

percent, as of July 1. If we had allowed this rate increase to continue, we would have subtracted thousands of dollars from the wallets of American students and their families or, worse, be responsible for pushing college beyond the financial means of some families who already wonder whether they can afford to give their kids the education they need and deserve.

The bipartisan legislation we passed yesterday will temporarily resolve this crisis for American families, but it is far from perfect. It switches these interest rates for these critical student loans from fixed rates to floating rates, with caps that are far too high. This opens the door to rising interest rates 4 years from now that students and their families simply cannot afford.

The student debt problem which for many families is a student debt crisis requires a carefully considered long term solution. I am hopeful that such a solution will eventually emerge, but this legislation is not it.

That is why I supported an amendment offered by my colleagues, Senators REED and WARREN, and another amendment offered by Senator SANDERS, which would have mitigated some of the long-term damage of this legislation. Even though we did not adopt those amendments, I supported this bill for the simple reason that it removes the burdens facing America's students and their families in the next few years.

The chairman of the HELP Committee, my friend TOM HARKIN has pledged to try to fix the likely spiking interest rates facing students when the higher education reauthorization bill comes up next year. I will strongly support that effort.

Yesterday we in the Senate had a choice, but America's college students do not they have no choice but to pay the ever-rising cost of a college education, not if they want the skills and knowledge that hold the promise of a better life. They have no choice but to live with the decisions we make here in this Chamber.

REMEMBERING MICHAEL WINTER

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, this week Americans are celebrating the 23rd anniversary of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act. As chief Senate sponsor of that legislation, I know that we could not have prevailed without the tireless, passionate, never-give-up advocacy of disability rights advocates and leaders across America. One of those outstanding leaders, Michael Winter, cannot be with us to celebrate this year's anniversary. He passed away earlier this month. But I would like to take a few minutes today to celebrate the life of this wonderful person.

Michael was born with a disability, and grew up in Chicago at a far less enlightened time, when students and other young people with disabilities were excluded from the mainstream.

Michael used a wheelchair, but he was not the kind of person to take discrimination sitting down. At an early age, he began to speak up. He discovered the power of advocacy. He was determined to change the world for people with disabilities.

In 1969, Michael was enrolled in Southern Illinois University. Because the school president's wife used a wheelchair, the SIU had made a commitment 15 years earlier to become one of the first accessible colleges in the United States. But Michael was not satisfied. He believed that the university needed to be more inclusive for students with disabilities. So Michael and other students with disabilities took over the university president's office and chained a wheelchair to his desk. They did so to drive home the point that the campus needed to have accessible transportation for people with disabilities. The university, to its great credit, made improvements, and Michael had found a special focus for his advocacy. His passionate and highly effective advocacy for accessible transportation became a constant throughout his life.

In addition, Michael was one of the early leaders in the Independent Living movement. In 1977, after college and attending graduate school, he went to the fledgling Berkeley Center for Independent Living, where he completed an internship with Judy Heumann. He ended up staying on as a staff member for another 4 years. He then directed a Center for Independent Living in Hawaii before returning to the Berkeley as director of the Center for Independent Living for 12 years. During that period, Michael also served as president of the National Council on Independent Living.

As I said, Michael's special passion was to advocate for more accessible transportation. Later in his career, he held various positions at the U.S. Department of Transportation, and was responsible for helping enforce civil rights with respect to transportation under the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, the Civil Rights Act, and other laws.

He also advocated for more accessible transportation internationally. Marca Bristo, CEO of Access Living in Chicago, recently shared a memory of Michael Winter, whom she considered a mentor on independent living. She wrote:

I'll never forget being in Seoul riding the most accessible subway I've ever been on with my son. Later I asked my host from Rehabilitation International, Dr. Il Yung Lee, how did it happen? He said: "The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Michael Winter."

Many Americans got to know Michael in Eric Neudel's award-winning documentary, "Lives Worth Living," which chronicled the rise of the disability rights movement in the United States. The documentary recounts the historic day in 1990 when hundreds of disability rights advocates crawled and climbed up the steps of the Capitol

Building in Washington to protest the slow progress in passing the Americans with Disabilities Act. One person who was there recalled the scene as follows:

A young girl with cerebral palsy, fiercely determined to reach the top ("I'll take all NIGHT if I have to!"), inspired the admittedly out-of-shape Michael Winter to follow close behind. When the activists gathered en masse in the Capitol rotunda, Winter was approached by a young, able-bodied woman who was excited by the crowd. Turns out she was a tour guide, expecting to host a group of "handicapped" people on a tour through the capitol. "I have to tell you something," Winter wryly informed her. "I don't think these people are here for a tour."

Hundreds of disability rights activists are in Washington this week to celebrate the 23rd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. We also celebrate the contributions of leaders like Michael Winter, who are responsible for America's remarkable progress toward fulfilling the four great goals of the ADA—equal opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency. Despite this progress, we know that our journey is far from finished. We have not yet achieved the full promise of the ADA. But we go forward inspired by the memory and example of Michael Winter and other outstanding leaders in this movement.

Thank you, Michael Winter, for a job well done. Thank you for helping us to create a better, fairer, more inclusive and accessible world for people with disabilities.

OBSERVING TED STEVENS DAY

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, this upcoming Saturday marks the third time Alaskans from across my home State will join together to "get out and play" in memory of the life and legacy of Senator Ted Stevens.

Since Ted's passing nearly three years ago, we have followed his example by getting out and embracing Alaska's great outdoors on this fourth Saturday of July. On this day, as envisioned by Senator Stevens' family, we embody his passion for Alaska's unique wilderness, his love for fishing, and his immense affection for nature. We celebrate his life, one dedicated to public service—from his days as a pilot in World War II to his four decades in the United States Senate fighting for roads, buildings, and other infrastructure needs in a State as young as ours.

This year, Alaskans in communities across the State—from Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, and the Kenai Peninsula—are coming together for BBQ's, Potlucks, and fishing, while countless others take part in their own unique and special way.

We remember Ted Stevens, among many things, as one of Alaska's great leaders, the Alaskan of the 20th Century, and a tireless advocate for the 49th State. He was committed to our people, our economy, and the role we played in the success of America—from

national security to energy independence to our bountiful fisheries. As political as things get in our State and in Washington, DC, Uncle Ted had perspective: "The hell with politics, just do what's right for Alaska."

This weekend, however, is about Senator Stevens' deep love for the outdoors and adventure. It is as if this summer, one of the most gorgeous we have had back home in ages, Uncle Ted is looking down upon Alaskans and encouraging us to take up activities that require a little sweat, a little more effort than usual, maybe one that leaves us catching our breath afterwards. Whether one decides to walk or run, hike or climb, reel in a nice rainbow or salmon, take a spin on a bike or just play outside, I encourage Alaskans to spend some time this weekend getting out and enjoying our beautiful Alaskan Summer.

Mr. President, for Senator Stevens and the entire Stevens family: Let's get out and play.

Thank you Mr. President, I yield the floor.

TRIBUTE TO KEVIN COVERT

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish to recognize Kevin Covert, our human rights officer at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. Very shortly, he will move on to another assignment as is the usual practice at the Department of State. During his recent tour, Mr. Covert brought a remarkable level of initiative and leadership to his job. A diplomatic first responder to raids, attacks, and show trials, his was the face of American diplomacy there to listen to the stories of civil society leaders who found themselves branded foreign agents for simply working to better their own country. His handshake was there to remind those Russians who dared meet with him that the United States is committed to telling their story for the record and will not forget them—and Mr. Covert did just that as a lead drafter of the Russia section of the annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices as well as through objective and incisive reporting chronicling an assault on rights unprecedented in modern Russia. All the while, his composure, and likely a good sense of humor, enabled him to listen patiently to host government interlocutors as American concerns were disingenuously construed as so much meddling while he politely, and with good judgment and integrity, reminded his counterparts of their own freely undertaken commitments to the rule of law and democracy.

As chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission and a senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I have the regular opportunity, and distinct honor, to interact with the hard-working men and women of the Foreign Service. They do not wear uniforms, but they make numerous sacrifices, take significant risks, and serve our country honorably.

Our relations with Russia are at the heart of a truly comprehensive security and cooperation in Europe and I have paid close attention to this country in recent years. In that context, I am acutely aware of the challenges that our diplomats, serving in Russia under the leadership of Ambassador Mike McFaul, face. Over the past year, as a crackdown on fundamental freedoms gained scope and speed, professionals at our embassy in Russia never wavered in their support for the universal values that we as Americans hold especially dear. Our personnel, particularly those covering sensitive issues such as human rights, met adversity with poise and served our Nation with great dedication. They represent this country well and do us all proud.

Mr. Covert will be missed in Moscow by his colleagues at Post, as well as by countless Russians who got to know him in recent years. I salute Kevin Covert and all his State Department colleagues working the Russia beat during this difficult, but exciting, period of change.

TRIBUTE TO CAPTAIN JAMES T. LOEBLEIN

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a close friend of the Senate, CAPT James Loeblein. Over the past three years Captain Loeblein has served as the director of the Navy Senate liaison office.

Since Captain Loeblein arrived on the Senate deck he has escorted 37 codels to 42 countries. In addition to his travels, Captain Loeblein led his team of sailors with the highest degree of professionalism in support of every Member of the U.S. Senate.

Throughout his time serving in the Senate liaison office, I got to know Jim. Captain Loeblein is a native of Salisbury, NC. Jim received his commission as an ensign after he graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD, in May 1985. He went on to graduate from the Naval War College, Newport, RI, in 1997.

He has served as the executive officer aboard the USS *John S. McCain*, DDG 56. Captain Loeblein has also led sailors on multiple deployments commanding two strike group deployments and served as the sea combat commander for the Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group all in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Under Captain Loeblein's leadership and sharp instincts, his team has been instrumental in supporting the Senate's legislative responsibility to provide our sailors with the resources they need to carry out their mission. The Senate and our Nation are indebted for his service.

Next week, Captain Loeblein will officially be promoted to rear admiral, lower half. We wish him well as he prepares to take over as deputy commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central

Command in Manama, Bahrain. I want to thank Captain Loeblein for his service and congratulate him on this hard earned promotion.

TRIBUTE TO EDWARD J. LODGE

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, I rise today on behalf of myself and Senator CRAPO to give recognition to U.S. District Judge Edward J. Lodge, the longest serving jurist in the great State of Idaho. This month, Judge Lodge marked 50 years on the bench in combined State and Federal service.

His long and notable career on the bench began in 1963 when he was selected probate judge in Canyon County. Judge Lodge was then appointed by Governor Robert Smylie just 2 years later to serve on the Idaho State District Court. He was the youngest person to be appointed a district judge.

After 23 years there, his name was put forth by U.S. Senator James McClure for a seat on the U.S. District Court for the District of Idaho. President George H.W. Bush appointed him in 1989 and shortly thereafter, his nomination was confirmed in the U.S. Senate by unanimous consent.

Judge Lodge has earned the respect of his colleagues as a jurist who, no matter the pressure or how big the case, works to ensure a trial is fair. Throughout the years, he has consistently received high ratings from the Idaho State Bar.

Though it may say more about my State than I would like, Judge Lodge is believed to have presided over more murder cases than any other judge in Idaho. And, in fact, he may just be the only judge who presided over two such cases simultaneously. These cases and the many others upon which he has presided distinguish Judge Lodge as a lifelong student of the law and as someone wholly dedicated to serving the people in judicial matters.

A native of Caldwell, ID, Judge Lodge earned a bachelor's degree from the College of Idaho in nearby Nampa, where he graduated cum laude. He then went north to the University of Idaho in Moscow to earn his juris doctorate.

Many may not know that throughout his education—from high school through university—he was an outstanding athlete. He was named three times an All-American in football at Caldwell High School, Boise Junior College and the College of Idaho. In addition, he was a Golden Gloves champion and successfully participated in track-and-field. These accomplishments landed him a place in the Boise State Athletic Hall of Fame and the College of Idaho Hall of Fame.

Judge Lodge is married to long serving Idaho State Senator Patti Anne Lodge. They have three grown children: Mary-Jeanne, Edward and Anne-Marie.

Idaho is proud to call Judge Lodge a native son.