

said that veterans found guilty of capital crimes could not be buried in our national veterans cemeteries. At the time, you may remember, the country was still reeling from the Oklahoma City bombing. And veterans everywhere were justifiably appalled that Timothy McVeigh, a military veteran, could be buried with full military honors.

Now, McVeigh did not receive that burial. But a major problem we discovered was that the law was not actively enforced for others until 2006.

Since then, the VA has relied on an “honor system,” which requires family members to willingly report their relative’s criminal record.

In 2013, Congress once again sought to protect our VA national cemeteries by passing a law to explicitly allow the VA to remove veterans from cemeteries if they had been convicted of a Federal or State capital crime. However, this law does not extend to veterans buried between 1997 and 2013, a time period that includes George Emery Siple.

That is why I have introduced Bertie’s Respect for National Cemeteries Act. What this law will do is require Veterans Affairs to take every reasonable action to ensure that a veteran is eligible to be buried, including searching public criminal records. It will clarify Congress’ original intent by providing Veterans Affairs the explicit authority to remove veterans convicted of capital crimes who were wrongly buried after 1997. And it will specifically provide for the removal of George Emery Siple from Indiantown Gap National Cemetery.

This bill really only reaffirms what Congress intended in the first place. And it enjoys the support of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

There were precedents for the removal of convicted murderers from veterans cemeteries—from Arlington National Cemetery and VA cemeteries in Michigan and Oregon, to name just a few.

Additionally, nothing in the bill would withdraw previous military honors, such as Purple Hearts or medals for valor, otherwise earned by the deceased veterans.

The discussion of military veterans who have been convicted of murder often raises the issue of mental health treatment and posttraumatic stress disorder. There is no question that PTSD is a real condition affecting many servicemen and -women, and I have always stood for funding the evaluation and treatment of those who may be afflicted.

That said, those who have been convicted of capital murder by our judicial system have been declared guilty of the worst offense possible, and any mitigating factors would have been considered at trial and sentencing.

I don’t think it is too much to say that murderers should not be buried next to true American heroes. And the memories of victims like Bertie Smith should not be disregarded.

I ask my colleagues for their support in saying that real, true honor really means something in our national military cemeteries.

HONORING OFFICER GREGG BENNER OF THE RIO RANCHO POLICE DEPARTMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Officer Gregg Benner of the Rio Rancho Police Department, who was killed in the line of duty on May 25.

I offer my heartfelt condolences to the family and loved ones of Officer Benner as they mourn the loss of a husband, father, grandfather, and friend who was taken from them far too soon.

Officer Benner dedicated his life to protecting his community and his country. From his career in the United States Air Force to his last 4 years serving as a member of the Rio Rancho Police Department, Officer Benner put his health and safety on the line to make us safer.

The same was true last week. When most of us were settling down after a long Memorial Day weekend with family and friends, Officer Benner was doing his duty to protect the people of Rio Rancho. When he didn’t return that evening, Officer Benner left behind a legacy of valor of service.

The loss of any police officer is a painful reminder of the dangers that they face each and every day. While we are shaken by Officer Benner’s loss, we can take comfort in the memories that he left behind for all who knew him and the example that he set for all those in the community.

Rio Rancho is a tight-knit community, and while a tragedy such as this is unexpected and shocking, the response has brought out the best of its residents, who have displayed an outpouring of support and sympathy. My thoughts and prayers are with Officer Benner’s family, friends, fellow officers, and the entire Rio Rancho community, and I hope that they find peace in this most difficult time.

Officer Benner, thank you for your service, and may you rest in peace.

STUDENT LOAN DEBT

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

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, costs simply explode on anything that the Federal Government subsidizes because there are simply not the same incentives or pressures to hold down costs as there are in the private sector.

Over the last several weeks, many thousands of young people have graduated from our colleges and universities burdened with sizable student loan debts.

It shocks the students of today when I tell them that tuition cost only \$90 a quarter my freshman year at the University of Tennessee in 1965–66—\$270 for a whole school year. I once heard House Minority Whip STENY HOYER say it cost only \$87 a semester when he started at the University of Maryland.

Students today think the Federal student loan program is one of the best things that ever happened to them. Actually, it may be one of the worst. Until that program started in the mid-1960s, college tuition and fees went up very slowly, roughly at the rate of inflation.

After the Federal Government decided to “help” students and start subsidizing these costs, tuition and fees started going up three or four times the rate of inflation almost every year.

Last year, columnist Kathleen Parker wrote in The Washington Post that since 1985, the cost of higher education has increased 538 percent, while the Consumer Price Index—inflation—over the same period has gone up 121 percent.

Colleges and universities were able to tamp down opposition to fee increases by telling students not to worry, they could just borrow the money.

When I was an undergraduate at UT and later in law school at George Washington, students could work part time, as I always did, and pay all their college expenses. No one got out of school with a debt because of tuition and fees. Now almost everyone does.

Now, 40 million Americans owe money on student loans. Outstanding student loan debts now total over \$1.3 trillion. Some analysts think it may be a bubble about to burst.

Floyd Norris, writing in the International New York Times, said: “Student loans are creating large problems that may persist for decades. They will impoverish some borrowers and serve as a drain on economic activity.”

Hedge fund manager James Altucher wrote that “we’re graduating a generation of indentured students.”

Ohio University economist Richard Vedder several years ago wrote a book entitled, “Going Broke by Degree.”

Richard Vedder, in an article last August, wrote that “a political storm is brewing in Washington over the consequences of rising college costs.” He added that “the biggest single cause of this financial problem, and a contributor to many other weaknesses in our economy, is the dysfunctional, Byzantine system of Federal financial assistance for college students.”

Mr. Vedder pointed out that before the late 1970s, Federal financial aid programs for colleges were modest in size, and tuition went up an average of only 1 percent above the inflation rate.

“Since 1978,” he wrote, “in an era of rapidly growing Federal financial assistance programs, annual tuition increases have been 3 to 4 percent a year beyond the inflation rate.”

In 1987, William Bennett, the Secretary of Education, said: “Increases in

financial aid have enabled colleges and universities to raise their tuition, confident that Federal loan subsidies will help cushion the increase.”

From 1939–1964, Federal student aid—mainly the GI bill—averaged just 2.5 percent of university spending.

From 2002–2014, Federal student loan aid spending averaged a whopping 33 percent of university spending.

Several things, Mr. Speaker, could and should be done to start helping solve this problem.

First, Federal and State legislators, parents, and even students themselves should speak out against tuition increases higher than the rate of inflation.

Secondly, colleges and universities that hold these increases down, or hopefully someday even lower their costs, should be given priority and rewarded in Federal and State grants and appropriations.

Third, the Congress and State legislatures should hold hearings that feature people who have been victimized by taking on heavy student loan debts at the start of their careers.

Fourth, every college or university that receives Federal money—99.9 percent—should be required to give financial counseling or at least some type of simple, easy-to-understand document to every person receiving a student loan warning about potential problems.

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Lastly, but most important of all, Federal and State governments should give incentives to schools that require professors to teach classes rather than writing for obscure journals or doing esoteric research that produces no tangible results.

Too many professors have lost their desire to teach. They seem to think 6 hours a week is heavy load. The result is that too many students cannot get the classes they need to graduate, and it is now taking 5 or 6 years to get a 4-year degree.

This is a very serious, fast-growing problem, Mr. Speaker, that needs major reforms sooner rather than later.

PRIORITIZING ONLINE THREAT ENFORCEMENT ACT

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

Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, imagine waking up every morning with the dread that you will face hundreds of violent threats as soon as you get to work.

Imagine that, while you are in your office, people threaten to sexually assault you, and they know where you live, when you are home, and who your family members are. Maybe they even show you the weapon they will use in the future to harm you. We would never tolerate this in our offices, but this is a daily reality for women online.

Right now, millions of women and girls are online, navigating their personal and professional lives; yet women will be targeted with the most severe types of online threats and harassment at a rate 27 times higher than that of men. Although these threats occur online, there is nothing virtual about their devastating impacts on women's lives.

Meet Jessica Valenti, a journalist who founded a site that features topics like women in the media, women's health, and LGBT rights. The price Jessica pays for creating this forum and expressing a feminist point of view on the Internet is an unrelenting barrage of rape and death threats.

After threats forced her to leave her home, to change her bank accounts, and to change her phone number, she contacted the FBI. The FBI advised her to never walk outside by herself and to leave her home until the threats blow over. The threats continue today, 4 years later.

In Pennsylvania, a woman described her terror after her abuser announced on Facebook that he planned to tie her up, put her in a trunk, pull out her teeth one by one, and then her nails, chop her into pieces, but keep her alive long enough to feel the pain.

Then there is the story of my constituent, Brianna Wu, a video game developer who had to flee her home with her family in the middle of the night after specific threats to rape and to kill her and her husband. Her online attackers released her home address and described in graphic detail the acts of violence they were planning.

Another woman moved nine times in an 18-month period out of fear of online threats. She moved across the country and changed her job four times just to stay safe.

None of the people who made these threats has been prosecuted, and most of the examples I have of online threats that women, including myself, have received are too vile and obscene to share on the House floor. In Jessica Valenti's words: “When people say you should be raped and killed for years on end, it takes a toll on your soul.”

For Jessica and Brianna and other victims of severe threats online, there are huge financial and professional impacts. They have lost work opportunities and have spent money on legal advice, protective services, and temporary housing.

They have had to pay to have their personal information scrubbed from Web sites. This is a significant price to pay just to remain an active participant of an online economy.

What has been our response? In a 3-year period, of an estimated 2.5 million cyber stalking cases, only 10 were federally prosecuted. A judge in Massachusetts recently told one victim who works in technology and has suffered terrifying threats from an ex-boyfriend to simply go offline.

When I asked the FBI about the investigation and prosecution of online

violence against women, they told me it is not a priority. By failing to address the realities of changing technology and a changing economy, we are failing these women.

It is not okay to call this an Internet problem. It is not okay to say to women that this is just the way things are. It is not okay to tell women to change their behavior, to withhold their opinions, and to stay off the Internet altogether, just to avoid severe threats.

For decades, women who have been victims of sexual assault and abuse have been told they have provoked their abusers by what they wore or what they have said. We have worked hard to change that culture; yet, by not taking these cases seriously, we send a clear message that, when women express opinions online, they are asking for it.

That is why I am calling on the Department of Justice to enforce the laws that are already on the books and take these investigations and prosecutions seriously. The Prioritizing Online Threat Enforcement Act would give the Department of Justice and the FBI the resources and the mandate to investigate and enforce the Federal laws on cyber threats.

It is not Congress' job to police the Internet, but we have a responsibility to make sure that women are able to fully participate in our economy. I urge my colleagues to support this crucial bill.

Let's keep the Internet open and safe for all voices.

FUNDING THE STRATOSPHERIC OBSERVATORY FOR INFRARED ASTRONOMY PROGRAM

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

Mr. KNIGHT. Mr. Speaker, I want to first thank the House Appropriations Committee for fully funding the Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy, SOFIA, program.

The SOFIA program is something that is stationed in my district. It is a 747 airplane with a 100-inch telescope in the back. Some people ask why we would need this or why this is something that NASA is so excited about. It is because we have certain programs that are in the atmosphere, and on the ground today, many of them have restrictions, but SOFIA doesn't. SOFIA does things that other telescopes just can't do.

First, it flies at 40,000 feet, so it gets above the water vapor. That is something that we just can't do from the ground. We can't do that type of science, those observations—we just can't do it—yet SOFIA does something that many other telescopes can't do.

It does something that the Hubble can't do. It does something that our beloved James Webb Space Telescope, which is going to be launched in the next couple of years, cannot do. It