

strengthen the program. That's because they don't care about the program. They just want to cut it. They want to eliminate it.

I'm taking this challenge to make a difference. I'm going to blog, I'm going to tweet, and I'm going to talk about my experiences to show that SNAP works, and I will do everything I can to push back and to fight these cuts. Reducing the ability of poor people to buy food is a rotten thing to do. If we can't restore the SNAP cuts, then I will do everything I can to defeat this farm bill because Americans deserve better.

Join me in this fight. Let's end hunger now.

#### COMMEMORATING THE 24TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TIANANMEN SQUARE CRACKDOWN AND BEIJING MASSACRE

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 24th anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown and Beijing massacre in China.

A quarter of a century ago, the world watched with horror as the atrocities in Tiananmen Square and nearby streets in Beijing unfolded. During this anniversary period, it is with solidarity that we remember the victims of that deep tragedy.

The courageous students protesting on those days in April, May, and June of 1989 sought basic freedoms. Prophetic in their presence, they called upon their autocratic, Communist government to embrace liberty, respect human rights, and put an end to deep-seated corruption. Chinese intellectuals like Wei Jingsheng championed political reform. They posted essays on the Democracy Wall in Beijing. For that, he was arrested and imprisoned twice for a total of 18 years. The Democracy Wall and its postings were shut down.

Today, still autocratic and still Communist, China faces many of the same challenges, despite promises by its new leadership that reform would occur. Millions of Chinese people remain denied adequate food, housing, and health care, and over 1,200 Chinese dissidents and critics are known to be imprisoned or detained for standing up for freedom of speech. Deep disparities between the rich and the poor of China exist. Eight hundred million Chinese, close to a billion people—60 percent of its people—exist on less than \$15 a day, all while the government seizes land and forces evictions.

Meanwhile, Communist Party leaders have become billionaires, often through corruption, graft, and theft, with immunity from a lawless regime. To rise economically in China, you must take an oath to the Communist Party and then be accepted into that club of politicians who become vastly wealthy as they climb the party ladder.

The Market-Leninism that drives China has resulted in 83 billionaires buying seats in their parliament. I can only imagine what that money power does to drive out the voices of the masses of the people longing to be free. The average fortune among these wealthiest 83 Communist Party delegates is \$3.35 billion.

Environmental issues are also a major source of concern for the Chinese people, and they remain unaddressed. The New York Times recently reported on the findings of the Global Burden of Disease Study, which states air pollution contributed to 1.2 million premature deaths in China in 2010.

It is no secret religious organizations are heavily restricted and monitored in China. The Catholic Church is banned, and phony bishops are sanctioned by the government in their stead. Often, ethnic and religious minorities are intimidated or harassed by government officials.

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Despite extensive documentation of the truth, the Chinese Communist Party continues to manipulate and censor the facts surrounding the events at Tiananmen Square and Beijing a quarter century ago; not to mention their ongoing censorship of the press and the Internet. The government blocks the social media, denying Facebook and Twitter the ability to operate. Journalists are regularly harassed and often imprisoned.

In remembrance of freedom's prophets, lost peacefully pursuing liberty at Tiananmen Square and in Beijing a quarter century ago, and those today who dream of a more liberty-loving future in that country, our Nation honors their noble spirits, their courage, their aspirations, and their lives given in pursuit of the cause of liberty.

#### TIME RUNNING OUT FOR 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, in 17 days, unless Congress acts, the Stafford student loan program—which is the workhorse loan program for millions of college students all across America—is going to see the interest rate double from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent.

Stepping back for a moment, 6 years ago, the Democrats passed the College Cost Reduction Act, which cut that rate from 6.8 to 3.4 percent. It was a 5-year bill concurrent with the Higher Education Authorization Act. Last year, with minutes to spare, we extended that lower rate of 3.4 percent for an additional year. And now, once again, we are hours away from students who are about to embark on life decisions, in terms of which college to attend, which course to follow; and they need to know with some certainty the

borrowing cost, which for many is now a stark reality in terms of paying the cost of higher education.

This morning in The New York Times, there was a very encouraging story about the fact that the number of college degrees in the U.S. has hit an all-time high. Students are now completing college, and it's just in time in terms of the workforce needs of our country. The same study which was released yesterday shows that in fact we have workforce needs for high-degree skills for which the education system is still scrambling to catch up. So there is no question for young people in America. This question of protecting the affordability of higher education is of critical importance to both their future and to our Nation's future.

Unfortunately, the only action in the House of Representatives was a measure which the majority party rammed through a couple of weeks ago, which the Congressional Budget Office Monday issued an analysis of. What CBO told the country is that the House Republican bill—which is a variable interest rate program—would actually cost students more than if we did nothing and let the rates double to 6.8 percent. I want to repeat that. That measure actually worsens the situation if we did absolutely nothing and allowed the rate to go to 6.8 percent.

It's obvious what we need to do. As a Congress, we need to recognize the fact that we have a national interest in terms of maintaining access to higher education. We also need to recognize that families are being crushed with the cost of higher education when we need to protect the lower interest rate.

I have a bill, H.R. 1595, which has over 150 cosponsors in the House—it received 51 votes in the Senate—that would protect that lower rate for 2 years and allow us to do a new Higher Education Authorization Act. This morning, just a few minutes ago, I executed a discharge petition for Members of Congress to sign to get H.R. 1595 on the floor immediately so that we can protect the lower interest rates for young people embarking on next year's college curriculum and semester.

So I would urge all Members to sign the discharge petition, H.R. 1595, which will protect the lower rate so that we can, in a measured, intelligent way, come up with a Higher Education Authorization Act, which will go through the whole gamut of issues for college costs—whether it's the Perkins loan program, Pell Grants, allowing students to refinance after they leave college, giving high school students better information as they make a decision that really is almost the equivalent of buying a house when you go to college in modern day America. Again, the stakes are huge, but the payoff is even greater for students, which that report issued yesterday documents.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I want to join some of my colleagues who are going to speak later this morning who will note the fact that it is now 6 months ago to

the date that my State, the State of Connecticut, saw a horrible tragedy, young children who were slaughtered in an act of senseless gun violence. And today, survivors of the Newtown massacre are all across Capitol Hill urging Congress to act.

Congressman THOMPSON and Congressman KING painstakingly worked out a compromise bill to strengthen background checks in our country, balancing constitutional concerns, again, totally consistent with the Heller decision, which sets forth the individual right to gun ownership.

It is time for this Congress to act. We should pass the Thompson-King bill. We should listen to those families, the survivors of the Newtown massacre, who are begging Congress to move forward and act on this measure. It will protect the rights of gun owners, but it will also protect the public safety of this country, which is so long overdue.

I want to salute Congressman THOMPSON, Congressman KING, Congresswoman ESTY, who represents the Newtown district in Connecticut, all of my colleagues from my State, and all across the country who have come together in response to this horrible event to make sure that it will not just be a passing memory, but that we will build something from that event that will protect Americans from the epidemic of gun violence that unfortunately goes on every single day in this country.

#### HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF FRED D. WILLIAMS III

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

Ms. SEWELL of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and pay tribute to the life and legacy of Mr. Fred D. Williams III, a beloved husband and father, highly respected community leader, and successful business owner from the great State of Alabama, who sadly passed away on June 11, 2013 at the age of 76. This phenomenal man was an extraordinary source of wisdom and guidance for me and so many others.

While I'm deeply saddened by his passing, I am confident that his legacy will continue through the countless people that he touched during his life.

For more than 50 years, this exceptional man owned and operated Fred's Flower and Gift Shop in the historic Selma, Alabama. Opened on October 15, 1956, Fred's Flower and Gift Shop served as a pillar in the Selma community until July 2011, when Mr. Fred Williams retired. Mr. Fred Williams, III represents a whole line of wonderful business owners in my home town of Selma, Alabama.

Fred Williams was married for 45 years to Martha J. Williams, who preceded him in death on July 15, 2003. Their marriage was blessed with two beautiful children, Kaye Frances Williams of Alexandria, Virginia, and

Kimberly Joyce Williams of Minneapolis, Minnesota. He was also the doting and loving grandfather of McKenzie and Madison Dillon.

For me, this is a personal loss since I was privileged to be raised by Fred Williams. His daughter Kim was my childhood best friend, and I grew up in the Williams household. In fact, there is not a childhood memory of mine that does not include the Williams family or my many visits to Fred's Florist.

Because of the closeness my family shared with the Williamses over the years, I affectionately called him Uncle Fred. Uncle Fred has left an indelible mark on the city of Selma, Alabama, and I am so grateful for the part he played in raising me.

While I am sad that I am not able to attend the funeral today to be with Kim and Kaye, I rejoice in knowing that Uncle Fred's legacy will live on in the many people that he touched. I find comfort in remembering his hearty laugh, the way he always walked with his head cocked to one side, and of course the way he always brought a smile to my face as he called me Terri Sue. I will forever carry with me the love, support, laughter and precious memories of Uncle Fred.

On behalf of the State of Alabama and this Nation, I ask my colleagues of the United States House of Representatives to join me in celebrating the wonderful life and legacy of Mr. Fred D. Williams III, an extraordinary American and an Alabama treasure.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak and ask unanimous consent to revise and extend my remarks.

He came by his entrepreneurship spirit honestly, following in the footsteps of his forefathers who were prominent business owners in Selma.

His floral expertise was legendary and his leadership in the industry was highly acclaimed. In 1970, Fred Williams became the first African-American member of the Alabama State Florist Association. As a trailblazer, he achieved recognition at the state level in 1979 when he served as the President of the Alabama State Florist Association and ultimately received the Association's Lifetime Membership Award for his dedicated service.

Integrally involved in his family businesses, Fred also owned and operated Fairlawn Memory Gardens and was Corporate President of J.H. Williams and Sons Funeral Home, a 108-year-old family business. He was a licensed funeral director and former member of the Alabama Funeral Directors and Morticians Association.

Fred Williams was known as a savvy business leader and a caring professional who took great pride in ensuring his floral arrangements were beautiful and personal for each occasion. He was beloved, respected and admired in our community. Many will remember him as the "dean of the floral business" who inspired and provided exceptional mentorship for other florists in the industry.

Fred Williams spent his formative years in Selma, Alabama. He moved with his family to Richmond, Virginia in the 1950s where he graduated from Maggie L. Walker High

School. He then attended the historic Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. After graduation, he returned to his hometown of Selma and opened his flower shop in 1956.

Fred Williams was actively involved in every facet of the Selma community. His love of people and his hometown was evident in his tireless efforts to make the City of Selma a better place. The list of clubs and organizations included the Selma-Dallas County Historic Preservation Society, the Selma-Dallas Chamber of Commerce and he also served on the boards for the Vaughan-Smitherman Building and Sturdivant Hall. He was a charter member of the 12 High Club as well as the Chesterfield Club and he was a founding member of the Tuesday Night Men's Group. He was a long-time member of the Historic Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church where he earned the title of "Trustee Emeritus" for his generosity and dedicated service to the church.

#### NEWTOWN

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

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, 6 months ago, our Nation witnessed a horrible massacre of innocence in Newtown, Connecticut. In the 6 months since, there are two important facts that we should note: first, nearly 5,000 more Americans have been killed by people using guns.

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Second, Congress has done absolutely nothing to reduce and prevent these deaths.

The Senate took one vote to expand background checks. Sadly, it failed when a minority of Senators voted against the wishes of 90 percent of Americans. The only thing more disappointing than the Senate voting down this pro-gun owner, anti-criminal legislation is that the House has refused to vote at all.

My Republican colleague, PETER KING, and I have introduced H.R. 1565, legislation that's identical to the Senate background check effort. We have 3 Republicans, we have 179 Democrats—a total of 182 coauthors. Surely, we need more support from the Republican side of the aisle.

But the truth is this shouldn't be a controversial bill, and it shouldn't be partisan. Background checks are something everyone in both parties should be able to agree on. Everyone says they're against criminals, terrorists, and the dangerously mentally ill getting guns. But you can't be against that and be against background checks. Background checks are the first line of defense. Our bipartisan bill strengthens that first line of defense.

It's anti-criminal. Right now a criminal can buy a firearm at a gun show, over the Internet, or through a newspaper ad because those sales don't require a background check. Last year, the background check system identified and denied 88,000 gun sales to