this country's history. In the next decade, 63 percent of all jobs will require at least some post-secondary education. And in order to compete for jobs in the future, our children must be equipped and not saddled with debt. Congress has a duty to ensure that Federal education assistance is both affordable and accessible.

On July 1, if Congress does not act, rates for college students taking out subsidized Department of Education loans are scheduled to double from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this week the House, the place affectionately referred to as the "people's House"—believe it or not—will consider a bill that would do more harm than good.

□ 2030

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle will bring the so-called

Smarter Solutions for Students Act to the House floor. This bill is not a smart solution. In fact, it is not a solution at all. It actually makes it more expensive for students and parents than if Congress did nothing and let the interest rates just double.

To be clear, I want to ensure Americans know exactly what Republicans are proposing. The Congressional Budget Office found that this bill will cost students and parents \$3.7 billion in additional student loan interest, and those charges will be over a 10-year period. So why propose such a bill? Why would Members of Congress in the people's House claim this is a good bill? Believe it or not, this legislation is an attempt to move closer to a balanced budget on the backs of college students. The true purpose of this legislation is to squeeze out revenue to pay down the Federal debt.

Yes, we will vote on a bill this week that seeks to decrease the Federal deficit on the backs of a generation already being called "generation jobless." Yet, still no jobs bill. This legislation totally ignores the fact that student loan delinquency and default rates are already exceedingly high. Due to the recession and unemployment, nearly 20 percent of student loan borrowers were 90 days or more behind in payments at the end of 2012. So why increase it more?

In addition to the student loan crisis, I have to mention the Department of Education PLUS loan crisis, another crisis that is breathing down the backs of college students. Over the last few years, thousands of students have been sent home from college because their PLUS loans were denied after the student year commenced. HBCUs have lost millions in revenue.

The CBC recently met with Secretary Duncan and requested that the Department reverse course to stop the bleeding. As a result, the Department is sending out notifications in an effort to get students back into school, and hearings will be held around the country this month and next month.

College presidents, students, and parents must speak up and demand a change. The CBC will continue to push back and speak out as the future of student loan programs are debated. We will not stand by and watch Congress or the Department of Education hurt our students' chances at a better tomorrow. Not on our watch.

Mr. JEFFRIES. I thank you, Chairwoman FUDGE, for so eloquently laying out both the history in this great country of investing in higher education, whether it is the private school context or in the public school context, but making sure consistently that our young people are prepared for the challenges of the modern day economy, which will increasingly require a college degree, if not a graduate degree and significant training. That is why we at the CBC feel it is important to make sure that we make college more affordable, not less affordable, as the GOP proposal would do.

We have also been joined by a very distinguished colleague from the Lone Star State who has been a tremendous champion on this issue and on many others in the Congress, and so I now yield to Representative SHEILA JACKSON LEE from the great city of Houston.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Allow me to thank both of my very good friends, the gentleman from New York and the gentleman from Nevada, for really answering the call of the First Amendment. The First Amendment guarantees the freedom of speech, but I think the most important part of speech is information. Thank you for the opportunity to share with our colleagues and share with America the pending crisis.

If I might just quote from an article in the Houston Chronicle by a writer in the early part of February, Mike Tolson, that said:

Like a hurricane churning across the Gulf of Mexico, the looming Federal sequestration threatens everything in its path. If the deep and automatic Federal budget cuts actually take place, there will be damage somewhere—perhaps a lot of somewheres.

So today we're standing on the floor of the House embracing some of the historic comments as relates to the African American community and other minority communities about the value of education. How many of us have been told by our parents that it was the door, the key, to opportunities? How many of us recognized it by listening to the words of Dr. Benjamin Mays, who was a leading voice at Morehouse and an educator, who always spoke of the slaves rising from the ashes, to be educated, to do good? And the debate between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois. It was a question of The Talented Tenth, but it was also a question of those who could pull their buckets up where they stand, to be artisans, carpenters, painters, and others. But it was to learn something, to be educated.

Today I stand sadly on this floor, Mr. JEFFRIES, and acknowledge that as I speak, one of my boards is having a meeting. They are a school district, not higher education as we talk about tonight, but it plays into this because there is a siege upon education in America. That board and that community, the North Forest Independent School District, is fighting with every breath in their body to keep from closing after they've succeeded in reaching all of the goals that were given to them by the Texas education agency. But our Governor, Governor Rick Perry, is opposed to their survival. Our commissioner, Commissioner Michael Williams, is opposed to their survival. And as well, what a contrast, when just a few days ago he saved another school district, not African American, with the same proposal North Forest has.

So I stand on the floor today to join you and acknowledge: is the siege continuing? It seems to be, because right now our friends, our Republican friends, this House, refuses to have a

conference on the budget. A conference on the budget might put us in a better position than what we will be doing today, H.R. 1911. It might put us in a better position than what the Department of Education, unfortunately, has had to do with the reconfiguration on the parent PLUS loans.

I ask why the budget conference has not been called? Why are we on the backs of people who are suffering and who want to get an education? Why are we on the backs of those, like in north Texas, who are suffering from tornadoes or the disaster today, where we don't know how many lives have been lost? Why are we suffering? Why don't we have a budget conference? Why are we suffering when we recognize how much education provides? I thank you, Mr. HORSFORD, for this initiative to show what it means to get an education. This is what our parents told us.

Less than a high school diploma, weekly earnings \$451; high school diploma or GED—and I spoke to a group that got a GED, \$638, congratulations to them. A bachelor's degree, \$1,053. And a professional degree, \$1,655.

This is a 2012 document, and I just want to call out these numbers of unemployment. They're higher when you don't have a high school education, almost 15 percent and growing; 10 percent for a high school education; and of course the numbers go down.

So it is of great concern that we now are facing legislation that is going to take the fat—oh, let me just stop and say that. Somebody says fat, they say: Oh, yeah, we want to take the fat out. That is going to go to the bone of individuals who are simply trying to get an education.

Sequestration is cutting NASA. It is cutting education programs. I just met some people on an airplane who said that all my programs from Rice University in science have been wiped out because of sequestration. Now my friends want to bring H.R. 1911, rather than listening to what we can do here today.

I introduced H.R. 900 with JOHN CONYERS and a number of other Members who said, let's end sequestration. If we end sequestration, we wouldn't have to bring up H.R. 1911.

Let me just say these few words as I discuss these boards very quickly. Right now it is noted that student borrowing is widespread, and more than \$100 billion in Federal education loans are distributed every year. What that means is that is the debt we are putting on the children of America. A historically black college like Texas Southern University in Houston, 81 percent of the students receive some form of student assistance. They received \$85 million in student financial aid. In terms of student loan debt, 92 percent of those students are African Americans; 85 percent are Hispanic students—this is overall—and 85 percent are Native Americans students; 82 percent are multiracial students; and 77 percent are white students.

□ 2040

Last year I introduced the College Literacy Finance and Economics Act of 2011 to help our students manage their debt; but now we find ourselves facing an uphill battle, and that is the introduction of this legislation that I believe is probably the worst that we could ever have. Let me explain it to you and see what H.R. 1911 does.

We're right now at 3.4 percent. That looks like it's reasonable. If this bill passes this week, by July 1, we will be up to 6.8 percent—excuse me. By July 1, if we don't do anything, we'll be 6.8 percent, \$8,880 in interest to be paid. But if we pass H.R. 1911, we'll be at \$10,109 in interest. Isn't this a disgrace, a shame on a Nation that encourages our young people, whether they go in business or not, to get an education?

And then as Mr. JEFFRIES mentioned, the Congressional Black Caucus has taken on the burden of a horrific burden that has been put on our parents, something called Parent Plus. In fact, I was looking at the numbers from Texas Southern University, who said they lost 450 students—and they don't know if they've got all the numbers—because the Parent Plus loan program caused students to drop out by the thousands across America. By the thousands.

I want to thank the Congressional Black Caucus and our chairwoman, Chairwoman FUDGE, for waking up this issue, along with our members on the Education Committee from the Congressional Black Caucus, because this is what is happening under the Parent Plus program.

Already bad under current law, in terms of the interest paid, \$27,956. But look what will happen under H.R. 1911. It would force parents to pay 28 percent more on their loan, \$35,848.

A debt on parents is a debt on the children. If the parents got ill, if the parents lost their jobs, if the parents had other children to take care of, and that one student that they invested in and they loved, trying to get the others to come up behind them, parents meaning well, doing well, and you're going to burden them with this burden on top of that, the student that is trying to increase their income.

So I would simply say that we're facing tragedy in our country with bad weather, but we're facing a tsunami of disaster on the floor of the House with the lack of a budget, with a sequester that is now getting into the seams of our life by causing enormous debt and legislative initiatives that are unwise and devastating.

And so I'd ask today that we move on the budget conference. And I ask the Speaker to bring up H.R. 900, a simple sentence. It says: to remove the sequestration from the 2011 Budget Act and go back to regular order.

Many of us are looking at amendments offered by the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY), whose legislation we supported last year. But we want anything but this devastating bill that is going to snatch the oppor-

tunity and the dignity of education from those who are trying.

I close on the remarks of President Obama as he spoke to the historic Morehouse College this past Sunday, thank him for visiting with those young men. And he talked about a young man who had a rough upbringing, a difficult upbringing, and he congratulated that young man because that young man had now graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Morehouse College and is going on to Harvard Law School.

I can assure you that that young man had his own sticktoitiveness, but also that the young men in those colleges like Morehouse have loans and depend upon financial aid, generally speaking.

And so what Mr. Obama conveyed to those young men, that the sky is the limit, that there should be no obstacles in front of you; don't blame anyone else; keep climbing up the ladder.

And we stand here on the floor this week to snatch the very promise of education out of the hands of those students, no matter what race they are, snatch it out of their hands with a devastating, crafty, expensive, trickery such as H.R. 1911.

I pray, as I go to my seat, I pray that wisdom will take charge, and that Members of Congress will come together and defeat H.R. 1911 and put on the floor of the House the legislation that has been offered by many on this side of the aisle, to be able to ensure that those individuals, parents and children, continue to claim the American Dream no matter where you walk from, no matter what story you have to tell, no matter what your racial or ethnic background is.

I'm glad that the CBC is standing here today to tell our story and to speak for America. I thank the gentleman for his courtesy.

Mr. JEFFRIES. I thank the distinguished gentlelady from the great State of Texas for laying out in very clear terms the two different visions that exist here in the House of Representatives as it relates to how to deal with access to higher education. The CBC vision is a clear one. We want to increase opportunity to a college degree because we recognize that it's a great way to the American Dream. The other side, unfortunately, has put forth a plan that will help snatch that opportunity away, make it more expensive, increase the debt burden.

And unfortunately, this one particular issue, as it relates to the student loan dynamic, fits within a broader dichotomy as to how we approach dealing with the problems in America. We believe in a balanced approach that invests in America and education and prepares our young people for the challenges of the 21st century economy. But the other side seems to have taken the approach that they're going to balance the budget on the backs of the most vulnerable here in America, and that includes young people who are trying to pursue a college education.

That's what their budget proposal says. Take away \$168 billion in higher

education funding, and then, at the same time, when, on July 1, student loan rates may double, put forth a bill that has been articulated to have made the problem worse if, in fact, it is ever enacted into law.

We're pleased that we've been joined, once again by my distinguished co-anchor, STEVEN HORSFORD, who represents the great State of Nevada, and so I now yield to my good friend, Congressman HORSFORD.

Mr. HORSFORD. To the coanchor, to my friend and colleague, the gentleman from New York, Representative JEFFRIES, I appreciate your leadership and the leadership of the Congressional Black Caucus in focusing this hour on such an important issue as the cost, the increasing cost of attending higher education in this country.

You know, Mr. Speaker, this week, graduations are being held across the country. Families are celebrating the achievement of students who have worked hard for the last 4 years or more to earn their degree. So I find it ironic that on this week when Americans are celebrating the achievement of students who have worked so hard that my colleagues on the other side would propose such a hypocritical piece of legislation as H.R. 1911.

H.R. 1911 is nothing but a bait-and-switch scheme that makes attending college more expensive. Can you imagine that? Proposing a piece of legislation that costs the American people more to go to college? People are already struggling to go to college as it is.

According to the CBO estimates, Federal student interest rates will be higher than current fixed rates for millions of borrowers. That means that if you're financing your college now, it's likely you will be paying more once you graduate under the Republican plan than you would today.

H.R. 1911 makes student loan interest rates change year to year, based on the 10-year Treasury note marked up by 2.5 percent to 4.5 percent. So to be plain, when next year's freshmen graduate and start having to repay their loans in 2017, their interest rate on that loan taken out in their freshman year is projected to be 7.4 percent, more than double today's current 3.4 percent rate for subsidized Stafford loans.

□ 2050

For a freshman starting college this fall who borrows the maximum annual loan under the Department of Education, their subsidized and unsubsidized loan programs, they will pay about \$2,000 more in interest under H.R. 1911.

Now, why is this so appalling? We recently learned that this year alone the Department of Education is expected to make \$51 billion in profit off students financing their education. Some of you may ask, How is it that the Department of Education is making a \$51 billion profit when American families and students are struggling to even pay

the tuition costs that they have? We teach our children that it's important to save, to be responsible with their money, and to get a good education. But with the system set up the way it is right now, those goals are mutually exclusive.

How are students supposed to save? When will they be able to pay off a record \$1.1 trillion in debt that they are saddled with now? It was just reported that there is more debt on student loans than there are credit card payments in America. How do they begin to consider to plan their lives, to prepare to buy a home, when they're trapped under a mountain of debt?

I have students that come to me when we have Congress on our college campuses and they express great fear and trepidation about their future. They're working so hard. I have single parents who are literally taking every dollar from the two jobs that they work to be able to afford their college tuition. I cannot go back to them and tell them that my colleagues on the other side propose a bill that makes the college costs for their loans double. It's unacceptable. It's unacceptable when companies like JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, Citigroup, and Wells Fargo reported a combined profit of \$51.9 billion and the Department of Education has the same amount of profit as those four companies combined.

And so, Mr. Speaker, my colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus, I have got to say that we've got to tackle H.R. 1911. We have to figure out a way to come up with amendments to keep the interest rates on college loans at 3.4 percent, as they are now, or to ensure that they're capped at a level that is predictable for students. But we also have to address this other underlying issue. It is not fair to American students that they are working harder and harder, that their families are struggling; and yet there's a billion-dollar profit that's going to the Department of Education. There's a \$51 billion profit that comes back and goes to the Treasury to pay down the debt, and yet corporations continue to get tax incentives and corporate subsidies.

Enough is enough, Mr. Speaker. Enough is enough. When are we going to require major corporations to do their part? Enough is enough. College students in America have worked too hard. Families have struggled for too long. The hope of a college education that so many people strive for is costing more and more, and now my colleagues on the other side want it to cost even more. And so we're here tonight to say, no, that is not going to happen. Not on our watch. And we're going to fight and work hard until it does not.

I've got two questions to my colleague, and then I'm going to yield back. I tweeted out #CBCTalks and I asked constituents to send in a question or two that I could respond to. I was asked by a constituent, David

Webb, a counselor, Wouldn't increasing the student loan interest rate discourage minorities' ability to go to college? Absolutely. The answer to that is yes. If the cost to attend college and take out loans for college will double—it's already too high now—too many students are foregoing their chance to get a college education because they can't afford it. This will just make it worse.

I was also asked by a constituent, Troy Amaro, if H.R. 1330 is passed by using the 10-10 scenario, what happens to the rest of the debt that is unpaid? I want to thank him for his question. I know we are working on the Student Loan Fairness Act, which offers a 10-10 repayment plan that would require borrowers to make 10 years of payment on their Federal student loans at a 10 percent rate of their discretionary income. And then once that period is done, the loan would be forgiven.

Those are the types of solutions that we need to be working on so that college can be more affordable for the American student and the American family. And to my coanchor and to the members of the Congressional Black Caucus, I'm hopeful that we will continue to raise our voice on this issue and to make it clear that the proposal by our colleagues on the other side, H.R. 1991, is not a solution. It is costing the American people more for college at a time when they can least afford it.

Mr. JEFFRIES. I thank the distinguished gentleman for raising some very eloquent points and doing it in such a thoughtful and passionate way. These are solutions, Mr. Speaker, that we really should be discussing in the context of a conference committee to come to some resolution around the budget.

For about 4 years, Members of the other side of the aisle were complaining about the absence of regular order, but this year we passed a budget in the House of Representatives in March. The Senate then passed their budget plan in the same month. The President came back in April, after we got back from recess, and presented his budget. The next step in regular order, which the House GOP has been asking for for 4 years, would be to appoint conferees so the Senate and the House can sit down and work it out and discuss some of the solutions that Representative HORSFORD and other Representatives of the American people have put forth to deal with our economic situation, make higher education more affordable, and provide businesses with the certainty that they need.

And so the question is, What is the House GOP afraid of? Why haven't you appointed conferees so we can sit down and have a discussion to work out the issues and the problems that are confronting the American people?

We've been joined by another distinguished member of the freshman class, one of the newest Members of the House of Representatives, Representative ROBIN KELLY from the great State of Illinois.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Thank you for your leadership, Congressman JEFFRIES.

This weekend, three students very close to me celebrated their college graduations: Brace Clement at the University of Wisconsin, Amelia Lumpkin at Davidson College, and Whitney Horn at the Illinois Institute of Technology. These three young people represent the best and brightest this country has to offer.

□ 2100

Congratulations Brace, Amelia, and Whitney. I am extremely proud of you. They are just three of the thousands of students across the country who celebrated their college graduations this weekend. It's a joyous time, but for some it's also a nervous time because more students than ever are walking across the stage weighed down by student loan debt.

The cost of a college degree has increased by more than 1,000 percent in the last 30 years, according to a report by the Center for American Progress. Two-thirds of students who earn 4-year degrees graduate with an average student loan debt of more than \$25,000, according to the report. Today, 37 million students are facing student loan debt, and the total student loan debt burden tops \$1.1 trillion.

The mounting student debt is stunting the growth of a generation of graduates who are facing a tough job market and high student loan payments, or putting off key milestones, such as buying a house or starting a family, which further stifles the country's economic recovery.

The problem is most acute among students of color, with 81 percent of African American students graduating in debt compared to 64 percent of White students. And not only are more Black students graduating with debt, they are graduating with higher levels of debt. According to the report, 27 percent of Black bachelor degree recipients have more than \$30,000 in debt, compared to 16 percent of their White counterparts. It is against this backdrop that student loan rates are set to double on July 1.

A Republican bill being considered this week would have student loan interest rates change year to year, based on a 10-year Treasury note, a move that could push rates as high as 7.4 percent. This is unacceptable.

Raising interest rates on student loans will be pricing our students out of the American Dream. At a time when a college degree is more vital than ever to national and global competitiveness, we will be putting the goals of attaining a degree further out of reach of our young people, particularly young people of color.

Our students, many of whom have graduated to find themselves unemployed or underemployed, are already struggling to pay back loans at the current rate level and are facing years—and, in some cases, decades—of

loan payments ahead. Raising the rates on students who are already struggling to make ends meet is just wrong, counterproductive, and will have a chilling effect on future generations of students who will be forced to forego an education due to skyrocketing costs. We should be opening more avenues to a college education for young people, not slamming the door shut in their faces.

I agree with my colleagues that a two-step approach is needed to address the student loan crisis. We should first freeze the current rate, 3.4 percent, on subsidized Stafford loans for the next 2 years and keep other educational loan rates steady to remove the immediate fear of students and their families of the impending rate increase. We should then investigate longer-term solutions to the student loan problem as part of a comprehensive approach to addressing our Nation's mounting student debt, escalating college costs, and broken financial aid system as a whole.

In investigating options for increasing college affordability, I agree with the notion that we should, at the very least, be open to giving our students the same interest rates we extend to banks. Our young people deserve the same backing and support. It is not only the right thing to do, but the investment in our students will net a much bigger payoff for our Nation for generations to come.

Mr. JEFFRIES. I thank the gentlelady for her very insightful comments.

You know, it's interesting, as Representative KELLY pointed out, when the economy collapsed in 2008, it created a situation where many younger Americans entered into the job market and confronted increased difficulty in securing employment in their area of study or in any other area of study. So it doesn't make a lot of sense to many of us that, as we still continue to deal with a fragile economic recovery, why in the world would we shoulder these young Americans with an increased student loan debt burden in the face of an already difficult job market? That's a question that our friends on the other side of the aisle are going to have to answer this week, and I don't think that the American people will like what they have to say in that regard.

We're pleased that we've been joined by the very distinguished gentleman from the great State of Virginia, someone who has spearheaded the CBC effort as it relates to our compassionate and strong and responsible budget. I'm pleased to yield to Representative BOBBY SCOTT.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. I thank the gentleman for yielding time, and I thank him for holding this important Special Order as we talk about college education and making it affordable.

We know that a college education is extremely important to young people. It can transform their entire lives and open opportunities that are not available to those without a college education.

We know that the good jobs require education. Ninety percent of the good-

paying jobs in the future will require education past the high school level—and not necessarily a 4-year college, but some education and training past the high school level. Of course, that would include college. There's an old adage that the more you learn, the more you earn; the more education you get, the more likely you are to have a much higher income.

Now, we know that the benefits of a decent education not only accrue to the individual, but also to the community; because those communities that have a well-educated constituency are much less likely to have to suffer as much crime or pay as much for social services as those communities that do not invest in education.

And our national economic competitiveness depends on an educated workforce. We're not going to be able to compete, for example, on low wages if people around the world will work for much lower wages. You don't have to be near your customers or even near your coworkers anymore. We've got delivery. You can deliver things all over the world. And if you can work across the hall from your coworkers, you can work across the globe from your coworkers with a computer and a modem and the Internet and everything else.

The reason that businesses want to locate in the United States is because they know they can get a well-educated, well-trained workforce. And if we allow people to fail to reach their full potential, we will not be achieving our full economic competitiveness.

So we know the benefits of education, particularly a college education. And we know that some young people are looking at the high interest rates and the cost of education and are calculating that it's not worth it. There can be nothing worse for our Nation than to have young people fail to achieve their full potential because they cannot afford a college education.

Several years ago, in 2007, Congress passed a cut in the interest rate on student loans to make college more affordable, cutting the interest rate in half, from 6.8 percent to 3.4 percent, for 5 years. At the end of 5 years, last year, we extended it for another year; but on July 1, in just a few weeks, that interest rate will double back to 6.8 percent if we don't do anything.

Last week, the Education and Workforce Committee considered legislation to deal with the interest rate. Unfortunately, the bill recommended by the Republican side of the aisle was actually so bad that, according to the Congressional Research Service, students would actually be better off if we just did nothing and let the interest rate double to 6.8 percent rather than take that variable interest rate that they had, with the extra fees and everything else along with it. We would be better off if we just let the interest rate double.

You're asking young people to sign up for a variable interest rate. When they sign up, they have no idea what

the interest rate will be later on; but the Congressional Research Service said, based on projections, that they would be better off with the 6.8 percent rate than what they're going to end up with under the Republican bill.

What we should do is protect the present 3.4 percent interest rate for students. It's reasonable, and it makes college much more affordable. Or, if you're going to have a variable interest rate, have it at a low rate similar to what we're charging businesses and what they're able to borrow money at, with the protection against increases so you're no worse off with the legislation than you are today.

We can help students afford college, but not with the bill that the Education and Workforce Committee considered because that's actually worse than just letting the interest rate double.

We owe it to our young people, we owe it to our next generation, and we owe it to our Nation to make sure that our students get the best education that they can, and making college affordable is part of that challenge. We need to make college affordable, and we need to make sure we defeat the bill that was reported by the Education and Workforce Committee because that's actually worse than doing nothing.

Again, I thank you for holding the Special Order and doing what we can to make college affordable.

□ 2110

Mr. JEFFRIES. Thank you so much, Representative SCOTT, certainly for your eloquent and thoughtful observations, and for pointing out what really is a very interesting fact as it relates to what we're doing here in Washington, D.C., this week. If we just simply did nothing, if we all went back to our districts and didn't act in advance of the student loan rate doubling on July 1, that we would actually be better off going back home and doing nothing than if we acted upon the GOP proposal, H.R. 1911, which independently and objectively has been proven to show that it would make the situation, which is bad, now worse for millions and millions and millions of American students. That's why so many of our constituents are cynical about a lot of the things that happen down here in Washington, D.C.

We've been joined by another distinguished member of the freshman class, someone who herself had a very prominent career prior to arriving here in the House of Representatives in higher education, as well as a leader in the Ohio legislature.

I'm pleased to yield now to the distinguished gentlelady from Ohio, Representative JOYCE BEATTY.

Mrs. BEATTY. Mr. Speaker, let me also join my colleagues in thanking Mr. JEFFRIES and Mr. HORSFORD for leading the Congressional Black Caucus' important discussion about rising burdens of student loans on our families and on our economy.

Higher education is a major part of the American Dream. I know as a college graduate and I know as a senior administrator at a university, access to higher education must continue to be an option for the American Dream to continue to be a reality.

The increasing financial burden higher education is placing on students, families, and the economy is unsustainable and threatens our country's economic progress. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, almost 13 percent of student loan borrowers of all ages owe more than \$50,000, and nearly 4 percent owe more than \$100,000. These debts are often beyond the students' ability to repay, which is demonstrated by the fact that delinquency and default rates are soaring.

This week, the Smarter Solutions for Students Act, H.R. 1911, will come to the floor. Unfortunately, it is partisan legislation and is not a sufficient solution to address our Nation's student loan crisis; and it is certainly worth repeating, as you have heard and you will repeatedly hear. In fact, it makes students worse off than if nothing is done to stop the increasing variable interest rates.

This bill actually would increase the cost of student loans for borrowers, discourage the use of Federal loans, and exacerbate the country's troubling student debt problem. Under this bill, interest rates for student loans will balloon over the next 10 years, costing students and their parents almost \$4 billion in additional loan interest charges.

As a former college administrator with numerous colleges in my district, I believe pursuing higher education is one of the best personal and professional investments one can make in your future. With the tens of thousands of students within my district, the impact of the student loan crisis is monumental for my community.

That is why I have cosponsored several pieces of legislation that will work to decrease the fiscal strain higher education can place on students. I've cosponsored the Student Loan Fairness Act, sponsored by Representative BASS, which is legislation designed to lend a helping hand to those struggling under massive amounts of student loans. This legislation actually caps interest rates for Federal loans and improves and expands public service loan forgiveness and creates a 10-10 loan repayment plan.

We must—we must keep our education loan rates stable, responsible, and affordable. We must find a solution that will allow college students to benefit from the 3.4 percent interest rates on subsidized Stafford loans. We must advance legislation that includes student loan reform in a way that provides realistic opportunities for our students to secure good jobs and pay off their student loans without falling into financial crisis.

I will continue to advocate for better ways to lessen the financial burden of

higher education for all students in this country. Our Nation's students and families deserve an affordable education.

Mr. JEFFRIES. I thank the distinguished gentlelady from Ohio for her great leadership on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to let us know how many minutes are remaining in today's Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 9 minutes remaining.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've been joined now by another dynamic member of the freshman class, who arrived a couple of months earlier than the rest of us. He has gotten off to a tremendous start. I now yield to my distinguished colleague from the Garden State, the always nattily dressed Representative DONALD PAYNE, Jr.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for anchoring tonight's CBC Special Order on student loans and thank Congressman JEFFRIES for that kind observation.

Access to quality education is the basis the American Dream. In 1965, the Higher Education Act was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Lyndon Baines Johnson, a former rural schoolhouse teacher, who fully understood that education is the greatest equalizer.

Since then, student aid in this country has been a springboard that gives hardworking students with low- to moderate-income the opportunity to realize their goals and transcend economic status. The Federal Pell Grant program helps more than 9 million students get to and through college. Unfortunately, while Pell Grants cover a significant portion of tuition, currently it pays for less than one-third of a student's tuition at most 4-year public colleges.

Given rising tuition costs and the decline in family incomes, the importance of financial aid has only increased with time. The cost of college tuition in the U.S. has increased by more than 1,000 percent—yes, 1,000 percent—since the 1980s. This is more than the growth in the consumer price index. At the same time, the Federal Pell Grant is covering an even smaller percentage of the overall college cost.

As a result, the success of our graduates is being hampered by mounting debt. Two-thirds of college seniors who graduated in 2011 accumulated more than \$26,000 in student loan debt. And I am increasingly concerned about New Jersey's graduates, who hold the 10th highest debt among college students in our Nation.

And while the cost of an education rises and the amount of the student debt skyrockets, young people struggle to find work. They've done everything we've asked them to do. They've worked hard, they've gotten an education, but unemployment for young college graduates remains at 8.8 percent.

So our graduates' dreams of making it on their own are stifled. They are

forced to put their lives on hold, move back home with their parents, and pinch pennies to pay off their mounting debt. Not only does this debt negatively impact the quality of life for our young people, but it weakens our economy and our workforce as well. Financial constraints caused by student loan debt discourage recent graduates from pursuing public service jobs in medical fields that serve our seniors in low-income communities.

Yet knowing all of this, my Republican colleagues have been working overtime to exacerbate the problem and make college even less affordable.

□ 2120

The 2014 budget eliminates mandating funding for Pell Grants and freezes the maximum grant for 10 years while also cutting eligibility; and as of July 1, Federal student loan rates are set to double. Instead of adopting efforts to keep interest rates low for young people in a volatile economic environment, my Republican colleagues have introduced a bill—and are voting on it this week—that can increase rates far beyond this July increase. As I like to call it, it's the Making College More Expensive Act.

Mr. Speaker, I beg your patience as I go through a little rudimentary arithmetic.

Right now, student loan interest rates are fixed at 3.4 percent, meaning a student pays about \$4,000 in interest payments on a 5-year loan. If we do nothing and let the interest rate expire this July, rates will double to 6.8 percent, and a student will pay nearly \$9,000—more than the double—on the same 5-year loan. Now, if we do what the Republicans want us to do and pass their bill this week, student loan interest rates will skyrocket to an estimated 7.4 percent, and the same student would pay \$10,000 in interest. In other words, if we do absolutely nothing—nothing at all—it would be better than if we pass the Republicans' proposed bill in the House.

Now, I'm not suggesting that we do nothing—this body must act—but it is a sad reality when doing nothing is better than going along with what the Republicans are pushing. Rather than invest in our future leaders and entrepreneurs of America, they propose to balance the budget on the backs of low- to moderate-income students. I fear that, by ignoring a generation buried under debt, we will cripple this country's future.

This great Nation is supposed to be a land of opportunity for all regardless of what you look like or where you come from. Throughout our history, the opportunities afforded to people of various backgrounds have built this Nation, creating a large and thriving middle class. Access to education has been the catalyst to this growth. As we look to our future, it is critical that we place education at the forefront of the plans for our success. We can start by stopping the doubling of student loan



interest rates and by once again making a college education affordable for all of those who want one.

Mr. JEFFRIES. I thank the distinguished gentleman from New Jersey.

As we close, this chart really illustrates the magnitude of the collective problem confronting younger Americans in the United States of America. The student loan debt burden has now exceeded \$1 trillion. Now, in this Chamber, we hear a lot about the debt crisis facing America, but we have a student loan debt crisis that must be addressed.

I yield to my good friend, the gentleman from Nevada, STEVEN HORSFORD, for his thoughts on this matter.

Mr. HORSFORD. Thank you, Representative JEFFRIES.

This chart and this number should alarm every American family. As you just indicated, in this body there are those on the other side of the aisle who talk about not burdening the next generation with a debt that they cannot afford to pay. It is for us, as leaders, to do our job now so that they don't have to bear that burden in the next generation. This is why this issue is so fundamental and why we must get this policy right, so that we don't burden the next generation of students.

We have increasing numbers who are low-income and who now have that opportunity for the first time ever to go to college. We have increasing numbers who are minority students, first-generation students who need to pursue their educations without the burden of a \$1 trillion debt from taking out student loans. The Huffington Post reported recently that the spread between what the government pays to borrow and what it charges students creates a profit this fiscal year of more than 36 cents off every dollar lent to borrowers.

So the question is: Why are our colleagues on the other side proposing a measure to increase interest rates on students and families?

That money does not go to the Department of Education, Mr. Speaker. That money goes to the Treasury, which goes to pay down the Federal debt. So the proposal on the other side actually charges students, an increasing number of low-income and minority students, more money in order to pay down the Federal debt so that the other side can keep corporate tax breaks for Big Oil, big banks, and millionaires. That's what this fundamentally comes down to. It's why every American should be concerned with this policy, and why we're coming up with a Democratic alternative worthy of support.

Mr. JEFFRIES. I thank the distinguished gentleman.

We will continue to do all that we can to make college affordable for every single American.

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

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, once again, we have been pushed to a political standoff over

an important issue that affects the future of our nation. On July 1, college students will see the interest rates on their federal loans double. College is becoming less and less affordable each day, and the bill the majority has offered for a vote this week, H.R. 1911 the Smarter Solutions for Students Act, provides no reprieve for college students. In fact, if this bill becomes law, it would make college more expensive for students and their parents than if Congress did nothing and let the interest rates double. It shouldn't be titled the Smarter Solutions Act, but rather, the Making College More Expensive Act.

It is not simply rhetoric or a baseless claim to state that the Republican bill will increase the cost of college. The Congressional Research Service looked at different scenarios where a student or their parent would use a federal loan in order to pay for college and how much that loan would cost under the Republican plan if rates were frozen at 3.4 percent, and if rates were allowed to double to 6.8 percent. Based on projected interest rates, CRS found that the Republican-led H.R. 1911 would increase interest payments under each scenario. If we look at one particular scenario, a student who borrowed the maximum amount of subsidized and unsubsidized loans for five years would see their interest payments increase over the lifetime of the loan by 14.5 percent, compared to allowing rates to double. The Republican plan would cost an astounding 45 percent more than if we froze current interest rates at 3.4 percent.

The Congressional Budget Office also looked at the total cost of H.R. 1911 for families looking to send their sons and daughters to college. They found that over 10 years, H.R. 1911 would cost working families an additional \$3.7 billion in interest payments. The federal government should not be in the business of profiting off of the backs of students and their parents. We should be helping them pursue a higher education, not squeezing them for every penny they have.

Let's work together on a common sense proposal that makes federal loans affordable and allows young people to obtain a degree without burdening them with insurmountable student debt. We need real solutions that will help young Americans succeed and make our country stronger.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER (at the request of Mr. CANTOR) for today and the balance of the week on account of an urgent personal family matter.

Mr. CLYBURN (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today.

#### SENATE BILL REFERRED

A bill of the Senate of the following title was taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 743. An act to restore States' sovereign rights to enforce State and local sales and use tax laws, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mr. HORSFORD. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 27 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, May 21, 2013, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

#### EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

1534. A letter from the PRAB Branch Chief, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program: Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Grant Program (RIN: 0584-AE07) received April 24, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

1535. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting FY 2014 Budget Amendments for the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, the Interior, Justice, State, and Transportation, as well as Other International Programs, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and the Federal Trade Commission; (H. Doc. No. 113-31); to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

1536. A letter from the Acting Under Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting authorization of 12 officers to wear the authorized insignia of the grade of major general or brigadier general; to the Committee on Armed Services.

1537. A letter from the Assistant Secretary of the Army, Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Department of Defense, transmitting the Department's Report on the Recruiter Incentive Pay Pilot Program, pursuant to Section 681 of the National Defense Authorization Act for 2006; to the Committee on Armed Services.

1538. A letter from the Under Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting the Department's report presenting the specific amount of staff-years of technical effort to be allocated for each defense Federally Funded Research and Development Center during fiscal year 2014; to the Committee on Armed Services.

1539. A letter from the Chairman and President, Export-Import Bank, transmitting a report on transactions involving U.S. exports to Ethiopian Airlines Enterprise, SC of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia pursuant to Section 2(b)(3) of the Export-Import Bank Act of 1945, as amended; to the Committee on Financial Services.

1540. A letter from the Chairman and President, Export-Import Bank, transmitting a report on transactions involving U.S. exports to Air China Limited (Air China), Beijing, China pursuant to Section 2(b)(3) of the Export-Import Bank Act of 1945, as amended; to the Committee on Financial Services.

1541. A letter from the Assistant General Counsel for Legislation, Regulation and Energy Efficiency, Department of Energy, transmitting the Department's final rule — Contractor Legal Management Requirements; Acquisition Regulations (RIN: 1990-AA37) received May 3, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1542. A letter from the Associate Bureau Chief, Wireline Competition Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Connect America Fund; Developing a Unified Inter-carrier Compensation Regime; Joint Petition of Price Cap Holding Companies for Conversation of Average schedule Affiliates to Price