

The excuse for this conduct is that the authorizing committees have simply failed to attend to their duties of keeping authorizations current, including for a number of critical functions, and so the Appropriations Committee takes it upon itself to fund them.

What's to prevent this? The House rules allow any Member the right to raise a point of order against any unauthorized expenditure, but this right is stripped from Members every time an appropriations bill is sent to the House floor, making this rule meaningless and unenforceable.

It has now reached the point that more than one-third of the discretionary spending approved by the House is for purposes not authorized by law. This fact makes a mockery of the leadership's effort to restore regular order to the appropriations process.

I urge the Speaker of the House to direct the authorizing committees to bring the authorizations current for every program within their respective jurisdictions and to give them a year to do so. If, after a full year, the authorizing committees don't believe the programs are worth the time to review, then maybe that's just nature's way of warning us that they're also not worth the money that we continue to shovel at them.

Once the committees have had that year to review these unauthorized programs and to either renew them, reform them, or let them die, I urge the House to restore the right of every Member to challenge unauthorized appropriations on the floor as our rules clearly envision and provide.

□ 1020

Americans elected a House Republican majority with one clear mandate: stop wasting our money. To be worthy of that trust, we can't allow hundreds of billions of dollars to bypass the minimal congressional review that the authorizing process provides.

EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN CALIFORNIA

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

Mr. MCNERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to a recent University of California at Davis study on some effects that climate change will have in California. This report looks at habitat and temperature sensitivity for fish species within the State.

California has a diverse and robust ecosystem, as well as the largest estuary in the Western Hemisphere, namely the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The delta and its tributaries are home to an amazing variety of native species that must be protected. The study found that, of 121 native fish species in California, more than 80 percent will be critically endangered as a result of climate change. At the same time, non-

native or invasive species will survive at a much higher rate.

We must take action now to address climate change, which is starting to affect every aspect of our daily lives, including our water quality, flood risk, more severe weather—including hurricanes, tornadoes, and droughts—and the extinction of native species. The destruction posed by climate change to the natural resources we depend on for our daily sustenance is too great.

Global warming is here. It's dangerous, and we need to take action now. The longer we wait, the more difficult and costly the fixes will be, and the more our fellow human beings across the world will suffer.

STOP GOVERNMENT ABUSE OF TAXPAYER INFORMATION ACT

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

Mrs. BLACK. Mr. Speaker, in the wake of this recent IRS scandal, President Obama made this promise to the American people: I'll do everything in my power to make sure nothing like this happens again.

Everything? But what about ObamaCare? In spite of the culture of corruption and coverup at the IRS, the Obama administration is moving full steam ahead with ObamaCare, a law that gives unprecedented new access and powers to unelected government bureaucrats at the IRS and several other major government agencies.

Consider the potential for abuse with ObamaCare's mystery Federal data services hub, the largest personal information database the government has ever attempted, according to The Wall Street Journal. This data hub will function like a Web portal where your personal health insurance, tax and financial information, criminal background, and immigration status will be shared and transmitted between agencies, including the IRS, HHS, DOJ, DHS, and SSA.

While far too many questions still remain about who will have access to what information in the hub, we do know that a woman in charge of the IRS' eight newly created Obama enforcement offices is none other than Sarah Hall Ingram, the former commissioner of the office responsible for tax-exempt organizations during the targeted IRS scandal.

Will the Americans who do not purchase government-approved insurance soon find themselves targeted and harassed through IRS audits? Right now, only time will tell.

With so much personal information going in and out of the hub likely privy to both government employees and contractors, many of whom will have discretion over health care coverage and tax penalties, the potential for abuses is staggering. That's why I have introduced H.R. 2022, the Stopping Government Abuse of Taxpayer Information Act. My bill would require not

only the IRS but all government agencies with access to ObamaCare's Federal data services hub to present to Congress—under the penalty of perjury—certification that the American people's personal information has not and will not be used for targeting any individual or group based on their beliefs.

With full implementation of ObamaCare only months away, the IRS scandal underscores why we must not only continue fighting to repeal the health care law, but we also have the responsibility to demand safeguards, accountability, and oversight measures to be put in place to shield Americans from further targeting and misuse of their personal information.

The question is: Will the President honor his promise to the American people to do everything in his power to ensure that nothing like the IRS scandal happens again?

Mr. President, join me in supporting my bill, H.R. 2022, to safeguard the American people's most personal information.

MAKING COLLEGE AFFORDABLE

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

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, ensuring students can afford college is vital to ensuring our Nation's competitiveness in a global economy. A majority of new jobs in the next decade will require a college degree, which makes higher education an economic necessity for most Americans. Ensuring all students have the opportunity to go to college will strengthen our economy, grow our middle class, and invest in our future.

Yet, education costs continue to rise year after year, pricing some people out of an education. College costs have dramatically increased. Over the last decade, the cost of attending a 4-year institution has increased 66 percent over the rate of inflation. For 2-year institutions, tuition and fees for students have increased 47 percent beyond the rate of inflation. According to the College Board, the annual cost of attending an in-State public college is now well over \$22,000 a year. These rapidly rising costs are pricing hardworking families and students out of an education.

Congress can—and must—act to ensure college remains affordable for hardworking families, and there are things that we can do to do just that.

First, Congress must act immediately to prevent student loan interest rates from doubling on July 1. I've supported the Student Loan Relief Act, which would extend the current student loan interest rate, 3.4 percent, until 2015. Unfortunately, the Republican plan passed last week, the Making College More Expensive Act, would put college out of reach for many of my constituents and students across this country. I opposed the Republican plan, which would create a variable

loan interest rate system, letting student loan rates spike, forcing students to pay higher interest rates.

I continue to believe that students deserve the certainty of a fixed student loan interest rate. An ever-changing rate, as the Republican plan would provide, would create more anxiety and uncertainty for millions of families, and that's just the wrong approach. Hardworking students and parents have already been saddled with \$1 trillion of student loan debt. Congress should be working to ease that burden.

It's time that Congress return to regular order and prevent student loan interest rates from doubling at the end of the month. That means doing what we were sent here to do: going to conference to work out the differences between the House-passed version and the expected Senate version of this bill. The clock is ticking, and rates for millions of students will double on July 1 if we don't act.

Congress shouldn't let rigid partisanship get in the way of preventing what equates to a massive tax hike on students and their families. Instead, let's do our job and legislate. Disagreement on parts of a bill is not an excuse for delay.

Second, we should enact legislation to allow families to save more for college. Recently, I introduced a bill with my Republican colleague, Congressman TIM WALBERG, giving greater flexibility to families to save money for tuition, books, and other educational expenses. This bill, the Helping Families Save for Education Act, would increase existing caps on Coverdell savings accounts and allow families to contribute more over longer periods of time.

□ 1030

These types of accounts offer families a tax-advantaged choice to save for a child's educational expenses.

Currently, families or beneficiaries can contribute a maximum of \$2,000 a year. Our legislation would increase the maximum contribution annually for most working families. Families and students, under our legislation, would also be able to save for college for an additional 4 years, until the student turns 22 years old.

Third, we must continue to provide and fully support Pell Grants, which provide needs-based grants to low-income students. No one who wants to go to college should be priced out of doing so. So I, along with my Democratic colleagues, stand ready and eager to ensure a college degree remains in reach for every student, no matter what their means.

Finally, we must keep the cost of attending college low by continuing direct State and Federal support to universities. In my home State of Michigan, we are blessed with great public institutions that provide a world-class education to our citizens.

Unfortunately though, in recent years we've seen direct financial support to these universities slashed. Such

cuts are then passed on to students and families. If investing in education remains a priority for this Nation, we must invest in college for our students.

I ask a simple question: What's more important than the education of our children?

COMPETITIVE BIDDING FOR CMS SERVICES

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to address a situation that is evolving within this Nation where older adults on Medicare who have the misfortune of experiencing disease or disability and require durable medical equipment, equipment that is designed to allow people to live with dignity and independence in their own homes, we're seeing, through the actions of CMS, through Medicare, of preventing their access.

Medicare is awarding contracts to companies who are not even licensed in States to do business. In the end, it's going to cause a terrible disconnect with people being able to access the equipment that they need.

And not just the equipment. I spent 30 years working rehabilitation services as a therapist, rehab manager, and as a licensed nursing home administrator. I saw what difference this equipment makes, but also what the service makes, the technical assistance means for people who are living at home on oxygen or using wheelchairs or other types of medical equipment.

In the evenings, I actually was a volunteer EMT and firefighter; and frequently I'd find myself in the middle of the night, pager would go off and I'd be out in the community, in neighbors' homes, and be able to witness firsthand how important that equipment is there.

This week the National Association for the Support of Long Term Care and its members are in Washington to represent ancillary providers of products and services in the post-acute care industry. Now, as part of this work, these individuals will be garnering signatures on a letter that calls on CMS, Medicare Administrator Tavenner, to delay implementation of the widely criticized Medicare Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics and Supplies Competitive Bidding Program.

Now, this competitive bidding program—and believe me, it was misnamed when it was passed; there's nothing competitive about it—was intended to reduce Medicare costs, ensure that beneficiaries have access to quality services. In practice, the system denies competition while worsening access to quality goods and services and harming seniors.

In many ways, their mission today in Washington reminds me of one of my favorite movies, and a piece of our his-

tory in this country, the Apollo 13 mission. The story of Apollo 13 is that what could have been the worst space disaster in history became one of NASA's most spectacular conquests.

Everything had gone wrong. An oxygen tank exploded in the service module, damaged a nearby oxygen tank, and rocked the command and lunar modules. Mission controllers struggled to isolate the problems, with no success. The mission and the astronauts' lives were in jeopardy.

To conserve power, the astronauts had shut all of the spacecraft systems down except the radio. The carbon dioxide rose to toxic levels, and crew members managed for 6 days with hardly any food, water, or sleep in freezing temperatures. There was clear danger the astronauts might not survive, but they did.

Apollo 13 Flight Director Gene Kranz famously rallied his team to do what is necessary to get the astronauts home safely, declaring "failure is not an option."

One of NASA's greatest achievements had become not the next feat in space exploration, but the brilliant rescue of crew members aboard Apollo 13.

Similarly, when it comes to competitive bidding, failure is not an option. CMS' competitive bidding is our damaged spacecraft. Individuals in need of durable medicine equipment for prosthetics or orthotics are the flight crew. They are in danger. We need competent technical support professionals working together to achieve our mission and bring this crew home safely.

After years of bureaucratic delay and mismanagement, we're no closer to a system that works for both providers and beneficiaries—that would be the seniors of our Nation.

Now, it appears providers are being awarded contracts by CMS to provide services for round two competitive bidding that lack the required licensing or accreditation for specific States in which they're supposed to service those seniors.

I'm extremely concerned that mishandling of the bidding process is going to have a devastating impact on beneficiaries. This is a serious issue that warrants a full review of the process and a delay of round two until this fatally flawed program is fixed.

For this reason, I encourage my colleagues to sign on to this letter to Administrator Tavenner requesting a delay through the end of the year so that we can have more time to review how round one was implemented and fix the problems that exist with the administration of the program.

I'm proud to say that, as of today, we have 129 signatures from Members of the House of Representatives; and I encourage my colleagues who have not taken the opportunity to sign on to the letter to do so today.

We need to replace this fatally flawed program with one that's not just labeled competitive, but is competitive