

STUDENT LOANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPS) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, we all know if Congress doesn't come together soon, interest rates on student loans will double on July 1. Rates will go from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent.

Right now in our country, student loan debt is higher than credit card debt. This is a huge challenge and barrier facing students, their families and our economy. We cannot have our graduates leaving school with crushing debt. It limits the careers they can pursue, and we certainly don't want young people shying away from continuing their education because they know they'll never be able to afford it. We must keep open the doors of opportunity for all and, in the process, produce a well-educated workforce that's going to grow our economy.

But, if Congress doesn't act soon, more than 7 million low- and middle-income students nationwide will be required to pay more for their student loans. This would mean adding thousands of dollars to a college bill, and that's why I am a proud supporter of legislation to address this issue. I support ending some of the lavish subsidies we give to extraordinarily profitable oil companies and using that money to keep student loan rates from doubling and, at the same time, reducing our deficit by billions of dollars.

We must get our priorities straight. We should be investing in our students and bringing down our deficit instead of handing over taxpayer dollars to some of the richest corporations in the world. I urge my colleagues to join in this effort.

VA COMMUNITY-BASED
OUTPATIENT CLINICS

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

Mr. BOUSTANY. Mr. Speaker, I recently received the first monthly update from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs since the announced delays associated with the Lafayette and Lake Charles VA Community-based Outpatient Clinics. VA Secretary Eric Shinseki's office followed through on my request for detailed monthly updates of the progress the VA is making with regard to these clinics in both Lafayette and Lake Charles. The errors in the contracting process were solely the VA's fault, and they've admitted it. I will remain vigilant in overseeing the expedited process to deliver south Louisiana veterans the local care they need and deserve.

I am pleased to announce that there are new and much-needed services for veterans coming to Lafayette in early May. These services include home-based primary care, imaging and x ray services, prosthetics and dental care.

For the veterans in Lake Charles, a mobile clinic providing primary care services is expected to begin June 4, and the selection of a location is under way. This will be a first for our veterans in Lake Charles who have had to travel far to get basic care. According to the VA officials, the Veterans Affairs' clinic primary care services will be available in Lake Charles 3 days per week also beginning June 4. Women's services will be provided 1 day per week in Lake Charles beginning then as well.

We need to do more, and we're going to do more. These are all very important services the veterans of south Louisiana deserve after sacrificing so much for our country. They should not have to wait any longer for this very much needed medical care. Expediting this process must remain a top priority for the VA.

Having cared for veterans in the VA system during my medical career, I know localized, personalized outpatient facilities and care are best for our veterans. This is a critical priority for our area. This is the least we can do for those who have fought on behalf of our country, and I am committed to ensuring that this unnecessary VA mistake does not repeat itself in the future. I will continue demanding accountability from the VA leadership on this and on other issues. I will continue to be the leading advocate for local veterans as we work to improve health care for our veterans in Lafayette and Lake Charles and in the surrounding communities of south Louisiana.

God bless those who have served our country. God bless America.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

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

Ms. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, I come humbly to the well today, under the "E Pluribus Unum," to ask that there be swift bipartisan action in reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act. VAWA's authorization, of course, lapsed at the end of the last fiscal year, on September 30, 2011.

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Unfortunately, for every day that passes by, women pay the price. The annual National Census of Domestic Violence Services—a daily snapshot taken every year by the National Network to End Domestic Violence—found that in one 24-hour period in the United States, over 67,000 victims were served through emergency shelters, transitional housing, counseling, legal advocacy, and more. Over 22,000 hotline phone calls were answered and over 26,000 people participated in domestic violence prevention and education training.

For all these people who are served, unfortunately, in the same 24-hour period, there are nearly 11,000 unmet requests for services because these programs neither have the resources to

help these victims nor the authorizations based on best practices on how we need to change VAWA in order to meet the needs of women.

Our colleagues across the Capitol in the Senate are on the cusp of passing a bipartisan VAWA reauthorization bill that contains these provisions to strengthen our ability to combat not only domestic violence, but also sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. And I'm so proud to say that right here on this floor, 1 month ago, I introduced a companion bill to the Senate legislation that contains these badly needed updates to reflect the input of numerous stakeholders and lays a path forward for VAWA.

The vision is to protect all victims, no matter what their gender, sexual orientation, immigration status, or whether or not they reside in sovereign territories or in States. These updates have garnered criticism from our colleagues on the other side of the aisle that offer fundamental, simple rights that ought to be guaranteed by the 14th Amendment.

For example, this bill would recognize the tribes' authority to prosecute non-Indians or Indians who abuse their American Indian spouses or dating partners on tribal lands. Fifty-two percent of women who are beaten, battered, raped, or stalked on tribal lands are not prosecuted because tribes have no authority. And on tribal lands, there is no follow-up and no prosecution.

The bill would also provide equal opportunity for areas that are in traditionally underserved areas, including those who have barriers because of their religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation. It's absurd to say that because you are a homosexual that you don't deserve protection from being beaten, stalked, or raped. And, of course, the Hippocratic Oath would have us scoop up a person who may be lying in the street, hit by a truck. We don't ask people for their immigration papers in order to intervene in a life-saving intervention. Why would we demand this of immigrant women?

We have got to ensure a more comprehensive response to the continuing problem of enforcement, reporting, and services for victims of sexual assault.

In spite of the strides we have made toward a new and improved VAWA, just yesterday the House Republicans put their so-called "clean" reauthorization bill on the floor. Let me tell you this: it's clean, perhaps, because we don't want to sully our hands dealing with the beaten, stalked, murdered, and bullied butch-batterers, because we don't want to deal with homosexuality. We want clean reauthorization, a sleight of hand that keeps immigrant women in the shadows and keeps their pain and their battery and their victimization in the shadows and makes them invisible. We're actually sanctioning the abuse that occurs on tribal lands and providing a sanctuary for assailants who commit these crimes on