PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LOUIE GOHMERT

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 2021

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, this morning I was notified of a death in my family for which I had been legally designated to make all of the arrangements and decisions. It came unexpectedly and I have scrambled to get back to Texas on the first accessible plane. For this reason, I am missing the votes today, and will miss the votes tomorrow.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. CHRIS JACOBS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 2021

Mr. JACOBS of New York. Madam Speaker, on March 17, 2021 I missed the vote on H.R. 1652, the VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021. Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 89.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DONALD NORCROSS

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 2021

Mr. NORCROSS. Madam Speaker, during the vote on final passage of H.R. 1620—the Violence Against Women Act, I was detained. Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 86.

CONGRATULATING THE PIRATES BOYS BASKETBALL TEAM

HON. SCOTT FITZGERALD

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 2021

Mr. FITZGERALD. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Pewaukee Pirates High School boys' basketball team for winning the Division 2 state championship earlier this month.

In the state championship game, the Pirates played incredibly well, never once trailing in the contest as they raced out of the gate with an eight-point lead. They hit shot after shot as they built on their lead. The Pirates closed the first half with an impressive 12–0 run on their way to a 54–37 win. This remarkable victory is the Pewaukee team's first state championship win and their second appearance in the tournament.

I applaud Coach Burkemper and the entire team for their first state championship title. This team has overcome many obstacles in the face of the COVID–19 pandemic, but they persevered and brought home impressive hardware to show for it. Congratulations to the Pirates for their hard work all season. This achievement is well-deserved.

INTRODUCTION OF THE CONSIDER TEACHERS ACT OF 2021

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 2021

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, today, I rise to introduce the Consider Teachers Act of 2021, which would improve the service obligation verification process for Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant Program recipients. The Senate passed a version of this bill last Congress, and Senators MIKE BRAUN and KYRSTEN SINEMA are introducing the Consider Teachers Act of 2021 today.

The TEACH Grant Program was created by the federal government in 2007 to attract the best and brightest to the teaching profession in underserved communities. The TEACH Grant Program provides up to $4,000 a year in grants to students who agree to serve for at least four years as a full-time teacher in a high-need field in a public or private elementary or secondary school that serves low-income families. The obligation to teach four years must be completed within an eight-year period. Those who do not fulfill their service requirement but have been given grants have their grants converted into Federal Direct Unsubsidized Stafford Loans, which must be paid back with interest. These loans cannot revert to grants.

According to the Office of Management and Budget, 66 percent of the grants are converted into loans. Though 21,000 recipients have completed the program without conversion, 94,000 recipients have had their grants converted to loans. Those conversions are often triggered by small paperwork issues, such as submitting the annual form one day late or missing a date or signature.

In 2018, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) released a reconsideration process for recipients who had their grants converted into loans but had either fulfilled, or could still fulfill, their teaching requirements. The Department also turned back the clock to allow teachers who left the TEACH Grant Program once their grants were converted to give them more time to complete their requirements. These changes allowed the Department to lift the debt of 2,300 recipients.

This bill would codify this reconsideration process and mandate that the Department continue to implement it, creating a safeguard from changes in Department leadership. This bill would also outline yearly deadlines and notification requirements to rectify some of the TEACH Grant Program's previous administrative mishaps. Furthermore, with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, many recipients have had trouble finding qualifying work. This bill would create a grace period for these individuals by extending the fulfillment period by three years for anyone who was fulfilling their obligations when the coronavirus pandemic began.

This past year has given us all a hard lesson in the invaluable service that teachers and educators provide to our society. As many young students have turned to homeschooling and remote learning, we have all come to appreciate the hard work and incredible talent of our teachers, who foster the mental, physical and emotional growth of our children every day. This bill ensures that that pipeline of talent for the teaching profession remains strong and that we do not unduly burden TEACH Program recipients, who have dedicated themselves to serving our most vulnerable communities.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this bill.