

I do not end up homeless. I may even have to look overseas to find work.

I have hopes that the government will see stories like mine from people who have risen above their circumstances and are able to go to college to make their lives better and not be statistics and actually do something to help us.

These stories, obviously, speak for themselves. We are certainly leaving our children with far too much debt. Ten years ago we had a budget surplus, until this government—the House and Senate and the President in the last decade—made terrible mistakes and blew a hole in the Federal budget. We do not want to also leave them increased debt from student loans. My wife was the first person in her family to go to college, to Kent State University. She graduated with almost no debt, even though her family was not really able to help her much, because the State government was more involved, the Federal Government was more involved, and tuition was lower.

It is a moral question to me to make sure we can freeze these interest rates. We have no business saddling a more onerous debt burden on the young men and women of our country.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

#### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2012

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, it has been more than a month since the Senate came together to pass the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2012. This bill, commonly referred to as VAWA, reflects the tradition of bringing together people from both political parties to work with professionals in the field and address the needs of victims—all victims. More than two-thirds of the Senate, including 15 Republicans, voted for this common sense legislation. It is a rare feat in the Senate these days, as the distinguished Presiding Officer knows, but it demonstrates that the Leahy-Crapo reauthorization bill is about saving lives, not partisan politics.

Few laws have had a greater impact on the lives of women in this country than the Violence Against Women Act. Because of this law, the days of dismissing domestic and sexual violence crimes with a joke or a shrug are over. The resources, training, and law enforcement tools provided by VAWA over the past 18 years have transformed the criminal justice and community-based responses to abuse. It gave support and protection to victims who for generations had been blamed, humiliated, and ignored.

I had hoped the House Republicans would follow our demonstration of bipartisanship by moving forward with the Senate-passed VAWA reauthorization bill. Instead, the Republican leadership in the House chose to proceed with a bill that doesn't reflect the core values of VAWA.

I mention its core values because we worked—both parties in this body—to

reflect what is most important in VAWA. The House Republican bill does not include protections for all victims. It takes away existing protections that have proven effective in preventing domestic and sexual violence. In short, the House bill is not VAWA.

Regrettably, the House Republican leadership would not even allow a vote on the bipartisan Senate-passed bill, which truly does do the job. They would not allow open debate regarding the relative merits of the different versions of the bill—ours, which protects all victims, and theirs, which rolls back protections. Had the House had the opportunity to vote on the Senate-passed bipartisan bill, I believe the President would have signed it and it would now be law. Nearly two dozen House Republicans, along with most Democratic Members, voted against the restrictive House bill.

It is not surprising that the House Republican bill failed to gain support among those who actually work with victims, the people who see these victims on a daily basis in all parts of the country. When challenged on the House floor to name any law enforcement or victim advocacy organization that supported the House Republican bill, their lead sponsor could not name a single one. Why? More than 320 organizations that work with the victims of domestic and sexual violence opposed that bill.

By contrast more than 1,000 local, State, and national organizations supported the bipartisan Senate bill, including hundreds of law enforcement, victim advocates, and faith-based groups. Why? Because in our bill, we worked at it. We did it the old-fashioned way—Republicans and Democrats working together after months of discussion with stakeholders from across the country and all political persuasions from the right to the left. The provisions in our bill that protect battered immigrant women, Native women, and the most vulnerable among us who have had trouble accessing services were recommendations from those very professionals who work with crime victims every day. The bipartisan Senate bill is intended to respond to the changing, unmet needs of victims and to prevent future acts of domestic and sexual violence. Instead of picking and choosing, as they tried to, among who would get protection, we came up with a simple fact. We said a victim is a victim is a victim. If somebody has been victimized, the police don't go and say: Can we help this battered person, maybe even murdered person? We might be able to get involved in this, provided they are not an immigrant or provided they are not a Native American or provided only if they are straight. That is not the way it works.

I still have nightmares over some of the crime scenes I visited at 2 and 3 and 4 o'clock in the morning when I was a prosecutor and I saw people who had been badly battered, badly injured. I never heard a police officer say: Be-

fore we go any further on this, what category does this battered victim fall into? Because unless they fall into one of these specific categories—such as the House bill had—we can't do anything for them. No, no police officer ever said that in my presence nor in anybody else's presence.

It was law enforcement who educated us on the importance of the U visa to keeping our streets safe and encouraged us to support a modest improvement to this program. The enhanced consultation provisions in the bill were included after domestic and sexual assault coalitions and other victim advocacy groups told us that they wanted to coordinate their activities in a more effective way with VAWA state administrators and Federal agencies. Victim service providers also told us that the LGBT community experiences violence at the same rate as the broader community but faces a serious lack of available services. It was the Native American community that informed us about the epidemic of domestic violence in tribal communities and the need to increase local prosecution of these crimes. It is unacceptable that nearly three out of five Native American women have been assaulted by their spouses or intimate partners, yet the percentage of these cases that are prosecuted is appallingly low. That is why our bill provides law enforcement with additional tools to combat domestic and sexual violence in Tribal communities.

The Senate has already considered and soundly defeated a conscripted version of the bill, like the House Republicans' version, that would not help all victims. We voted 37-62 against the Hutchison-Grassley amendment last April. This was not a case where an amendment did not obtain a supermajority of more than 60 votes. The votes against it were bipartisan and more than 60. I do not understand why the House Republican leadership has gone to tremendous lengths to avoid debating and voting on the bipartisan Senate-passed VAWA reauthorization bill.

The House Republican leadership has refused to consider two House bills that mirror the Leahy-Crapo bill, including one introduced by a Republican. They also raised a procedural technicality as an excuse to avoid debating the Senate bill, even though the Speaker of the House has the ability to waive that technicality and allow the House to move forward to consider the bipartisan Senate bill.

The Majority Leader tried to move this forward 2 weeks ago by proposing a way to resolve the technical objection by House Republicans to considering the bipartisan Senate-passed bill, but the Republican leader objected.

Frankly, victims should not be forced to wait any longer. They will not benefit from the improvements made by the bipartisan Leahy-Crapo bill, unless both Houses of Congress vote to pass this legislation. The problems and barriers facing victims of domestic and

sexual violence are too serious for Congress to delay. Domestic and sexual violence knows no political party. Its victims are Republican and Democrat, rich and poor, young and old. Helping these victims, all of them, should be our goal.

I will continue to work with our leadership in the Senate to come up with a solution that can move us past this impasse and send back to the House a Violence Against Women Act reauthorization bill that protects all victims. We know we can do that because the Senate has already passed such a bill. I am still hopeful that the House will do the same.

#### TRIBUTE TO CAROL MARTIN GATTON ACADEMY

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, Kentucky received quite an honor recently when the Carol Martin Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky, an elite public high school that draws students from all over the Commonwealth, was named the No. 1 public high school in the United States by *Newsweek* Magazine. Think about that, Madam President—out of more than 20,000 public high schools in the Nation, the top-ranked one is in Kentucky.

The Gatton Academy is in Bowling Green, KY, specifically, and it is a special place. First opened in 2007 and funded by the Kentucky General Assembly, the Gatton Academy is the Commonwealth's only State-supported residential high school with an emphasis on math and science. Bright, highly motivated students come from across the State and stay on campus, taking college-level courses at Western Kentucky University.

Dr. Julia Roberts, a good friend of mine and the executive director of the academy, worked hard for many years to see the school become a reality. How wonderful for her that her vision has been realized. This honor is a recognition that she truly deserves for her steadfast commitment to help Kentucky's finest students blossom and reach their full potential.

Here is a quote from Dr. Roberts that summarizes the school's mission:

The United States has emphasized proficiency or grade-level learning to the exclusion of nurturing the talents of advanced learners. A promising future for our country is closely tied to the development of talent in science, mathematics, languages arts, the social sciences, and the arts. The purpose of the Gatton Academy is to extend learning opportunities for gifted students who live in all parts of Kentucky.

I also must recognize Dr. Tim Gott, director of the Gatton Academy, without whose hard work the school surely would not have been able to rise to the top. In fact, the Gatton Academy tops *Newsweek's* list of public high schools this year after ranking fifth in 2011. That is quite a jump up in 1 year, thanks in part no doubt to the indefatigable work of Dr. Gott.

"It's just wonderful to be able to celebrate Kentucky students," Dr. Gott says. He also adds, "This recognition would not have been possible without the full partnership we have with Western Kentucky University."

The *Newsweek* rankings that put Gatton Academy on top were based on measurements such as graduation rates, college enrollment, average ACT and SAT scores, and advanced placement tests per student, as well as scores. This year, the school's average ACT score was 31.2 out of a possible 36, and its average SAT score was 2,010 out of a possible 2,400. In addition, over half of the school's students studied abroad last year, and 91 percent of recent graduates participated in a research project sponsored by a university mentor.

Mr. President, I would like to ask at this time that my colleagues in the Senate join me in recognizing the Carol Martin Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky and its great contribution to the success of Kentucky and the Nation. The students at Gatton are the future leaders and success stories of America.

I ask unanimous consent that the *Newsweek* article naming the Carol Martin Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky as the top-ranked public school in the Nation be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From *Newsweek*, May 20, 2012]

KENTUCKY ACADEMY TOPS THE CHART: NEWSWEEK RANKS KENTUCKY ACADEMY AS AMERICA'S TOP HIGH SCHOOL

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE THE BEST PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL IN AMERICA? DANIEL STONE REPORTS FROM THE TOP-SEEDED GATTON ACADEMY

(By Daniel Stone)

To call the Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science a high school, you'd have to suspend an element of reality. You'll find no football games, pep rallies, or dismissal bells on the Kentucky campus. Instead you'd find couches designed for study halls and white boards scribbled with advanced math. Last week, one student even walked around campus in a T-shirt proclaiming, "Extreme science: What a rush."

Welcome to Gatton. Or as administrators affectionately call it, the crucible—a place with admittedly high pressure, but where every student succeeds. The school has another title, too: America's best public high school, according to *Newsweek's* 2012 ranking of the top 1,000. On every metric used—test scores and graduation and college matriculation rates—Gatton sets the nation's curve.

The school, about 100 miles south of Louisville in verdant Bowling Green, Kentucky, is a public school with selective admission based only on past academic performance—a key quality that separates Gatton from other public schools, which are mostly mandated to seek economic and racial diversity.

Once students are in, they're given broad autonomy to pursue subjects that interest them: They befriend their instructors and conduct scientific research. During semester breaks, the school helps students study abroad. Last winter, the offerings were Western Europe and Costa Rica.

It is, you might note, a bit like college.

That's precisely the idea. Back in 2007, generous funding from the Kentucky statehouse brought Gatton to life. The facility, a five-story building about the size of one football field, was built for 126 lucky and ambitious minds. Students live on campus in dorms and eat with their friends in dining halls. They see their parents only once a month. Most of their classes are college level, literally, which they take on the adjacent campus of Western Kentucky University. "We see ourselves as an atypical high school. We're trying to break the mold of what high school could be," says Tim Gott, who directs the school's academic programs.

Gatton was designed under the Early College Model, a concept devised by researchers at the University of North Texas (UNT) in the 1970s. They wanted to end traditional high school after tenth grade to push students into a college environment sooner. "The idea was to zip them through the educational process," says Richard Sinclair, one of the early researchers of the model. Sinclair now runs the Texas Academy of Math and Science, a school similar to Gatton, albeit twice its size, that's located on the UNT campus. About seven schools exist under the model, most of them in the South. Despite the high cost—Gatton's yearly budget for 126 pupils is \$2.6 million—state legislatures tend to like the idea because it gets hungry minds out of school faster, turning them into taxpayers and industry leaders.

To understand just how different Gatton is, try to name another high school that has a living room. Or students who have pet names for their math classes (multi, diffie). Some high-schoolers pin posters with the latest movie or heartthrob; in one break room at the end of Gatton's dorm hall is a floor-to-ceiling crossword puzzle—the one from *SkyMall* magazine—that's about half full. When *Newsweek* visited last week, senior Jordan Currie picked up the clue list. "370 across is kingdom!" she shouted. "Someone fill it in!"

Ambition, in other words, is a sort of currency, and the only one that really matters. In the five years since the school opened, some of its students have already completed law school, begun dentistry and pharmacy programs, and started doctoral degrees. (The school's everybody-knows-your-name mentality has already produced seven marriages.)

Of seven students who agreed to be interviewed, all said they wouldn't stop studying until they had their Ph.D.s. Some are already on their way. Andrea Eastes, who graduated this year, spent her senior year studying DNA, specifically in pursuit of a cure for tuberculosis. "Everything you need to take tissue cultures is in here," she says matter-of-factly, just a few steps away from a canister of liquid nitrogen.

Gatton has its share of the usual adolescent issues, too. Some students stress over their studies, others over friends and romance. The school employs a full-time school psychologist to work through these issues, and occasionally more serious ones too, like broken families or eating disorders. "Every student comes to me for something," says Christopher Bowen, Gatton's Converse-wearing psych counselor. "It's almost like, if you're not coming to see me, then we think something's wrong."

Gatton has received nods from high places. Kentucky Sen. Mitch McConnell, the Senate's minority leader, stopped by once to marvel; when he got back to Washington, he submitted a statement into the Congressional Record exalting the school.

But Gatton's administrators admit it's not a model for every school. You need to have students who really want to excel before you