

is the staff director for the majority and John Bonsell is the staff director for the minority—I have yet to call them when issues come up that we haven't been able to get this done, and this is kind of unusual. This doesn't happen in the Senate in very many committees.

I believe, and have always said, the NDAA is the most important bill of the year, keeping in mind we have actually passed one for 52 consecutive years. This is something that has to be done.

We adopted the National Defense Authorization Act on May 22, as the chairman said, 25 to 1, which doesn't happen very often around here. It contains a lot of vital work we have to do and it is within the budget caps.

I think it supports the training of the troops, the maintenance and modernization, research and development, and the pay and benefits. These are tough issues to negotiate, but we have done that, and we have it ready for more action.

What we don't want is what happened last year. Last year we had a lot of amendments. We on the Republican side were wanting to have all these amendments. I think we are entitled to amendments. We did a count last year of how many amendments were on the average bill. It was something like 140 amendments. We didn't have nearly that many requests, but we were able to get them in.

If we start now, we can do that. So I wish to tell my Republican colleagues that I don't want them to come back and start complaining later on, if we don't start getting amendments now so we can hash them out, find out what is acceptable, and find out where the opposition would be. But we don't want to wait until the end of the year.

It got so close last year, as we were approaching December 31, and we all know that if we don't have a Defense authorization bill by that time, hazard pay is at risk, reenlistment bonuses won't be paid. Stop and think about the cost. Right now, if we were to hire a person in training to be an F-22 pilot, the cost is \$9 million. However, the retention bonus for over a 9-year period could be \$225,000. Look at the economics of it. We don't want that to happen.

Last year we were able to get a bill. It is the first time I have ever participated in a "big four" meeting. Actually, three of us sat down because we had one no-show. So three of us put together a bill in a period of time, tried to consider all the amendments, and most people were pretty satisfied with it, but that is not the way it is supposed to happen.

We are going to have a lot of amendments. We always do. The only way we are going to be able to do this is to get this out on the floor. I think it needs to be passed before the end of the fiscal year. So I invite my friends on both sides of the aisle to bring down their amendments.

Let me again say how appreciative I am personally of having worked with

CARL LEVIN in this process and with the staff, who have been so easy to work with, and so competent and professional.

Mr. LEVIN. If the Senator will yield.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. I thank Senator GRASSLEY for his patience.

Senator INHOFE and his staff worked extraordinarily well with us on this side of the aisle. It is a bipartisan bill. It is a bipartisan committee. Senator INHOFE has helped in a very important way to maintain this bipartisan tradition of our committee. I thank him for the remarks, and I thank him and his staff.

I hope our colleagues will listen to what we both are urging them to do. Let us take a look at the amendments now, instead of waiting and waiting and waiting. Because if we look at amendments now, we increase our chances of getting this bill to the floor earlier rather than later.

I thank the Presiding Officer and my friend from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I come to the floor to address two issues, a shorter issue on immigration and a longer issue on the student loan program, particularly in reference to legislation offered earlier this morning.

On immigration, this morning, Secretary Johnson appeared before the Judiciary Committee. We had a chance to ask a number of questions related to the administration's release of 36,000 criminal aliens, for what reasons the Department voluntarily did release them—especially convicted murderers—and what they are doing to track down and keep track of where these people are. I didn't get answers, but the Secretary committed to respond in writing about the matter, and I thank him ahead of time for doing that.

I also asked about data on countries that refuse to cooperate in taking back their nationals. Today I am introducing a bill with Senator INHOFE to fix this situation and allow the government to detain foreign nationals who pose a threat to our homeland. I have a longer statement on that issue.

Finally, I mention that the Secretary of Homeland Security answered a lot of questions related to unaccompanied children coming to the United States, mostly from Central America, and entering our southern border.

I agree we do have a humanitarian problem. These are vulnerable children whose lives are on the line. They are escorted by strangers for the most part, away from their families in some cases, and each of these young people probably not understanding what lies ahead.

When in custody, our government makes an attempt to reunite them with their families. However, sometimes the government is handing them over to nonrelatives, which concerns me because of the potential of placing them in the hands of pimps and traffickers.

As I said this morning in the committee, these children are being lured into these dire circumstances by false promises. That is evident from the interviews being done with the children.

Already, border agents and intelligence analysts have been interviewing the youth to understand why they are migrating at this particular time. Today I received a document that summarizes the findings of these interviewers. The document, while it does not have any author or official seal, was apparently done to summarize the interviews of individuals crossing the border along the McAllen, Rio Grande City, and Weslaco stations.

Two hundred thirty subjects were interviewed from several countries. An overwhelming majority said they were coming to the United States to take advantage of the new U.S. law that grants a free pass to unaccompanied children and female adults traveling with minors. That so-called free pass refers to a Notice to Appear document issued and then saying they are released on their own recognizance pending a hearing.

There is no new law. There is a new bill that passed the Senate 1 year ago but not through the House of Representatives, and it may never be. So there is no new law granting a free pass to unaccompanied children and female adults traveling with minors.

Specifically, this report states:

A high percentage of the subjects interviewed stated their family members in the U.S. urged them to travel immediately, because the United States Government was only issuing immigration [free passes] until the end of June 2014.

The report states that:

The issue of free passes was the main reason provided by 95 percent, plus or minus, of the interviewed subjects.

So while I understand there are a lot of factors involved, we cannot ignore the fact that these children are coming or are being forced here because of a belief on their part that they will never be deported.

We can say that is thanks to the Obama administration because this administration has refused to be serious about immigration enforcement. The President needs to send a signal right away, if he wants to stop this catastrophe from happening, that the laws will be enforced.

Instead of reviewing deportation policies and suggesting ways to remove fewer people, the President should task Secretary Johnson with finding ways to actually enforce the laws we have on the books.

We must send a very strong signal that there is no benefit and no avenue

for them to remain in the United States. We must do this so the children are not lured into dire situations in the future. Even before they cross the border into the United States, they are probably already in circumstances we would consider a dire situation.

STUDENT LOAN DEBT

Mr. GRASSLEY. In fiscal year 2014, the U.S. Department of Education will make about \$112 billion in Federal direct loans to students. The Federal Government already holds more than \$1 trillion in student loan debt. So that makes the U.S. Department of Education one of the country's largest lenders. Total student loan debt in the United States is now second only to mortgage debt, and about 90 percent of all student loans happen to be issued by the Federal Government.

When elected officials say we have a student loan crisis because too many students owe more than they can afford to repay, we have to keep in mind who it was and is that made those loans to students in the first place.

It was, in fact, Uncle Sam.

What is one of the first things a Federal regulator looks at when a private bank issues a loan? They look at whether the bank has confirmed the ability of the borrower to repay. Federal student loans are given out without a credit check or any analysis of the student's ability to repay the loans in the first place.

The fastest growing category of student loans is Federal unsubsidized student loans, which are given out regardless of need. That means that students across this country get an award letter from their college saying they are eligible for thousands of dollars in Federal loans, even though in many cases they may not need all of those loans to cover their tuition and other costs. Colleges are required to offer the full amount of Federal student loans for which the student is eligible even if a financial aid counselor at that university knows that a student is borrowing more than the student needs and even if that counselor realizes they will have trouble repaying. If a private bank followed these same tactics and gave out loans on these terms, that bank would be accused of predatory lending. These easy-money policies may even be helping fuel tuition increases, which then obviously makes the problem even worse. A Federal government trying to help a student and at the same time maybe giving incentives to increase tuition actually is not helping that student in the long run.

Between Federal student loan policies that effectively encourage overborrowing and the lack of good jobs for college graduates in this current economy, it is no wonder that so many college graduates find themselves in over their heads with student loan debt.

Unfortunately, for all the concerns we have heard expressed on the Senate floor about excessive student loan debt,

my colleagues on the other side of the aisle decided to play election-year politics with this issue rather than tackle any of the root causes of the problem. In fact, when it comes to economic growth and job creation, the first rule ought to be do no harm. By including yet another massive tax increase, the bill the Senate declined to take up would have only added to the list of tax and regulatory burdens currently choking our economy.

We should be intensely focused on removing burdens to economic growth and as a result have some job creation. Instead, the policies we see from the other side of the aisle seem to be based on the old European model of accepting anemic economic growth and trying to make up for it with debt-financed government handouts for as long as possible.

I just referred to an old European model because many countries in Europe have already rejected this failed approach and instead have sought to reform entitlements, cut spending, and reduce taxes—measures we ought to be taking right here in the United States. Our goal should be to expand opportunities for young people and the middle class and not add them to the welfare state.

Incidentally, the President's recent so-called Executive action on student loans shows that he shares the same outlook of assuming a stagnant economy for the foreseeable future. He is talking about making people who graduated years ago retroactively eligible for programs enacted in 2010 that allow students to lower their monthly payments if they have a lower income. First of all, that happens to be a very transparent admission that many students who graduated near the beginning of President Obama's first term in office still don't have good-paying jobs halfway through the second term. What he doesn't tell you is that when you lower your student loan payments, you will pay off your loan more slowly and obviously accumulate more interest. In other words, you will eventually end up paying a lot more to Uncle Sam than you otherwise would have. When banks were offering adjustable-rate or interest-only mortgages, they were criticized for taking advantage of borrowers who would be faced with bigger payments down the road.

The pay-as-you-earn program may be useful tools short term for those in distress, but it will cost every one of them in the long term; that is, assuming you ever get a job that pays well. However, the second part of the program says that if you still haven't found a job that pays well enough to pay off your loan after 10 years, your loan will be forgiven if you work for the government or a nonprofit or after 20 years if you work in the private sector, which apparently is considered less worthwhile. And who foots the bill when these people get their loans forgiven? The American taxpayer will pay for those people's college loans.

Creighton University Professor Ernie Goss has analyzed the President's plan and thinks it is a poor use of taxpayer funds. This is what he said:

A lot of these men and women that are out there working don't have kids in college, won't have kids in college, and it's a big transfer of income to those of us who have university educations or particularly those of us who are in university education.

So increasing Federal subsidies for colleges at the expense of the American taxpayers who work hard to pay for their own bills just encourages colleges to keep increasing tuition.

Furthermore, expanding a program designed to help student loan borrowers who still cannot afford their student loan payments 10 or 20 years after graduation looks a lot like planning for further economic stagnation typical of the last 4 or 5 years rather than focusing on improving economic growth and resultant job creation.

The political messaging bill the Senate declined to take up today would also do nothing to address the problems of students borrowing more than they will be able to afford to repay in the first place. I have a bill that will help with that problem.

The Higher Education Act already contains a requirement for colleges to provide counseling to new borrowers of Federal student loans; however, the current disclosures in the law do not do enough to ensure that students understand what kind of debt they will face after graduation. My bill, which I have entitled "Know Before You Owe Federal Student Loan Act," strengthens the current student loan counseling requirements by making the counseling an annual requirement before new loans are disbursed rather than just for first-time borrowers.

My bill adds several key components to the information institutions of higher education are required to share with students as part of loan counseling. Perhaps most significantly, colleges would have to provide an estimate of a student's loan debt-to-income ratio upon graduation. This would be based on the starting wages for that student's program of study and the estimated student loan debt the student will likely take out to complete the program. That way, students will have a very real picture of the student loan payments they will face and whether they will be able to afford those payments with their likely future income.

Students will also be provided with information about the higher risk of default if they have a projected loan debt-to-income ratio greater than 12 percent. They will be told that they should borrow only the minimum amount necessary to cover expenses and that they do not have to accept the full amount of the loans offered.

Students will also be given options for reducing borrowing through scholarships, reduced expenses, work-study or other work opportunities.

Because adding an extra year of study can significantly increase student loan debt, an explanation will be