

Maine System will lose a vital resource in support of their higher education goals. Public universities already struggle to provide sufficient financial aid to students, especially the lower and middle class who currently benefit from this program.

Eliminating the Perkins Loan Program will either force students to borrow through less desirable loan programs, or universities to make even more difficult cuts in an attempt to fund the gap from the loss of this program.

I sincerely hope that the students enrolled at all of the institutions in the University of Maine System, and all across the state, can count on your support of this vitally important and proven program. Also, I hope you can help facilitate a budget solution that does not impact funding in other critical areas relating to higher education and other federal loan programs.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your time and we appreciate your hard work and support.

Sincerely,

JAMES H. PAGE,

Chancellor, University of Maine System.

Ms. COLLINS. Again, I want to commend my colleagues, including the Presiding Officer, Senator PORTMAN, and my colleague from Wisconsin who has been a leader on this issue as well.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

AIRPORT AND AIRWAY EXTENSION ACT OF 2015

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 3614, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3614) to amend title 49, United States Code, to extend authorizations for the airport improvement program, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the funding and expenditure authority of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, that the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements related to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 3614) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

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

TSA OFFICE OF INSPECTION ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2015—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

FEDERAL PERKINS LOAN PROGRAM

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, much attention has appropriately been focused upon our next 36 hours in the

Congress. A lot of attention—again, appropriately—focused on whether there would be a government shutdown for failure to pass a continuing resolution. Now we believe that is, hopefully, going to be avoided.

In just under 36 hours, there are a number of other vital programs that will expire, lapse, or sunset if this Congress does not take appropriate action. I am here to join my colleagues, Senator COLLINS and, in a moment, Senator AYOTTE, to call attention to one of those critical programs, one of those vital programs, and that is the Federal Perkins Loan Program, the authorization of which will expire in less than 36 hours if we do not take collective action in this body.

I am here today to call on our colleagues across the aisle to join me in supporting the extension of the Federal Perkins Loan Program. Already we have seen encouraging bipartisan support for the program here in the Senate. The Presiding Officer, Senator COLLINS, Senator KIRK, Senator AYOTTE, and just today Senator THUNE have all joined me and more than 20 Democrats last week in submitting a resolution highlighting the importance of the Federal Perkins Loan Program and urging its extension.

Yesterday our colleagues in the House of Representatives unanimously passed a measure that would extend the program for 1 year. I am hoping this body will do exactly the same. While I look forward to a broader conversation about improving Federal support for students as we look to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, we simply cannot sit idly by and watch the Federal Perkins Loan Program expire as America's students are left with such uncertainty.

Since 1958, the Federal Perkins Loan Program has been successful in helping Americans access affordable higher education with low-interest loans for students who cannot borrow or afford more expensive private student loans. In my home State of Wisconsin, the program provides more than 20,000 low-income students with more than \$41 million in aid. The impact of this program isn't just isolated to the Badger State. In fact, the Federal Perkins Loan Program aids over one-half million students with financial need each year, across 1,500 institutions of higher education. The schools originate, service, and collect the fixed-interest-rate loans. What is more, institutions maintain loans available for future students through a revolving fund.

Since the program's creation, institutions have invested millions of dollars of their own funds into the program. In addition to making higher education accessible for low-income students, the program serves as an incentive for people who wish to go into public service as careers by offering targeted loan cancellations for specific professions in areas of high national needs, such as teaching, nursing, and law enforcement.

As a Member of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and as a U.S. Senator representing a State with a rich history of investment in cherishing of higher education, it is a top priority for me to fight to ensure the Federal Perkins Loan Program continues for generations to come.

I am fighting for students like Benjamin Wooten. Benjamin is a 2004 UW-Madison graduate and a small business owner from Genoa, WI, whose family fell on hard times while he was attending school. Ben shared with me:

The fact that I did not have to pay interest while I was in school was a huge help to me. I was attending school full time, working and trying to live on a meager budget. . . . I am a grateful and successful small business owner. I paid my loan off in full about a year ago with pride and excitement. I know that when I repaid my loan it was returned to a revolving fund and will be lent back out to other students in need.

I am also fighting for students like Brittany McAdams. Brittany is a medical school student with a passion for pediatrics and helping the most vulnerable among us—something that doesn't always yield a significant paycheck, especially in comparison to some of her medical school peers. Brittany said:

I want to be able to treat patients from all socioeconomic levels, despite their ability to pay. In other words, I want to do important work for less money than most other physicians. . . . The Perkins Loan is so valuable because it does not collect interest while we are in school. To me, that says the government believes that what I am doing with my life is important. That our country needs more doctors willing to tackle primary care. That while we need to pay for our graduate degrees, that they are going to do their part to make it just a bit easier. The Perkins Loan makes me feel valued and respected and even more passionate about my work.

Finally, I am here today fighting for students like Nayeli Spahr. Nayeli was raised by a single immigrant mother who worked two full-time jobs. She attended 10 different schools in 3 different States before she finished high school. Without the Federal Perkins Loan Program, Nayeli said that her opportunity to get a college education would have been "an illusory dream."

Today, Nayeli is the first in her family to finish college and is now in her last year of medical school and is planning to work with those who are underserved in our urban communities. She finished by telling me:

The Perkins loan program helped me reach this point. And, its existence is essential to provide that opportunity for other young adults wanting to believe in themselves and to empower their communities to be better. Please save it.

You don't have to look very far to find the significant impact of the Federal Perkins Loan Program—the significant impact that it has on America's students. There are thousands of stories like the few that I just shared, representing thousands and thousands of students who are still benefiting from the opportunities provided to them by this hugely successful program. Let's show the American people

and the one-half million students impacted by this program that we can come together, that we can find a bipartisan and commonsense solution.

I urge my colleagues to immediately take up and pass the House bill so that we can avoid another crisis of our own creation and put America's students and our Nation's future first.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, I rise today and join my colleagues, and I wish to thank Senator BALDWIN from Wisconsin for the speech that she gave and for her leadership—as well as yours, Mr. President—on the resolution to extend the Federal Perkins Loan Program. This is something we should take up and pass right now. There is strong bipartisan support to do so.

Yesterday the House of Representatives passed the Higher Education Extension Act of 2015, which would extend this important program for an additional year. But if the Senate does not act by tomorrow, this program, which helps the most financially needy students receive a college education, will expire. We can't let that happen.

I have heard from students, colleges in my State, universities, and financial aid administrators who have urged us to act and to make sure we continue this program, which allows students with exceptional financial needs to have access to low-interest loans they need so they can get higher education, live the American dream, and contribute to our society. Making sure they have that access is critical.

In New Hampshire, approximately 5,000 students received a Perkins loan during the last academic year. Across the country, as Senator BALDWIN mentioned, over one-half million students received a Perkins loan during the 2013–2014 academic year. That is one-half million students across this country that will be impacted—their access to higher education negatively impacted—if we do not take up the House-passed bill and immediately pass it in this body.

The cost of higher education in the United States continues to skyrocket. My home State of New Hampshire has the highest average student-loan debt in the country—either putting college out of reach for too many or requiring students to take on substantial amounts of debt in order to get a college education that is often hard to repay, especially with the first job they receive right out of college.

There are several things we must do to address the issue of rising college costs, including, in my view, requiring schools to have more skin in the game and providing more transparency for students and for parents. But as we stand here today, there is one thing right now we can do to help make college just a little bit more affordable, especially for low-income students and families, and that is by taking up and passing the House bill to extend the

Federal Perkins Loan Program for 1 more year. Allowing Perkins to expire would mean that hundreds of thousands of low-income students across the country could see a decrease of about \$2,000 on average in their student aid packages. For many, that could put college out of reach because they are counting on it. If we don't take this up now, we will be in a position of really leaving those students hanging, and we should not do that. We should not allow that to happen.

I again thank my colleague from Wisconsin and the Presiding Officer, who is from Ohio, for his leadership.

Again, this has such strong bipartisan support. I hope we get it done today. Let's do it now. Let's make sure we extend the Perkins Loan Program for another year, just as the House did, and ensure we can work together to make college more affordable for everyone so that everyone has the opportunity to live and achieve the American dream.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the Perkins Loan Program as well. We heard a number of important presentations here about the critical nature of this program to students across the country who are trying to fulfill the American dream, and one way to do that is to have access to higher education.

I have often said in the context of early learning, whether we are talking about early learning programs or pre-kindergarten programs, if kids learn more now, they will earn more later. That linkage, that bond between earning and learning is, of course, at the core of what we are talking about when it comes to higher education as well.

The benefit of a higher education has become so essential not only to being able to learn and to grow but also to getting the best job you can to be able to move forward. One of the ways young people are able to do that is by having access to Perkins loans. They are fixed-rate, low-interest loans, and they are meant for students who, as we heard before on this floor, have exceptional financial needs. For example, in Pennsylvania, in the 2013 to 2014 school year, nearly 40,000 students in Pennsylvania, at more than 100 colleges and universities, were able to go to school because of these loans. Nationwide, more than 539,000 students were helped. For many students, these loans are the difference between staying in school and working toward a bright future or literally dropping out of school.

According to the Coalition of Higher Education Assistance Organizations, one-quarter of all loan recipients are from families with incomes of less than \$30,000 a year. We all have examples in our States.

I have one example from the northwestern part of Pennsylvania. Edinboro University is part of our State system

of higher education. I had a chance to speak at their graduation this year.

Nikki Ezzolo, a 2015 graduate of Edinboro University, said the following:

I am sending this to you to tell you that I just started my new job at Highmark.

Highmark is a major health care company in western Pennsylvania.

She goes on to say:

I am a single mom who wasn't your normal 20 year old at college. I was an adult student who had left school more than once when I thought I couldn't do it. The last time I came back I was dedicated to getting my degree but I didn't have enough financial aid to help me pay my bill. I had messed up along the way in school and used up my only chance of having a good life with my daughter.

I wanted to thank you for the perkins aid that I needed in order to graduate. I am proud to be a college grad and my daughter is proud of me too. I have always been a bartender and this week I started my career at Highmark. I am so grateful for getting the perkins money to help me. I know that I wouldn't be where I am right now without it and that is a really scary thought.

Whether it is Nikki from northwestern Pennsylvania or Kayla McBride, a recent graduate of Temple University—Temple University is all the way at the other corner of our State in southeastern Pennsylvania. Kayla also talked about the Perkins loan. Kayla said:

I wanted to extend my gratitude to Temple University and the Bursar's Office.

With the rising costs of tuition, attending college might seem impossible for some students. I come from a single-family home and my mom did everything in her power to see that I graduated. When my mom was laid off from her job, I thought graduating would no longer be possible. I received some scholarships, but it was still not enough to cover the entire cost of tuition as well as room and board.

Without the assistance of the Federal Perkins Loan finishing college would've been very difficult. I am now a college graduate and I am thankful for all of the financial assistance I received during my undergraduate years. College can be an expensive investment, but I am glad that I had the Perkins Loan to assist me.

Both cases exemplify and validate the importance of the Perkins Loan Program.

Since the 1960s, over 30 million students have been helped by Perkins loans, and we have to do everything we can to continue the program.

What we are trying to do now is very simple. We are trying to get some time in order to fully update and reauthorize Perkins loans so that all students have access to an affordable college education. I urge the majority to work with us on this bipartisan effort to allow the bill to pass so we can move forward and continue the Perkins Loan Program even as we focus on changes in the future.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, last night, with an overwhelming vote, the Senate ended debate that will conclude

the postcloture period, which will run until midnight tonight. Tomorrow morning the Senate will pass a continuing resolution appropriations bill that will keep the lights on and keep the Federal Government running.

I have told my constituents that the irony of this is that we only appropriate funds for about 30 percent of the government, and half of that 30 percent, roughly, is for defense spending; 70 percent, as the Presiding Officer knows well since he is an expert in this area, is on autopilot.

Since 2011, since the Budget Control Act, we have actually done a remarkably decent job of freezing the growth of discretionary spending. It is roughly at the 2007 appropriations level. But the problem is that without bipartisan cooperation, we are unable to touch the 70 percent of government spending that has been growing by leaps and bounds, and that simply can't continue.

This year, for the first time since I believe 2009, under the new majority, the 114th Congress actually passed a budget, and that was a notable achievement. I am almost a little sheepish about mentioning that as an achievement because most people across America would think that is not something to be particularly proud of and that that should happen routinely, so why give anybody a pat on the back for doing something they ought to have done in the first place? But our budgets have been missing under this administration, and literally the last budget that was passed was 2009.

One of the benefits of having a budget is there is a regular appropriations process. That may sound like getting in the weeds for most people, but this is the money we should be appropriating subject to spending caps to keep the government running. It is for items such as military construction and veterans' benefits, paying our men and women in uniform through the Defense appropriations bill. Those are essential items on which I know we would all agree.

The only reason we had to deal with the drama of this so-called continuing resolution is because notwithstanding the fact that we actually passed a budget and notwithstanding the fact that the various appropriations subcommittees had passed a budget and indeed the whole Appropriations Committee had voted them out and they were available for action on the floor, our friends across the aisle decided they were going to block those appropriations bills. Given the fact that under Senate rules it takes 60 votes to close off debate, our only alternative was to pass a continuing resolution, which I believe will fly out of here tomorrow morning with overwhelming support. It is a terrible way to do business, and it creates needless uncertainty for the people we ought to be caring a lot about—people such as our veterans and our military servicemembers.

Even though we had the opportunity to move the appropriations process under what we call regular order around here and not resort to this continuing resolution process, our Democratic colleagues decided instead to turn their misguided filibuster summer into an equally misguided filibuster fall.

Many of these bills, of course, came out with strong support. Here is an example of some of the oddity of this process: Some of the bills they blocked were the very same pieces of legislation they supported in the Appropriations Committee. For example, many of my colleagues from across the aisle praised elements of the Defense appropriations bill, only to then buckle under the Democratic leadership's pressure and twice block the bill from going forward.

In some cases, our Democratic colleagues were quick to send out press releases to their constituents back home celebrating their accomplishments under these very same bills and claiming a victory that would benefit their home State. That was true in particular of both of our colleagues representing the State of New Jersey. When the bill was overwhelmingly voted out of committee, our colleagues from New Jersey applauded funding for a bill for F-16 fighters based in their State. The junior Senator said: "The inclusion of this funding is a deserving victory for our U.S. Air National Guard." Similarly, the senior Senator said: "Securing this funding in the Department of Defense Appropriation bill is a win, win, win." But these same Senators filibustered that bill on the Senate floor. How do you explain that one back home? And they did that twice, along with virtually all of our Democratic colleagues.

Unfortunately, the other 11 appropriations bills haven't made it to the Senate floor because the majority leadership recognizes that it is probably a futile effort to do so—bills that many of our colleagues celebrated, only to then refuse to take action that would move them forward, at the behest of Democratic leadership.

We didn't have to resort to this drama, and believe me, our Democratic colleagues have been beating the drum, saying: There is going to be a shutdown. There is going to be a shutdown.

Well, they are the ones who created this crisis in the first place that necessitated the passage of a continuing resolution by filibustering the very same appropriations bills many of them voted for in committee and sent out press releases saying: Look at me. Look at what I have done for my constituents.

I don't know how to put a better word on it, but I think it reeks of hypocrisy at the very least.

But I also believe we have a responsibility—those of us who choose to operate in a responsible fashion—to try to govern the best we can even in the face of such arbitrary hypocrisy by some of

our opponents. They blocked the very same bills on the floor that they voted for in the Appropriations Committee, thus creating this "crisis." I put quotes around that. There was never really a crisis because we knew we were going to do our job and make sure we kept the lights on, paid the money to our veterans for the benefits they earned, and that our military—many of whom are in harm's way defending our freedoms and those of our allies—was going to be taken care of. But the idea that you would vote for bills in committee and then come to the floor and block them is hard to explain, and, in fact, I can't explain it other than using the word "hypocrisy."

Another element of this discussion has been whether we would use this continuing resolution to cut off money to Planned Parenthood. As we know, Planned Parenthood is the largest abortion provider in America. Well over 300,000 abortions are done at Planned Parenthood facilities each year.

I want to assure our Democratic colleagues, even though they have filibustered our efforts to defund Planned Parenthood and to make sure that not one penny of tax dollars goes to support the No. 1 abortion provider in America, this fight is not over, based on their filibustering of the defund Planned Parenthood legislation that we voted on or their refusal to even consider the pain-capable abortion ban.

We have said it before, but it bears repeating. I think most people would be shocked to find out that the United States is only one of seven nations in the world that allows late-term abortions after a baby in utero is a viable human being. We are right there alongside the great defenders of human rights such as China, North Korea, and Vietnam. While many States such as my State have imposed limitations at the State level, I think it is appropriate for us to recognize that medical technology has now allowed us to save preterm babies that we could not in the past. In fact, the distinguished Presiding Officer, I believe, has shown me a picture on his iPhone of a child that was born that weighed, I believe, somewhere around 1 pound at 20 weeks or so.

So we ought to be having this debate because I think what it reflects is who we are as a nation and whether we want to continue to subsidize the sort of horrific practices we have seen depicted in some of these videos, and most of them involve late-term abortions because that is where the money is. That is where Planned Parenthood harvests tissue from these late-term babies and then sells them. The only question is whether they do it with the appropriate legal informed consent and whether they do it for profit, as some of these videos would suggest, both of which, by the way, are banned by current law—selling it for profit and doing it without informed consent. Both of those are current provisions of the law. We are conducting investigations in

four different committees in the Congress to make sure Planned Parenthood is not in violation of current law, in addition to the steps we have begun to both make sure no tax dollars go to Planned Parenthood to subsidize their abortion practice—the largest abortion provider in the United States—and then to redirect that money to provide for women's health at community health centers and other places.

I was surprised this morning when I caught a glimpse of the hearing that is occurring over in the House of Representatives where Cecile Richards, the chief executive officer of Planned Parenthood, is testifying. Somebody asked her about her compensation. I was shocked that she said: Well, I get paid \$520,000 a year—\$520,000 a year. This money—the vast majority of the money that Planned Parenthood gets is Federal tax dollars, primarily through Medicaid. So, in effect, the taxpayers are subsidizing the chief executive officer of Planned Parenthood—the No. 1 abortion provider in the country—her salary of \$520,000 a year.

I remember after the financial crisis in 2008, a number of our colleagues would come to the floor and say: We need to do something about these excessive salaries of people working in the financial services industry; this is an outrage. But I will tell my colleagues, I haven't heard one peep out of our colleagues across the aisle about the \$520,000 that Cecile Richards is paid each year as CEO of Planned Parenthood, the No. 1 abortion provider in the country and an entity subsidized mainly or in large part, I should say, by U.S. tax dollars—about one-half billion dollars a year. Maybe that is a discussion we ought to have.

The last thing I want to say is I think it is important to stress, in the context of this debate, the value and the meaning of human life that the fight is not over with the votes we have had so far. It is important to stress how some of the advocates back home in Texas, for example—some of the strongest champions for the unborn in the country—have made clear how they hope their elected representatives will respond to these horrific videos and the current debate. Just yesterday, for example, the executive director of the Texas Alliance for Life, Dr. Joe Pojman, said he applauded the strong efforts of Republican leadership in Congress to move forward with the strategy of shifting funds from Planned Parenthood to better providers of women's health services—providers that are not part of the abortion industry. Indeed, that is exactly what the Texas legislature has done, and it is something we need to do. In his statement, Dr. Pojman went on to say that instead of a government shutdown, better options exist for achieving success.

This is similar to the statement made by Carol Tobias earlier, the leader of the National Right to Life organization. In other words, at this pivotal moment in time, Congress has an op-

portunity to make progress with legislation that would further the cause for life and defend those who cannot defend themselves and to put on record all 100 Members of the Senate. I know many people would prefer to look the other way because of the gruesomeness of this practice, particularly as it regards late-term fetuses—children who, if born, even though they are not full term at 40 weeks, could literally live outside of the womb. In fact, neonatologists, as I mentioned a moment ago, have demonstrated incredible capability of keeping these children alive even if they are born preterm.

We will, I hope, have a vote on—Senator BEN SASSE from Nebraska has introduced a bill that has actually passed the House of Representatives called “the born alive” bill. This bill simply would say, if a child is born alive as a result of a botched abortion, the health care provider must do everything in their power to save and preserve that life. I think it is important to get every Senator on record on that issue because this is a little bit different than the issue of defunding Planned Parenthood. I think we ought to do both. We ought to ban funding of tax dollars for Planned Parenthood, the No. 1 abortion provider in the country, but we ought to also focus on the desensitization of America and the world to some of these horrific practices, some of which we were shocked by when Kermit Gosnell, an abortion doctor in Pennsylvania, would literally deliver these babies alive and then kill them. I know people don't want to talk about it. They don't want to think about it. They would prefer to just look the other way, but we can't, in the name of our very humanity, look the other way. We have to deal with this and where better to have that debate and discussion and to put people on the record than right here in the U.S. Senate. That is what our plan is going forward.

With that, I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). The Senator from Washington.

FEDERAL PERKINS LOAN PROGRAM

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I think a lot of people here talk about what they think everyone should be focused on, but what I think we should be focused on is that this month students across the country are making their way back to college campuses. When more Americans pursue their degrees beyond high school, it is actually good for our country. It strengthens the middle class. It strengthens the workforce that needs to compete in the 21st century global economy. So here in Congress what I believe we should be working on are ways to help more students earn a degree and gain a foothold into the middle class.

Unfortunately, instead of keeping students' options open to help them succeed, we are facing another deadline and another artificial crisis. If we do

not act in the Senate, the Perkins Loan Program will expire after tomorrow. That means that more than 100,000 students will no longer be eligible for this assistance over the next year. That is going to leave a lot of students in this country in the lurch.

Without Perkins loans, students might have to take out private loans that have higher interest rates and fewer repayment options. So students would end up with a heavier burden of student debt or they might decide not to enroll in the first place. That is the exact opposite outcome we need for the future of this economy.

In my home State of Washington, more than 15,000 students received Perkins loans last year. That includes about 4,700 students from the University of Washington. I want to make sure the next class of students has the same opportunity so they can better afford college.

We in Congress need to supply students with more support to manage rising college costs, not less. I am hopeful that today we can extend the Perkins loan for 1 year while we work to reauthorize the Higher Education Act because there is no reason to block this bipartisan legislation that would give our students some certainty for next year.

The Perkins Loan Program gives students with financial needs three things that private loans do not. The loans are low cost. They do not accrue interest while a student is enrolled and for 9 months afterward. That can reduce student debt by hundreds or even thousands of dollars. The loans provide flexible repayment terms, and they also give those who are interested in the public sector generous forgiveness options.

The House Representatives has already acted to extend this program for 1 year. We should do the same before the clock runs out.

I am so glad this effort to extend the Perkins Loan Program has strong bipartisan support in the Senate. It would provide new students with some certainty for the current school year. Today, students face unprecedented challenges in financing their education. The cost of college has skyrocketed, and many students are struggling under the crushing burden of student debt. Preventing the Perkins Loan Program from expiring will not solve all of their problems. I hope we can continue this bipartisan work on ways to make college more affordable and rein in student debt.

Passing this bill to extend the Perkins Loan Program is a step we can take so students don't have the rug pulled out from under them. There is no reason students should have to face this uncertainty and there is no reason we shouldn't be able to pass this by unanimous consent.

I know firsthand how important education is for families and for our Nation's middle class. When I was 15, my dad was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and, in a few short years, he

couldn't work any longer. Without warning, my family had fallen on hard times, but instead of falling through the cracks, my brothers and sisters and I got a good public education at our schools and we had a country at our back that helped make sure we were able to go to college with student loans and what is now known as the Pell program. My mom got the skills she needed to find a better paying job at Lake Washington Vocational School. So even though we faced some hard times, we never lost hope that with a good education we would be able to find our footing and earn our way to a stable middle-class life.

Students at colleges and universities across the country today are looking now to us to make sure they have a solid pathway into the middle class. So I urge my colleagues to support extending this program to make sure students have the financial aid tools they need so they can build their skills, grow our economy, and help lead the world in the 21st century.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I join my fellow colleague from Washington State, talking about the Perkins Loan Program. The House has already acted on this. They extended it for 1 year. All we are asking is that our colleagues on both sides of the aisle allow us to have the opportunity to do that here, probably by unanimous consent.

It shouldn't be terribly controversial. After all, this is a program that is working. I am following a number of my colleagues today in talking about this. We just heard from Senator MURRAY. We also heard from Senators COLLINS, BALDWIN, AYOTTE, and CASEY. This is a bipartisan effort. It is an attempt on our part to ensure that students are not going to fall between the cracks. They are getting started this fall in colleges and universities, and they are wondering whether this program is going to be here or whether we are going to allow it to expire. We ought to be sure these young people know that, yes, the program is going to be here and, yes, they are going to have the opportunity to get ahead by using this relatively low-cost student loan option that is focused on kids with the most need to be able to get an education.

Since 1958 this program has been strong. It has been one that works. By the way, there is no appropriation involved. There is no spending involved here. It is a matter of allowing the program to continue. The program has what is called a revolving fund, where whenever somebody gets a loan and pays that money back, the money goes back to another student. This is an opportunity for us to continue a program that is working.

If we don't pass it, we are going to have a situation where new loans will not be awarded. College tuition is al-

ready too tough. I hear it all the time from families back home and from students back home. One of the biggest concerns they have—we had a tele-townhall meeting last night, and one of the biggest concerns that people have, of course, is the cost of education. This is a way to ensure that young people can pursue their dreams, despite the fact that college tuitions are too high in many cases. This is a tool that is incredibly important.

It is also a matching program that hasn't been talked about much on the floor today. The fact is that the program is administered by the schools, and the schools actually match so that they are providing some of the funding for this. That is another reason why I like this program.

There are 67 colleges and universities in the Buckeye State, my State of Ohio, that participate and take advantage of this. I have gotten interesting correspondence from some of the schools and students. Last year there were 25,000 or so Ohio students who received Perkins loans. I heard from Kent State. They have 3,000 students involved in Perkins. I have heard from Ohio State, which has 1,700 students there. I have also heard from other schools. I have heard from the University of Toledo, Oberlin, and Ohio Wesleyan.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD some of the correspondence because it describes the needs of the program so well.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

KENT STATE,

Kent, Ohio, September 3, 2015.

Hon. LAMAR ALEXANDER,
Chairman, Committee on Health, Education,
Labor & Pensions

Hon. PATTY MURRAY,
Ranking Member, Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions

DEAR CHAIRMAN ALEXANDER AND RANKING MEMBER MURRAY: On behalf of Kent State University, I write to you today in support of reauthorizing the Federal Perkins Loan Program before it is due to expire on September 30.

Since its inception over 55 years ago, the Perkins Loan Program has played an important role in providing need-based financial aid for our students by distributing low-interest, subsidized loans to those with demonstrated financial need.

Kent State University students receive the largest volume of Perkins Loans in the entire State of Ohio. Total disbursements for the 2015-16 academic year alone are estimated to reach over \$9M.

While there have not been federal capital contributions to the Perkins Loan Program in recent years, universities have continued to use existing resources to fund new loans for needy students. Absent Congressional action before the end of this month, these loans will cease to be disbursed and hundreds of thousands of students across the nation will lose a vital source of aid.

In a higher education environment that focuses on access and affordability, the expiration of the Perkins Loan Program would have a devastating effect. I therefore urge that you delay the expiration of the Perkins

Loan Program until Congress has the opportunity to enact a comprehensive reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

Sincerely,

BEVERLY WARREN,
President.

OBERLIN COLLEGE & CONSERVATORY,
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT,
Oberlin, Ohio, September 18, 2015.

Hon. ROB PORTMAN,
U.S. Senate, Russell Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR PORTMAN: I am writing to you as President of Oberlin College asking that you intervene to extend the Perkins Loan Program, which is set to expire on September 30, 2015. As you may be aware, the Perkins Program provides federal funds to institutions of higher education in order to offer low-interest loans of up to \$5,500 per year to students. More than 500,000 students received Perkins Loans in the 2013-2014 academic year, totaling more than \$1 billion in disbursed student aid. However, not all the funding for this program comes from the federal government, as up to one-third of the funds appropriated by the federal government are matched by participating institutions. Ultimately, Perkins Loans are an important piece of the campus-based federal aid model, offering flexibility and discretion to financial aid officers to help students afford their higher education.

At Oberlin College we have committed to meeting 100% of every student's demonstrated financial need. While we do this predominantly with grant dollars, the Perkins Loan Program is a vital component in making an Oberlin education affordable for both our low and middle-income families. Last year alone more than 320 Oberlin students received funding of over \$1 million from the Perkins Program. Many students tell us, particularly lower income students, that without the help of the Perkins Loan it is likely they could not have attended Oberlin.

Senator Portman, I urge you to support the reauthorization of the Perkins Loan Program. As history has shown us, the Perkins Program was one, if not the first, form of federal student aid that has helped millions of students afford higher education. At Oberlin, while we have a tremendous institutional commitment to making college affordable through our needbased grant program, we also know our students rely heavily on Perkins Loans as a means to attain their educational aspirations.

Sincerely,

MARVIN KRISLOV,
President.

MICHAEL BODNAR: My wife and I are very concerned about Congress not extending the Perkins Loan Program. With two children in College and one on the way, we would not be able to send them to the type of school needed to excel in this world today.

Every time we vote the political platform of higher education is expressed as so important. Now we and our children are faced with the possibility of losing vital money needed to stay in college.

We urge you to move forward and make sure that this program is extended. Most of our friends that have children in college rely on this program to help them pay their tuition.

MARY BODNAR: My husband and I are very concerned that The Federal Perkins Loan is on the verge of being discontinued.

By not acting on this very important issue which comes due on October 1st you are putting many families and College students at risk of not being able to afford their higher education. We have two children in college

and one on the way and this program is vital to us as a family. Every year it's time to vote a representative into office whether it's the House of Representatives or the Senate we hear how important it is to educate our children.

Please make sure that this important Federal Loan Program continues. All of our friends that have children in college depend on The Federal Perkins Loan Program to get their kids through college.

Mr. PORTMAN. It is not just about Ohio. It is about the entire country. There are 1,700 postsecondary institutions that take advantage of the program. Allowing it to expire is going to affect all those institutions and all those many thousands of students.

Tuition is far too high. We should be making it easier—not harder—for students to be able to pay for college. I have heard concerns from some of my colleagues that we shouldn't extend this and not allow a unanimous consent agreement to occur here because they would like to improve the program to make it better and even more targeted, updated, and modernized, and make sure the funds are allocated properly. I don't disagree with that at all. I agree that this program, like every other program in the Federal Government, could be improved. That should be part of our work. We should be improving these programs so they are more cost effective and efficient and getting to the folks who really need the program the most.

While I agree we need to look at it and make changes, I don't think we should take this step of allowing it to expire. Why? Because, in effect, what we are doing there is we are saying that it is going to be at the expense of the students who need the aid. It should be on us. We should be doing our work. So I hope that we will go ahead and allow this extension to occur, and then let's work on those solutions. I think that it may be easier to have these reforms take place if we are not working under the gun—in other words, allowing this program to expire. Letting something lapse and trying to figure out how to bring it back is not the way the American people and the people of Ohio whom I represent expect Congress to work. I think we can get this done, and I think we can do this with the extension.

The Department of Education already indicated to us that they may start to recall funding in October from colleges and universities if this program is not extended. By the way, not extending Perkins won't help with the Nation's budget problems, because, again, it is a revolving fund. The way it works is one loan is paid back and another loan is extended.

This is the right thing to do. As we ensure that government continues to operate, let's ensure the Perkins Loan Program does as well.

I want to thank my colleagues on the other side of the aisle for their discussion today on this issue. I want to urge leadership on both sides of the aisle to focus on this issue. Let's be sure and do

what the Senate should do along with the House. The House acted already with a 1-year extension. Let's simply do what the House has already done. Let's ensure we are providing loans to students who need them while we continue our efforts to reform this program and make it even stronger going forward.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

JAMES ZADROGA 9/11 HEALTH AND COMPENSATION REAUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise today to hopefully prick the conscience of the Senate to ask the Senate to honor the memory of James Zadroga and all of those first responders who on September 11 responded to a national tragedy.

I come to the floor to achieve a goal that I and others did in 2010, which was then to pass the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, and today it is to speak to reauthorize it before it expires.

Now, Jim Zadroga was a New Jerseyman, but he was also a hero who after September 11, 2001, ran towards the World Trade Center—not away—to help us recover. But while working on the site, breathing in the smoke, dust, and debris, unknown to him, he was developing an illness from which he would never recover.

Jim was the first emergency responder to die directly because of health effects from working at Ground Zero. For years we had pieces of legislation in Congress to right the wrong created when hundreds of emergency workers were left out of the World Trade Center emergency worker settlements. It took us 9 years to pass the original bill. Let's not let it expire tomorrow.

Let's send a clear message to our first responders, those who responded on that fateful day and those who may be called upon to respond on some future fateful day, that we will never forget what they did for their fellow citizens, for this Nation, on the day that changed the world—for Jim Zadroga, who passed away, and for every other first responder sick because of their response to duty, some of whom have died and left loved ones behind.

If you told any American 14 years ago that we would let expire our commitment to provide for those who helped in the 9/11 recovery effort, that their government would be slow to respond to their illnesses, their suffering, and their sacrifices, no American would believe it. But that is what we are on the verge of doing. That is exactly what we are on the verge of doing.

We just had the September 11 commemoration. We all faithfully and responsibly went to remember the lives of those fellow Americans who were lost. We all paid tribute to them and to those who sacrificed in response. Yet here we are, just a few weeks after, on

the verge of allowing to expire the very law that helps those who did their duty—some who did beyond their duty, because they were first responders not even from New York City but who came from across the country to help in the aftermath. No American would believe that we are about to let this expire. That is where we are, and it must change. This law is set to expire at midnight tomorrow.

Now, there is still enough funding to pay out claims for months to follow, but the reauthorization bill that I and other colleagues have cosponsored is needed now for a number of reasons. First and foremost, to provide the security, the peace of mind, and reassurances to those first responders that these critical programs will last longer than just what the next couple of months' funding would provide. It also permanently lifts the statute of limitations on the Victims Compensation Fund to provide for those first responders who need access beyond next year because we don't know what latent illness may befall them as a result of their sacrifice at Ground Zero.

Very importantly, it exempts the key programs from the budget sequestration cuts that would hollow out the critical safety net that this program provides for those September 11 first responders. The sequestration, which I voted against, imposes arbitrary and capricious cuts to funding that will continue to provide care and support for those 9/11 heroes, who sacrificed everything to help those in need on that tragic day.

The fact is, Congress must act, and this time, let's not wait for a public outcry before we ensure that these heroes receive the care and support they deserve. Last week I stood with colleagues and first responders to call on all of us to do what is right and honor these heroic men and women.

Let's reauthorize the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Reauthorization Act before it expires tomorrow. It is the least we can do to say thank you for the risks they took and the sacrifices they made. Fourteen years after the attack, we still have a profound and moral obligation to take care of these brave men and women, the first responders who risked their lives and are now suffering health effects as a result of their efforts.

All of us remember that day. We remember where we were on the day that changed the world. We remember that it brought us closer together as family, as a community, one Nation indivisible. This is not a New York or a New Jersey issue. Nearly every State in the Nation has a first responder or more who ultimately will benefit from the fund because of an illness they have contracted or a loved one they left behind.

There is a reason we call this great country the United States of America, because, in fact, whether there are wildfires in the West, flooding in the Mississippi or any other great consequence to our country, we take care

of our own collectively. In fact, this is the moment to take care of those whom we have heralded as heroes. It is not simply enough to say so in words, but we have to do so in deeds.

We should remember that feeling that we had on that day and subsequently the days afterwards and honor the heroic men and women, such as James Zadroga, and reauthorize the bill.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in recent years we have faced a lot of difficulty filling positions for service to our Federal Government, not the least of which are critical diplomatic posts around the world. We have seen delays in confirming Federal judges, one of the most important duties of the Senate. These men and woman are chosen for life appointments.

The most frustrating part of this is that virtually all of these nominees should be confirmed with overwhelming support. To be nominated by the President at the White House for an ambassadorial spot or even a Federal judgeship you go through a clearance process in the beginning for the White House to choose this person, then a background check—and it is a pretty extensive background check—and then eventually, if the White House is satisfied this person is fit for the job, with no obstructions to their moving forward, they send them to Congress and it goes through this process all over again.

So these nominees have been vetted once, twice, three times before they finally reach the point where there is a vote on the nominee in a committee on Capitol Hill in the Senate. If they clear that vote—and it is a partisan vote—if they clear that vote, then they make it to the Executive Calendar. It takes a long time. While this is going on, people are sitting there in suspense as to whether they are going to be selected and when they finally might get a chance to serve.

For some reason, we have seen a virtual standstill since the Republicans have taken control of the Senate when it comes to filling critical positions appointed by the President. It is time for us to schedule up-or-down votes on more than 27 foreign affairs and judicial nominees who are awaiting floor action.

Given the foreign policy challenges we face around the world, the delays in

considering delays for our ambassadors and other critical foreign policy positions is inexcusable. Many come to the floor on the other side of the aisle every day to criticize the President and his foreign policy. Yet when he asks for men and women to serve and represent the United States in foreign countries, they languish on the calendar.

Most of the people languishing on the calendar for ambassadorial spots are not political, they are professional. They are men and women who have served our government through Democratic and Republican administrations, have developed a good reputation, and are now moving up to a new responsibility. Why in the world is the Republican majority refusing to allow those men and women to serve the United States? I don't understand it. I think it is dangerous. I think some people are putting politics ahead of national security.

As of today, we have at least 11 foreign affairs nominees on the Senate Executive Calendar. Typically the vast majority of those nominees move quickly in a bipartisanship manner. However, over the past few years that has all changed. Everything is political now. Last year the Senate Republicans held up more than 30 nominees at various times. At least 10 of them were held over from the last Congress.

Most astonishingly, on the Senate Executive Calendar today, at a time when the international community is facing a terrible conflict in Syria, is a professional named Gayle Smith. She is a qualified nominee who wishes to serve as the head of USAID, U.S. Agency for International Development. What does that Agency do? That Agency provides food and medicine to the refugees of the Syrian war. It is a big process. It has to be moved into countries and into refugee camps in massive amounts to keep innocent people—victims of this war—alive.

Gayle Smith has been waiting for weeks, if not months, for approval. So what is so controversial about her? The only controversy is she was chosen by President Obama. She is eminently qualified. No one has raised any questions about her competency to do this job. She came to see me a week or two ago. She is anxious to serve our government, and the job she has to do is critically important at this moment in history. Yet she languishes on the Senate Executive Calendar not approved. So there is no nominal leader of this massive Agency which is responsible for the well-being of so many innocent people. There are another 10 just like her. In addition to this, three dozen more await confirmation in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Many of them have had hearings; they just sit there. This includes people like Jeffrey Hawkins to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Central African Republic. Now, most of us would struggle to find that on a map, but the fact is, that country is facing its own conflict that has displaced more than one-half mil-

lion people. Yet the post of U.S. Ambassador to that country goes vacant, not because of any controversy about Jeffrey Hawkins but the fact that he was chosen by this President. That is it. That is the only complaint.

It also includes Roberta Jacobson, who has been named as the next Ambassador of Mexico. Roberta is a seasoned diplomat who would be a great asset to a country that is our neighbor and closest among Latin American countries.

It includes Daniel Rubinstein to be the next Ambassador to Tunisia, one of the few countries to emerge from the Arab Spring as a functioning democracy. In total, some of these posts have been vacant for more than 1 year, despite the President's efforts to fill them. Other nominees are supposed to replace current Ambassadors who are looking forward to moving to their next post. They cannot do it. Why? The Senate does not want to call them for a vote.

That is a decision to be made by the Republican majority. It is a shame our nominees, many of whom are non-controversial, who have distinguished careers in the Foreign Service, languish on the Senate Executive Calendar for months at a time, in some cases a year. There used to be a spirit of bipartisanship when it came to national security, one that had a long and proud tradition. I hope the majority now will return to that proud tradition.

We have a similar delay when it comes to judges. So far this year—this year, and here we are in the month of September, near the end, coming into October—so far this year, the Republican-controlled Senate has held confirmation votes on six judges—six—all year. Well, you say, the President only has 2 years left. Maybe it is normal that you would not approve a judge for a lifetime appointment if he only has a little over a year left now. During President George W. Bush's final 2 years in office, the Democratic-controlled Senate confirmed 68 judicial nominees—6 so far this year by the Republicans. At this point in 2007, the Democratic Senate had confirmed 29 of President Bush's judicial nominees. That is nearly five times the number that has been cleared by the Republican Senate, despite the fact that there is no controversy involving any of those nominees.

There are 16 noncontroversial judicial nominees currently pending on the Senate Calendar whom we could confirm right away. Seven of these nominees would fill judicial emergencies. That means they are being sent to courthouses where the cases are stacking up and people are asking: When am I going to get my day in court?

Well, you will not get your day in court until the new judge gets his day in the Senate. We don't know when that might happen. There is no reason to delay these confirmation votes. These nominees would be confirmed

with overwhelming support. We need to put them into the vacancies on the Federal bench. Overall, there are 67 vacant Federal judgeships now, 31 of which have been designated as judicial emergencies. Most of those vacancies are from States where there is at least one Republican Senator. What that means is that nominee would not even be on the calendar were it not for the approval of that Republican Senator. So they have bipartisan support. I urge my Republican colleagues to work in good faith to fill these vacancies on the Federal bench. This is an important responsibility of the Senate. We should not neglect it.

The vast majority of nominees could be confirmed today. If debate is needed on a few of them, so be it. If a rollcall is needed, let's have it. We cannot leave vacant important positions in our government and in our judicial system: 16 judicial nominees, 11 nominees for foreign affairs. We could vote on them this afternoon. Are we holding off the vote because we are too busy on the Senate floor? If you are following the Senate, you know that is not the case. It is time for us to do our jobs so these nominees can do theirs. For the sake of national security and our system of justice, let's move forward in a bipartisan fashion and vote on these nominees.

FOR-PROFIT COLLEGES

Mr. President, another school year has begun. In August, I marked the occasion by holding a press conference outside of Argosy University. Don't be surprised if you have not heard the name Argosy University. It is a for-profit college in downtown Chicago. This for-profit college is part of an industry that enrolls 10 percent of all college students—the for-profit colleges and universities—10 percent of the students. They take in 20 percent of all the Department of Education financial aid. Here is the kicker. For-profit colleges and universities account for 44 percent of all the student loan defaults: 10 percent of the students, 44 percent of the student loan defaults.

Why does that happen? Because of several things. First, they are very expensive. They accept anyone—virtually anyone. Many of the students start going to these for-profit schools and realize they are getting too deep in debt and they drop out. Then they have the worst world: a student debt and no degree. Some of them finish the school, finish the course, and are given a diploma. They find out that they cannot get a job with it.

When you look at the Brookings Institution's recent study of for-profit schools, they ranked last when it comes to good-paying jobs after college. Then what happens? The students cannot make enough money to pay off their student loans and they default. That, sadly, is the cycle that has faced thousands of students across America. This industry is in trouble. It is in such trouble that many of the large for-profit schools are threatened and some

have collapsed. The largest, Corinthian College, this for-profit university sent shock waves through the industry. They raked in profits, leaving students with mountains of debt, and then when they were asked to prove to the Federal Government that the students actually got a job after they graduated, they falsified the returns to the Federal Government. When they were challenged, they went under. They sunk.

When they sunk, look what happened. The students who had gone to school there were told: Corinthian just disappeared. You no longer have a university. Then they learned that the courses they took could not be transferred to any other school except maybe another for-profit school somewhere. The net result of it is, the students had an option: give up whatever credits they had at Corinthian and walk away from their student loans or keep their Corinthian credits and pay their student loans.

The students who walked away from their student loans, of course, created an obligation to Federal taxpayers who had to make up the difference.

Argosy University is another one of these for-profit colleges. It is owned by Education Management Corporation. It is one of the companies that are also being looked at very carefully. Students who walk through Argosy's doors in Chicago or surf their ads online considering enrollment should know the company that runs this school, Argosy University, is under investigation by at least 14 different State attorneys general for unfair and deceptive practices.

In 2013, the Colorado attorney general sued EDMC, which owns Argosy, for deceiving, misleading, and financially injuring students. The Colorado attorney general's investigation centered on Argosy and found a long, elaborate pattern of deceptive behavior by the school. That is not all. EDMC is also being sued by the Department of Justice under the Federal False Claims Act for falsely certifying compliance with provisions of Federal law. It turns out that they are incentivizing people to sign up students at their schools, these for-profit schools. They give them a signing bonus if they can lure some young student into signing up. That violates the law.

In addition, the San Francisco city attorney found that EDMC, the company that runs Argosy, engaged in marketing tactics that underestimated program costs for students and inflated job placement figures. They were just flatout lying to these kids.

According to the Department of Education, EDMC is considered "not financially responsible." It has been placed on the Department's special heightened cash monitoring status.

The company withdrew its stock from trading on NASDAQ because it no longer wanted to make public filings with the SEC. You see, if you make a public filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission and lie, you can go to jail, so they just withdrew their stock rather than be caught lying.

In addition, in Chicago, an Argosy student seeking an associate's degree in business, information technology, or psychology will pay about \$34,000 in tuition to this for-profit school. Two blocks away, the students at City Colleges of Chicago Harold Washington Campus are also getting the same degree, and the cost there is \$7,000. It is \$34,000 at Argosy and \$7,000 at the City Colleges of Chicago. Incidentally, the hours at the City Colleges of Chicago are transferable to other universities and schools—not if it is Argosy.

One in fifty students at the Harold Washington Campus is likely to default ultimately when it comes to paying their student loans; at Argosy, one out of seven. It is just too darn expensive, and these kids cannot pay back the loans.

A recent Brookings report found that Argosy University Chicago—the one I visited in August—is No. 9 in the country on the list of schools whose students owe the most in Federal student loans. They owe a total of \$6.2 billion—billion. In fact, of the top 25 schools on the list, 13 are for-profit colleges and account for 10 percent of all the outstanding student loan debt in America.

I want to close, as I see my colleague is on the floor seeking recognition. I close by using one more example: ITT Tech. It sounds great, doesn't it. It is No. 16 on Brookings' list. Students owe \$4.6 billion in loans. It is not surprising. An associate's degree, a 2-year degree at ITT Tech, costs \$47,000, and the students have a one-in-five chance of defaulting on the loans they make at that school. Meanwhile, ITT Tech, which does business in Chicago—Arlington Heights, Orland Park, and Oak Brook—has been under investigation by at least 18 State attorneys general for unfair and deceptive practices, has been sued by the New Mexico attorney general for misrepresentation to students about their accreditation status and sued by the Federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau for predatory lending. The list just goes on.

The point I am getting to is we are subsidizing these schools. This is the most heavily subsidized for-profit business in America; 80 percent to 95 percent of their revenue comes straight from the Federal Treasury. If all of the money going to for-profit colleges and universities—think about the University of Phoenix, DeVry, Kaplan—if all of that money were combined, this would be the ninth largest Federal agency in Washington. But, instead, the CEOs who run these for-profit companies are making a ton of money. The top man at the University of Phoenix—the biggest one—makes \$9 million a year. How is that for being a college president? And some of these other ones, small change—\$3 million a year. They get to run these for-profit schools while these kids stack up in debt, end up defaulting, and end with their lives ruined. Incidentally, defaulting on a debt means you still owe it to the grave. Student loan debts are not dischargeable in bankruptcy.

I could go through a long list, but I hope Congress comes to its senses when the higher education bill comes to the floor. This rip-off, this scam on students and families across America, has to come to an end.

I yield the floor.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY AND COST OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I rise to discuss one of the major crises facing our health care system today, and that is that the pharmaceutical industry itself has become a major health hazard to the American people. The pharmaceutical industry in this country is charging the American people by far the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs.

The result is that one out of five Americans, including patients suffering from cancer who get a prescription from a doctor, is unable to afford to fill that prescription. This is totally absurd. The result is that Americans who are unable to buy the drugs that were prescribed to them become much sicker than they should have been, and in some cases they die. The result is also that people will end up in the emergency room or in the hospital at great expense to themselves and to the system because they were unable to afford the drugs that would have improved their health.

As Dr. Marcia Angell, a senior lecturer in social medicine at Harvard Medical School and a former editor of the New England Journal of Medicine, recently wrote in the Washington Post:

Why do drug companies charge so much? Because they can.

Simple truth. There is not a rational economic reason for that. They charge outrageously high prices because nobody is stopping them in this country.

The United States is the only major country on Earth—the only one—that does not in one form or another regulate prescription drug prices. What that means is you could walk into the drugstore and the pharmacy tomorrow, and you could find that the price you are paying for a drug you have been using for many years has doubled, tripled, or gone up 10 times, and the United States has chosen to be the only major country on Earth that does not address this issue.

Let me give a few examples, some of which have received a good deal of attention recently.

In the United States, Daraprim, a prescription drug used to treat patients diagnosed with cancer and AIDS, shot up in price from \$18 a pill to \$750 a pill, literally overnight, after this drug was acquired by a former hedge fund man-

ager by the name of Martin Shkreli, who is quickly becoming the poster child for pharmaceutical greed. This same exact drug sells for 66 cents a pill in Britain, and Mr. Shkreli is charging the American people \$750 for a drug used to treat patients with cancer and AIDS. That makes no sense to me, and it makes no sense to the American people.

Last week Congressman ELIJAH CUMMINGS and I sent a letter to Mr. Shkreli asking him to explain why the price of this drug has skyrocketed by over 4,000 percent. Now the good news—or it appears to be the good news—is that Mr. Shkreli recently said he would lower the price of this lifesaving drug, although he has not yet indicated what the new price will be. But let's be very clear—this is just one of many examples of price gouging within the pharmaceutical industry.

I wish to give another example. In the United States the prescription drug Sovaldi, which is used to treat a very serious and widespread disease, Hepatitis C, costs \$1,000 a pill—a thousand bucks a pill. In Europe, the same exact drug, made by the same exact company, costs \$555 a pill. In Egypt and India, the same drug costs \$11 a pill.

The cost of this drug has become so expensive that Medicaid and the Veterans' Administration—and many veterans are suffering with Hepatitis C—both Medicaid and the VA are rationing access to Sovaldi and other blockbuster Hepatitis C drugs to only the sickest patients. In other words, people in the United States are dying and suffering because they or the government programs they rely on—Medicaid or the VA—are simply unable to afford the outrageous prices this company is charging.

According to a recent article in the Atlantic magazine, despite rationing Sovaldi, the State of New Mexico—and I am just using New Mexico as one example; this is taking place all across the country—the State of New Mexico will spend an estimated \$140 million this year on that drug alone.

I should tell you this issue first came to my attention as the former chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee when the VA requested an additional \$1.3 billion for that particular drug—\$1.3 billion for one drug. This is unacceptable and it has to change.

Last year, the pharmaceutical industry—shock of all shocks; I know the American people will be very surprised to hear this—the pharmaceutical industry spent \$250 million on lobbying and campaign contributions, and they employed some 1,400 lobbyists. Well, that is what you get when you spend one-quarter of a billion dollars and you have 1,400 lobbyists on Capitol Hill.

What you get is the ability to rip off the American people, to charge our people prices far higher than the people of any other country on Earth pay. And you have the three largest drug companies in this country making \$45 billion in profit last year. So that is not a bad investment. Hey, just spread the money around on Capitol Hill—\$250 million—throw in some campaign contributions, and the three largest drug companies make \$45 billion in a year. Meanwhile, all over this country, one out of five Americans cannot afford to fill their prescriptions. People die. People become sick. State governments spend huge sums of money on these drugs because they are so expensive.

The time has come to say loudly and clearly: Yes, the drug companies make a lot of campaign contributions, but maybe, just maybe, Congress might have the radical idea that it is more important for us to represent our constituents than the people who throw all kinds of money at us in Congress.

It is unacceptable that total spending on medicine in the United States has gone up by more than 90 percent since 2002. It is unacceptable that the monthly cost of cancer drugs has more than doubled over the last 10 years to \$9,900 a month. In the United States of America, you should not be forced into bankruptcy because you are diagnosed with cancer.

It is time—in fact, the time is long overdue—for our country and our Congress to join the rest of the industrialized world by implementing prescription drug policies that work for everybody and not just the owners in the pharmaceutical industry. That is why I recently introduced legislation to lower the cost of prescription drugs in America. That legislation is cosponsored by Senator AL FRANKEN of Minnesota and was introduced in the House by Congressman ELIJAH CUMMINGS.

Specifically, this is what the bill would do: No. 1, it requires Medicare to use its bargaining power to negotiate with the prescription drug companies for better prices—a practice that was banned by the Bush administration several years ago. No. 2, this bill would allow individuals, pharmacists, and wholesalers to import prescription drugs from licensed Canadian pharmacies, where drug prices are significantly lower than they are in the United States.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a comparison of the prices of some drugs in the United States with Canada be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

BRAND VS. BRAND

[Manufactured by the same company at the same cost. Delivered to two different countries]

	United States	Canada	
Advair Diskus			
Condition: Asthma & COPD	\$878.31	\$212.01	— 76%
Crestor			
Condition: High Cholesterol	608.72	160.05	— 74%

BRAND VS. BRAND—Continued

[Manufactured by the same company at the same cost. Delivered to two different countries]

	United States	Canada	
Premarin			
Condition: Estrogen Therapy	324.99	90.00	—72%
Abilify			
Condition: Depression	2,615.08	467.07	—82%
Zetia			
Condition: High Cholesterol	636.49	183.45	—71%
Nexium			
Condition: Heartburn	682.42	228.60	—67%
Synthroid			
Condition: Hypothyroidism	878.31	212.01	—76%
Januvia			
Condition: Type-2 Diabetes	970.56	273.60	—72%
Celebrex			
Condition: Arthritis	878.31	212.01	—76%
Diovan			
Condition: High Blood Pressure	475.04	144.90	—70%

Prices obtained May 19th, 2015 using average U.S. cash price for a 90 day personal supply from GoodRx.com using New York resident pricing and average Canadian mail-order pharmacy price.

Mr. SANDERS. I will give a few examples. We have a drug called Crestor that deals with high cholesterol. Here in the United States, we pay \$608 for a 90-day supply; in Canada \$160—74 percent less in Canada. Premarin for estrogen therapy is \$324 in the United States and \$90 in Canada. Nexium is \$782 in the United States and \$228 in Canada. Synthroid is \$878 in the United States and \$212 in Canada. It is the same product, the same company. It is not generic. These are the same exact brand name products. Celebrex—a widely used drug for arthritis—is \$878 in the United States and \$212 in Canada.

What this bill would do, in addition to having Medicare negotiate drug prices with the pharmaceutical industry—which would substantially lower the prices Medicare pays—this bill would allow individuals, pharmacists, and wholesalers to import prescription drugs from licensed Canadian pharmacies, where drug prices are substantially lower than they are in the United States.

I live 100 miles away from the Canadian border. In 1999, I took a busload of Vermonters—mostly women, many of them dealing with breast cancer—over the Canadian border into Montreal. As long as I live, I will never forget the looks on their faces when they bought the same medicine they were buying in Vermont, in the U.S.A., for one-tenth of the price—one-tenth of the price. These were working-class women who were struggling with breast cancer and who didn't have a whole lot of money. They were able to purchase the exact same medicine for 10 percent of the price in Montreal. That makes no sense to me, and it only speaks to the power of the pharmaceutical industry over the Congress that we have Members here who vote for all kinds of free-trade agreements—they just love free trade. We can bring in any product we want from China. We can have lettuce and tomatoes coming in from farms in Mexico. But for some strange reason we cannot bring in brand name drugs from Canada. We just can't do it. We can't figure out how to do it. And everybody here knows what the reason is—it is the power of the pharmaceutical industry, their campaign donations, and their lobbying efforts.

Our bill does a lot more than that. We cannot in good conscience tell people in our States that they must continue to pay outrageously high prices for prescription drugs when year after year drug companies make billions of dollars in profit and year after year people in our country get sicker and in some cases die because they can't afford the medicine they need.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHATZ. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. AYOTTE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHATZ. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr. SCHATZ. Madam President, last Friday, China announced its decision to implement a national cap-and-trade program beginning in 2017. It will cover the majority of China's greenhouse gas emissions, including those from power generation, iron and steel production, cement, chemicals, and manufacturing. In creating the world's largest market-based program that puts a price on carbon pollution, China is showing that it knows that climate change and economic growth can be addressed at the same time.

China stepped up on climate finance as well, matching the United States' contribution to the Green Climate Fund. China's announcement directly counters the arguments made by opponents of climate action here at home. The original idea was that essentially we should wait for China, that our actions would not make a difference without China, or worse, that we would be harming our own economic growth while they kept burning fossil fuels.

That argument, originally—that idea that on the challenge of our generation we should wait for other countries—was ridiculous on its face. After all, the United States must always lead. We are the indispensable Nation regardless

of what the other countries may or may not be doing. But even if you subscribe to that argument, everything changed last week. The world is taking action around us. We are now at risk of being left behind, both in terms of our energy systems and our international standing.

China's recent announcement to peak its coal use, reduce emissions from superpollutants, and now its decision to implement a cap-and-trade program throw the old arguments out the window.

Those who oppose climate action have also said that addressing climate change would slow economic growth. Of course, we have known for years that this is not true. Consider the plummeting cost of clean energy or savings at the pump due to higher fuel economy standards, both of which are good for consumers and good for the climate. Now we have further confirmation that countries can reduce emissions without sacrificing economic growth.

China obviously has no interest in putting the brakes on its growth. By including in its cap-and-trade program many sectors that are vital to its future growth, China is showing the United States and the rest of the world that it means business. China does not have a monopoly on ideas to reduce carbon pollution. In fact, most of their good ideas are still coming from us. The Senate has a long history of proposing market-based solutions to climate change, dating back to the 2003 Climate Stewardship Act from Senators MCCAIN and LIEBERMAN.

Earlier this year, Senator WHITEHOUSE and I reintroduced our American Opportunity Carbon Fee Act. Our bill would impose a price on carbon pollution and use the revenues to cut a \$500 check for all Americans, while lowering the corporate income tax rate from 35 percent to 29 percent. Economists from across the political spectrum agree this is good policy.

Putting a price on carbon in a revenue-neutral way will provide numerous benefits above and beyond the significant cuts in carbon pollution. It will give companies the policy certainty that they need, and it will send a price signal to polluters. By using revenues to lower tax rates and provide dividends to every American, we can

stimulate economic growth and protect the most vulnerable among us.

Carbon pollution entails costs, but right now taxpayers are footing the bill. By making polluters responsible for the damage they cause and returning all of the revenues to individuals and employers, we will send a signal that innovation in clean energy and other low-carbon technologies will be the driving force behind the global economy of the 21st century.

The United States should not cede leadership in those sectors to China, Germany or any other country. We always lead. It is what Americans do best. American ingenuity led to some of the most exciting developments in the last century—from the airplane and the assembly line to the microprocessors and solar cells. With the right policies, we can assure American leadership for the next century as well.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNIZING RICHARD EVANS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the distinguished career of Richard Evans, who has served as a Transportation Security Administration, TSA, aviation compliance inspector, passenger service manager, and county sheriff.

Richard Evans has always been a man of sound judgement and conviction. He began his law enforcement career at the Orange County Sheriff's Department in 1964 at the age of 21. As would become recurrent in his career, Richard rose through the ranks for 20 years and retired from the sheriff's department as an investigator. During Richard's exemplary career, he participated in numerous high-level, dangerous undercover cases. The department called upon Richard to participate in many joint Federal, State, and local task forces. He always answered the call and was willing to go above and beyond.

Following his service with the Orange County Sheriff's Department, Richard spent 17 years rising through the ranks of the world's largest airline fleet, American Airlines. Richard worked at the John Wayne Airport in

Orange County, the Ontario International Airport, and the Los Angeles International Airport. He completed his career with American Airlines at McCarran Airport in 2001.

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, Richard answered the call to service yet again and joined the TSA. He was quickly assigned to the law enforcement liaison section, where he built upon his 20 year law enforcement career and his 17 years with American Airlines. For nearly two decades, Richard has been the point of contact for all dignitary movements and specialized screening at McCarran Airport. In conjunction with Federal, State, and local law enforcement officials, Richard seamlessly ensured the safe and security of dignitaries in one of the Nation's busiest airports.

Official records note thousands of successful escorts, which include escorts for the President of the United States, the Vice-President of the United States, and former Presidents. Richard has personally coordinated the movements of Kings, Queens, Prime Ministers, Princes, Princesses, Ambassadors, and senior officials from more than 57 different countries. Nearly every Governor in the United States, a vast majority of Executive Branch Cabinet Secretaries, multiple Supreme Court Justices, and countless Members of Congress have experienced Richard's unrivaled expertise and without fail everyone agrees: Richard is the standard for exceptional service.

Richard Evans is a wonderful man and one of the finest public servants I have had the pleasure of meeting during my career. His trustworthy, problem-solving nature was always apparent when crises or challenges presented themselves. Dignitaries in the United States and around the world were fortunate to have been in his capable care. I commend Richard for his service to this Nation, and I wish him the best in his retirement and future endeavors.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this month, the Senate passed a resolution recognizing Hispanic Heritage Month and celebrating Hispanic Americans as dedicated public servants in the highest levels of government. These great Americans include a Supreme Court Justice, 3 U.S. Senators, 34 members of the House of Representatives, and 3 members of the President's Cabinet. I commend the U.S. Senate for passing this resolution celebrating Hispanic heritage, but we should be doing much more than approving a resolution. We should be working on a bipartisan basis to pass comprehensive immigration reform, as the Senate did last Congress under a Democratic majority. At the same time, the Senate should immediately confirm the several judicial nominees supported by the nonpartisan Hispanic National Bar Association.

There are three outstanding Hispanic judicial nominees that are currently

pending on the Senate's Executive Calendar: Luis Felipe Restrepo, nominated to a judicial emergency vacancy in the Third Circuit; Armando Bonilla, nominated to a judicial vacancy in the Court of Federal Claims; and John Michael Vazquez, nominated to a judicial emergency vacancy in the district of New Jersey. A fourth, Dax Lopez, has been nominated to a judicial vacancy in the Northern District of Georgia, and is still awaiting a hearing in the Judiciary Committee.

These dedicated public servants are eager to serve, but they have been blocked by the Republican leadership's virtual shutdown of the judicial confirmation process since they took over the majority in January. More than 8 months into this new Congress, the Republican leadership has allowed just six votes for judges. At this rate, the Senate this year will confirm the fewest number of judges in more than a half century. Luis Felipe Restrepo, Armando Bonilla, John Michael Vazquez, and Dax Lopez all deserve an up or down vote by this Senate.

Judge Restrepo was nominated last year to fill an emergency vacancy on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit in Pennsylvania. If confirmed, Judge Restrepo would be the first Hispanic judge from Pennsylvania to ever serve on this appellate court and only the second Hispanic judge to serve on the Third Circuit. He was unanimously confirmed 2 years ago by the Senate to serve as a district court judge. During his tenure as both a Federal district court judge and as a Federal magistrate judge, he has presided over 56 trials that have gone to verdict or judgment. He is superbly qualified, and I have heard no objection to his nomination. Despite his outstanding credentials and experience, it took the Republican majority 7 months just to schedule a hearing in the Judiciary Committee for this qualified nominee.

Judge Restrepo has bipartisan support from both Pennsylvania Senators and was voted out of the Judiciary Committee unanimously by voice vote. He has the strong endorsement of the nonpartisan Hispanic National Bar Association. At his confirmation hearing in June, Senator TOOMEY stated that "there is no question Judge Restrepo is a very well-qualified candidate to serve on the Third Circuit." Senator TOOMEY described Judge Restrepo's life story as "an American dream" and recounted how Judge Restrepo came to the United States from Colombia and rose to the top of his profession by "virtue of his hard work, his intellect, his integrity." I could not agree more.

Given his remarkable credentials, wealth of experience, and strong bipartisan support, the Senate should have confirmed Judge Restrepo months ago. Instead, for 10 months since his nomination back in November 2014, he has been denied a vote on his confirmation. No Senate Democrat opposes a vote on his nomination. He is being denied a confirmation vote by Senate Republican leadership. No one doubts that he