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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HARPER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
May 9, 2012.

I hereby appoint the Honorable GREGG HARPER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 17, 2012, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

STUDENT LOAN DEBT

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

Mr. WELCH. Mr. Speaker, right now, families across this country are sitting around their kitchen tables trying to figure out how they can send their kids to college. They're talking about how to finance a college education when the cost of that is rising faster than the cost of health care.

Parents are making some very difficult decisions. Should we refinance our homes and dwindle our retirement? How much money can we borrow? How

much can we ask our kids to borrow in order to put this financial package together? And for the first time, many of these parents are considering the unthinkable: maybe they can't afford to send their kids to college.

Meanwhile, in 52 days, if Congress does not act, a very bad situation will get worse. On July 1, the interest rates on the Stafford student loans will double from 3.4 to 6.8 percent. Vermont students, American students and parents need action from Congress and need it now.

Over the past few weeks, I've been asking Vermonters to share their real-world stories, and I'd like to tell a few.

Katie from West Glover graduated with \$36,000 in student loan debt. And it's a tough economy. She's had a hard time finding a job, so she took an internship so she can keep advancing her career. She works 5 to 6 days a week making 25 bucks a day. She's essentially providing well-educated, cheap labor, but she doesn't have a choice. She doesn't regret her decision to go to school, but she's getting extremely apprehensive about her ability to get this financial albatross off her back.

Sue from Newport has \$125,000 in debt. She also has some medical problems which limit the kind of work that she can do, but she does work and has a full-time job. But student loan payments are \$600 a month, making it very difficult for her to pay her other bills, and she has no savings and no retirement.

Peter, a parent from Calais, Vermont, he always believed that he could send his son to college. Now he's not sure that he can. His son has done his part, graduating from high school with honors, and he's been accepted to a number of very good institutions. But with tuition costs at those schools ranging from \$30,000 to \$56,000 a year, Peter from Calais is just not sure that their family is going to be able to make this work out.

Julie from Huntington, Vermont. She grew up in a single-parent home, living below the poverty line, but she was told that if she worked hard in school, studied, she could achieve a great future. She did her part. She also was taught, by the way, that she should avoid debt at all costs. She is pursuing college but working three jobs while she's going to school full-time. And she's still piling up debt. She was taught to believe that if she worked hard and applied herself she could achieve great things. Now working three jobs, piling up debt, "Is there a way out?" is the question she's asking.

Mr. Speaker, this is more than about extending the low interest on the Stafford loans. It's really about whether we're going to have a pathway for people trying to climb into the middle class to get there and for people in the middle class to stay there. How much more burden can we impose on folks who want a future for their families, for their kids? It is absolutely unconscionable, in this world that we're in, to double student interest rates from 3.4 to 6.8 percent.

It is time for Congress to stand up for the middle class, for those folks from Vermont and around the country who are trying to do the best for themselves and for their country.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATIONAL SECURITY

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

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, climate deniers have buried their heads so deep in the sand they can't hear the Secretary of Defense warning us about the risk of climate change.

Last week, Secretary Panetta gave a speech about the impact of climate change on national security. He said,

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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