

CORINTHIAN COLLEGES AND THE INTRODUCTION OF THE CLASS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MAXINE WATERS) for 5 minutes.

Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California. Mr. Speaker, next month, almost 4 million students will graduate from college, but on Monday, more than 16,000 students—students who have sacrificed countless hours and resources—were robbed of the opportunity to achieve this goal.

These students are the victims of Corinthian Colleges, which closed its doors yesterday amidst ongoing State and Federal investigations regarding the school's fraudulent and predatory recruiting tactics. Corinthian's closure marks the end of one of the Nation's largest for-profit colleges, an industry wrought with fraud and deception.

The story of Corinthian starts with the rising cost of college, combined with repeated cuts to other affordable public educational options like community college or HBCUs. The combination of these factors led to the explosive growth of a for-profit college industry that quickly began to prey on low-income, minority, and veteran students by enticing them with the false promise of a quality education and good jobs. These promises were simply untrue.

Corinthian repeatedly misrepresented the quality of its programs and lied about the job placement rates of its graduates. By doing so, Corinthian lured in the country's most vulnerable student populations, whose Federal loan and grant dollars were used to line the pockets of its CEO, investors, and shareholders.

As a result, Corinthian and the for-profit college industry as a whole absorbed one-quarter of all the Federal student aid, more than \$30 billion annually. During the Great Recession, Corinthian alone nearly doubled its revenue due to the enrollment of millions of vulnerable unemployed workers who were even more susceptible to the enticing offer of a quality education and future employment.

Make no mistake, these people preyed on at-risk students and workers. They took advantage of the next generation of America's leaders, and they used the economic distress and uncertainty our young people were dealing with for their own economic gain.

As Corinthian continued its deceptive practices, the school had 162 failing academic programs, more than any other for-profit college in the country.

□ 1215

During this Congress, I have continued my lifetime of work on this subject, which began in the California General Assembly. I have repeatedly called on the Department of Education to close Corinthian and offer full loan forgiveness for all its students. Last month, I was proud to endorse the Co-

rinthian 100 and their efforts to obtain full debt relief.

Today, joined by my Senate colleague, Democratic Whip DICK DURBIN, I am introducing the CLASS Act, a piece of legislation that will help restore students' legal rights against for-profit institutions.

We need this for a key reason. As Corinthian knowingly deceived its students, it also included in its enrollment agreements provisions that limited students' access to courts and shielded Corinthian from liability for its misconduct. These included mandatory arbitration and measures that prohibited students from joining together to form a class action lawsuit.

As a result, even though Corinthian Colleges has closed its doors, students are still suffering because they do not have a legal outlet to address their harms.

If students are to receive any relief, they are at the mercy of the Department of Education and the good faith of Corinthian Colleges itself, the same institution that has already deceived them and saddled them with debt.

The CLASS Act attempts to remedy this problem by prohibiting any school receiving Federal funding from including any restrictions on students' ability to pursue legal claims against it in court.

Essentially, this bill serves as the students' strongest line of defense against any future fraudulent conduct by restoring their rights to have their day in court.

I encourage all of my colleagues to take a stand against the practices of Corinthian Colleges and other predatory for-profit institutions by supporting this legislation and fighting for our students' right to an honest, quality education.

Mr. Speaker and Members, we still have a lot of for-profit colleges out there that are treating our students in the same manner that Corinthian has—deceiving them—and who are guilty of fraud.

We must take responsibility in this Congress to protect our students.

RAISE THE WAGE ACT

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

Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, this is an important and significant week here in the Hall of the people's House because, this week, we are going to be introducing the Raise the Wage Act.

This argument has been going on for quite some time now; yet, frustratingly, despite all the time and energy that has been focused on this issue, the Federal minimum wage still has not been raised in almost a decade.

Depending on what measure of inflation you use, the minimum wage in real dollars is either at its lowest level in 50 years or its lowest level in 70

years. Either way is bad for American workers.

I want to particularly combat the perception some have that all minimum wage workers are teenagers. Actually, the average age of a minimum wage worker is 33 years old.

Any time you go into the local McDonald's or Burger King in my neighborhood, you can see in person that we are dealing with not just teen workers, but many who are in their thirties, forties, fifties, and many seniors who need to work in order to supplement their income.

I also want to highlight this important fact: 18.7 million children—almost 19 million children—are supported by parents who work full time at minimum wage jobs.

We are not talking about a government handout. We are not talking about helping those who aren't attempting to help themselves. We are talking about making sure a fair day's work actually pays. We are talking about rewarding hard-working Americans.

By the way, if you don't work a minimum wage job—you are just an ordinary taxpayer—you, too, would benefit from increasing the minimum wage.

Here is why. We have, right now in America, the highest percentage of minimum wage workers who are currently getting government assistance—food stamps, Medicaid, and other sorts of programs—because, despite working full time, they make so little, they qualify for government assistance.

By raising their wage, we would decrease the poverty rate and decrease the amount of money needed to be spent on public assistance programs.

Mr. Speaker, this is an issue about fairness; it is an issue about justice, but it is also an issue about what kind of an America we believe in, one that rewards hard work, one that rewards those who are going to work every day and working for a living, or one that just says the wealthiest one-tenth of 1 percent can continue to grow at the greatest rate of income in American history, while the other 70 percent of Americans are losing their share of income. That is wrong.

We believe in an America in which those who work hard and play by the rules should benefit. One way of ensuring this will happen is raising the minimum wage now.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 21 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. McCARTHY) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

Reverend Dr. Jim Birchfield, First Presbyterian Church, Houston, Texas, offered the following prayer:

Eternal God, we give You thanks for the gift of this new day and for the promise that You are with us. Thank You for Your grace, Your love, and the many blessings that are ours through You.

Forgive us for falling short of Your grace and Your call upon our lives, and help us to walk humbly, serve graciously, and lead righteously.

Guide this body today in the work that You have called them to. Grant strength, wisdom, courage, and compassion to the leadership and to each Member of this House, the Senate, our President, and all the leaders of our government.

Finally, we pray for our Nation. Grant us peace and unity. Call out the best in us, and help us to care for and serve the least of those among us.

Bless these leaders, that they might be a blessing to the world.

To Your glory, Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from California (Mr. LOWENTHAL) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. LOWENTHAL led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WELCOMING REVEREND DR. JIM BIRCHFIELD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor for me to be here today to watch my father-in-law, the Reverend Dr. Jim Birchfield, speak in the House this afternoon.

Reverend Dr. Jim Birchfield is a man whom I have known over the past nearly decade that I have known my wife and her family. They are here with us in the gallery this afternoon. He is a man of utmost integrity who has devoted his life to, as he said, serving those among us that are most in need.

Through his ministry at First Presbyterian Church and, prior to that, in Newport Beach, California, and the Greater Los Angeles area, he and his family have consistently dedicated

themselves to spreading the Word of God and making sure that we, as a community and a country, remain focused on those who need our help most.

He has spread that Word throughout the entire world, from Sub-Saharan Africa, Egypt, and Malawi, to recent trips to Israel, and literally the world over, as he continues to expand his ministry and touch those who are in need of additional services.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful today to be with my father-in-law, Reverend Dr. Birchfield, and to have this moment to share with him and his family this morning.

JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING ACT

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, under the leadership of Senator CORNYN and Senator WYDEN, the Senate has unanimously passed the bipartisan Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act. This bill will help stop modern-day slavery here in America. The House has passed a similar bill under the sponsorship of CAROLYN MALONEY and myself.

We have acknowledged international human trafficking for years. Now, we acknowledge and put sufficient resources behind the fight against the buying and selling of human beings. Slavery in America is not going to be tolerated.

The bill penalizes traffickers and buyers. Mr. Speaker, buyers have escaped the long arm of the law for too long. The bill also treats trafficking victims as victims and not criminals.

We can no longer deny the scourge of rape and abuse of our children. I strongly encourage the House leadership to immediately bring up the Senate compromise, Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, for a vote.

Victims are people, too. Let it be known that America's kids are not for sale, and woe be to anyone that sells them or buys them in the marketplace of slavery.

And that is just the way it is.

BLACK APRIL

(Mr. LOWENTHAL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Mr. Speaker, 40 years ago, the fall of Saigon ended the war in Vietnam and began the journey for hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese who were forced to flee their land for foreign shores like America.

This April, we remember those Vietnamese, Americans, and their allies who lost their lives in Vietnam and for the many thousands of boat people who perished while fleeing Vietnam on the "journey to freedom."

Today, in communities throughout our Nation, Vietnamese Americans

contribute daily to the tapestry that we call American life.

On this 40th anniversary of Black April, we also cannot forget the continuing struggle in Vietnam for democracy, freedom, and basic human rights.

Today, I am introducing a resolution commemorating this historic event, remembering those who gave their lives, and honoring the Vietnamese community in the United States.

CLEAN POWER PLAN IN MINNESOTA

(Mr. EMMER of Minnesota asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to raise awareness about the questionable requirements the State of Minnesota has been given by the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Power Plan.

The Clean Power Plan mandates that Minnesota reduce carbon emissions for power plants by 41 percent by the year 2030, while requiring lower reductions in other States. The EPA has failed to recognize and credit Minnesota for already decreasing its emissions by 13 percent between 2005 and 2011.

Not only is this plan patently unfair to Minnesotans, but it will hurt consumers across our Nation. Electricity prices will increase for many businesses and families, disproportionately impacting those who are already struggling to make ends meet.

Additionally, according to the Cato Institute, the plan will only reduce the average worldwide temperature by about two-hundredths of a degree Celsius, and that will take almost 100 years.

I encourage the EPA to reconsider the Clean Power Plan, while keeping in mind the work many States have already done on their own to reduce emissions.

TRIBUTE TO EARL HARGROVE

(Mr. HOYER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I will place a statement into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD paying tribute to the memory of my dear friend, Earl Hargrove, who passed earlier this month.

Earl was a very respected figure in Maryland's Fifth District; in Maryland; and, indeed, nationally. He built a successful specialty decorations and event planning business and served our Nation in the Marine Corps.

Everyone has seen Earl Hargrove's work in America because he did many of the inaugural floats for our Presidents; so when you watched television, you were watching the work of Earl Hargrove, his family, and coworkers.

I am honored to celebrate his life and legacy today, and I hope my colleagues will join me in offering condolences to Earl's wife of six decades, Gloria Love