

their donors, but, more importantly, on the communities they serve.

Tim Delaney, president and CEO of the National Council of Nonprofits, recently wrote:

The IRS proposal would open the door for scam artists. . . . Nonprofits have neither the financial resources nor sufficient staffing to combat hackers who will see an easy source for Social Security information. This also creates a liability nightmare for innocent nonprofits. . . . To be asked to share their address, their credit card number and their Social Security number all in the same place would be enough to scare even the most committed donor to decline to give.

Tim Delaney has aptly summarized this pending and serious problem. He poses very legitimate concerns, especially regarding how scam artists might operate, explaining:

Imposters' phone scripts will go something like this: "Hi . . . I'm working for several nonprofits here in Kansas to make sure that generous donors like you get full credit for your wonderful contributions. . . . The nonprofits asked me to thank you for your generosity and confirm your name and address. . . . Also, the IRS has a new regulation that nonprofits need your Social Security number so we can send you a form confirming your contribution in case you get audited. What's your Social Security number so we can send you the form?"

Sadly, many people who want to be sure to support their charity will give the scam artists exactly what they want.

To protect the mission of our non-profit community and the taxpayers who share their hard-earned dollars with those in need, I have introduced legislation to block this regulation and to maintain current law. The Protecting Charitable Contributions Act would maintain current IRS rules governing the substantiation of charitable contributions, and prohibit the IRS from issuing, revising, or completing any new regulation that would alter the existing rules. This just makes sense. And I would think the IRS would agree when in their own description of the proposal they state that the present system works effectively.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation and to join me in stopping this dangerous and unneeded proposal from moving forward.

I urge all those who play a role in supporting nonprofits to go to the IRS Web site before December 16 to provide written comments to the IRS about this proposal. Yep, the IRS would like to have your comments.

Let me repeat that. I would urge all those who play a role in supporting nonprofits to go to the IRS Web site before December 16 to provide written comments to the IRS about this proposal. The message should be simple: No.

This is one Christmas greeting you had better send.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

PERKINS LOANS, HARDEST HIT FUND, AND ENFORCE ACT

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about a couple of areas where I think we can make progress on legislation before the end of the year. This has been a legislative session in which we passed a number of important bills, and I think there is more we can do. Specifically, I am going to talk about some legislative initiatives that will give a leg up to American workers—Ohio workers—and also to help our families and help our students.

I will start with students. There is an opportunity over the next couple of weeks for us to ensure that we reauthorize the Perkins Loan Program. Perkins is an incredibly important program, particularly for low-income students. In my view, of all the student loan programs out there, Perkins is by far the most flexible. This is an urgent matter because if we don't pass an extension, new loans will not be reauthorized, even in January as students start this next semester. Let's not allow college tuition to become even less affordable for low-income students. Let's ensure that they can get a college degree to pursue their dreams and that we do move forward with this Perkins reauthorization.

I spoke about this on the floor a month or so ago. I talked about it as a program that was incredibly important for students in my State. I talked about the fact that there are 60 schools in the Buckeye State, in Ohio, that have received loans from this program. Over the last school year, more than 25,000 Ohio students received financial aid through Perkins—including about 3,000 students at Kent State University and about 1,700 students at the Ohio State University.

I was in Columbus last weekend and had a chance to meet with some Ohio State students who care a lot about this. They want to ensure that this Perkins is going to be there for them so they can stay in school. Some of them already have help from other programs, but they know that if they don't have the Perkins Loan Program, they can't afford to make ends meet and to stay in school. It is very important.

I have also heard from our college Presidents from around the State—particularly from Dr. Beverly Warren from Kent, who was here a couple of weeks ago to talk to me about this, and Dr. Michael Drake, whom I saw last week at Ohio State. They want to ensure that their students have this possibility.

One of the students I talked to is Keri Richmond. Keri is a junior at Kent State, and she interned at my office this past summer. Keri was an in-

credible intern. She is a student who is working hard. She is at Kent State, likely to graduate a little bit early. She spent her teenage years going from foster home to foster home. She fought the odds, and she is now excelling in college. She is bright. She is ambitious. Even with her Pell Grant, she has to have that Perkins loan in order to be able to stay in school, in order to make ends meet.

This is an important program, but it is not about a program. It is not about numbers. It is about people. It is about Keri Richmond and others like her. The impact goes well beyond Ohio. Over 1,700 colleges and universities across the country participate in this program. Low-income students everywhere rely on it. If it expires, it is only more difficult to pay for school. Instead, what we should be doing in the Senate is making it easier, not harder, to afford to go to school. Some of these tuitions have gone up and up. We have to be sure every kid has a chance to be able to get ahead by going to college or university.

If we don't move, students who previously received a Perkins loan will lose their eligibility if they change institutions or academic programs. It is a big deal for them. If we don't act soon, students who are seeking loans for the winter and spring semesters will be ineligible. In total, it is possible that 150,000 freshmen will lose their eligibility this fall. We can't let that happen. Let's not allow college tuition to become this roadblock for low-income students who are looking for a college degree. Let's give them this chance. Let's give them this opportunity. By the way, let's extend it but at the same time work on ways to improve the program. I know there are some Members on my side of the aisle—and I think on the other side as well but certainly on my side of the aisle—who said they have concerns about some of these student loan programs and would like to reform them to make them work better. That is great. Let's take the time to do that.

In the meantime, let's not eliminate this program and have these kids fall between the cracks. I am there on the reforms. I would like to help on that. I think we can do better for all of our student loan programs and help all of our kids be able to have a better chance to succeed. Let's not create this terrible uncertainty for these students in the meantime. Let's extend this program and then work on those reforms.

I thank Senator CASEY, Senator BALDWIN, Senator COLLINS, and others for their strong leadership on this. I want to ask my colleagues in the Senate to do simply what the House has done and do an extension of this program. The House has already passed this legislation. There is no reason it shouldn't be in the omnibus legislation, and there is no reason we shouldn't move forward with ensuring that these kids have the certainty they need to be able to stay in school.

Mr. President, the second issue I want to talk about is that while students get the education they need, we also have to ensure that the communities they are going back to are safe and make sure those communities can thrive and grow.

One of the issues we have in Ohio and unfortunately in too many neighborhoods all around this country is that you have a lot of blight, a lot of homes that have been abandoned. Two things happen: One, when homes are abandoned, they become a magnet for crime, for drugs, and for other criminal activity to the point that they are dangerous for the community, but, second, they drive down the cost of the other houses—sometimes by as much as 80 percent. If you are in a community or you have a beautiful home you are taking care of but your neighbor's house becomes abandoned and becomes a magnet for crime and an eyesore, it drives down all of the property values.

In Congress we have spent a lot of money, taxpayer money, on helping people deal with their mortgages when they are underwater—particularly after the financial crisis. In my view we ought to focus more on taking down these abandoned homes and creating safer neighborhoods but also, through market forces, allowing the property values of all of these homes to increase.

I think this is an honorable effort, and it is one that a lot of people are focused on now around the country. I don't think we are quite caught up to where our neighborhoods are here in Washington, DC, because when I go home to Ohio I hear about this all the time. We have about 80,000 of these dangerous abandoned homes in Ohio.

Again, to address public safety concerns and tumbling home values in these struggling neighborhoods, one of the best alternatives is to demolish these abandoned structures. Sometimes another structure can be rebuilt there. That is what we want. We want more economic development in these communities. In some cases, I have seen where there was an abandoned home, it was torn down and made into a community garden and the community can all participate. The point is to get these homes down so we can have the redevelopment we all want.

I have walked the streets with local officials in Cleveland, Warren, Lima, and Toledo, OH, and I have seen these problems firsthand. As I do that, I talk to the residents. I ask them what they think. You can imagine the response I get. First, for them, it is an eyesore. It is a danger for their kids, grandkids. Second, they are worried about their property values.

I had one occasion to speak to someone in Toledo, OH, that was particularly concerning to me. This was a woman who had three kids. Her home was right next to an abandoned home, literally feet away—6 or 7 feet away, sort of like a row house. She said: ROB, every night I go to bed worrying that

the home next to me, which is abandoned, is going to be torched by arsonists. At that point in time—this was in Toledo, OH—there was about one arson a night, where these abandoned homes were not just targets for crime but they were also being used by arsonists as practice for burning down a home. She was worried about her kids. She was worried she couldn't go to sleep at night because if that home caught fire next to her, her home could be next.

This is something we ought to focus on and we can focus on. Land banks in some of our hardest hit areas of Ohio, Michigan, and other States have gotten to work on attacking this problem. They have done a great job. They don't have the resources they need to demolish as many properties as they would like to help some of these struggling neighborhoods. That is why these land banks have come to us and asked: Can you help us a little more?

After talking to them, after visiting these neighborhoods, we did take action. We authored legislation called the Neighborhood Safety Act of 2013, which was a bipartisan effort and a bicameral effort. In the House, you had Members like DAVE JOYCE, MARCY KAPTUR, and MARCIA FUDGE working on this. Our legislation called for what is called the Hardest Hit Fund to be used not just to help people pay down their mortgages but also to help people be able to knock down these abandoned homes. We pushed it aggressively, and this important change was made administratively. It has provided nearly \$66 million in Ohio and around the country to deal with these thousands of abandoned homes in our State. Michigan also got funds, as did other States.

Now, in many of these States, these Hardest Hit Funds have run out. In other words, there are more abandoned homes than there is money to be able to deal with the problem. Given the success rate we have and the fact that these land banks are doing a great job, we think it is time to provide some more funding. That is what we proposed to do in the Omnibus appropriations bill.

I am working with Senator STABENOW, Senator BROWN, and others to transfer funds from what is called the Home Affordable Modification Program, which is a program that would be eliminated under our proposal, and shift some of those funds into the Hardest Hit Fund for demolition purposes. I have repeatedly discussed this issue with our leadership, Senator MCCONNELL and others, our leadership here on the committees in the Senate and in the House, and I am very hopeful this can be done before year-end. It is the right thing to do. It is an opportunity for us to be able to shift some of these funds from a program that is not working as well into a program we know works and to make progress in some of our struggling neighborhoods in Ohio and around the country.

I give special thanks to these land banks in Ohio that have taken the lead on this issue back home. Particularly, I want to thank the tireless efforts of Jim Rokakis, director of the Thriving Communities Initiative at the Western Reserve Land Conservancy. He has done excellent work in helping to lead this effort and highlight this issue. I hope we can get this done, even in the next week here, to be able to help our communities in Ohio and around the country.

Mr. President, finally, when we talk about keeping our communities safe and the need to help our students, we also have to be sure that we are helping our workers. We need to ensure we are protecting jobs in our States that are threatened by unfairly traded imports.

I am pleased that we will soon be voting to pass the conference report for the Customs bill. It is my understanding that this may come up as early as Monday or Tuesday next week. I hope we can pass that here in the Senate and send it to the President for his signature.

There are a number of aspects of the Customs bill I support, but one aspect of it that I think is really important is legislation that is called the ENFORCE Act, to ensure that we are enforcing our laws properly. This is on the heels of legislation we already passed as part of the trade promotion authority earlier this year. That legislation is called Level the Playing Field Act. Senator SHERROD BROWN, my colleague from Ohio, and I offered this legislation, and it is now part of our law and ammunition we can use against unfairly traded imports. It is already working because it has already been signed into law, and it is helping to deal with dumping when people are selling below costs or when they unfairly subsidize imports. It is helping workers in Ohio. It is helping our tire workers, paper workers, and steel workers, and we are proud of that.

The problem is that although the legislation that we have already passed, the Level the Playing Field Act, helps with regard to taking on countries that are sending their products here unfairly, sometimes those countries then decide to try to evade the provisions we put in place, the higher tariffs for their dumped products or their higher tariffs for their subsidized products. That is what the ENFORCE Act is about. It is about ensuring that although we have this legislation in place, countries and their companies don't go around those regulations and still try to get products here into the United States by illegally sending it through another country or relabeling the product so that it doesn't fall under the tariffs that might be levied against them.

I am really hopeful that we will be able to pass this additional legislation. It is incredibly important, as I said, not only for Ohio, but it is also important for the country. Time after time we

have seen that once we put these protective orders in place against these unfairly traded imports, these countries continue to illegally enter our country through illegal transshipments to other countries or through relabeling these products.

I think we have an opportunity to move forward on something that is really important to help protect workers to ensure that we can closely examine these schemes and stop them.

This effort, by the way, is backed by the National Association of Manufacturers, the American Iron and Steel Institute, and the United Steelworkers. They have a common cause because they understand that it is so critical that we ensure that our workers get a fair shake.

I got an email last week from workers at Pennex Aluminum in Leetonia, OH, in the Mahoning Valley. They have 78 workers at their facility, and they won an important case against aluminum extrusions from China. The email said that this relief really helped us.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for 1 additional minute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. PORTMAN. These workers said: Senator PORTMAN, "this relief enabled our company to compete once again on a fair and level playing field." That is the relief we helped to provide by enforcing our laws against this product coming in.

They then said:

As a result, we recently completed an investment of \$38 million to expand our facility in Leetonia and create significant new jobs. Our great concern is that this trade relief is now at risk due to the efforts by Chinese producers to avoid paying duties by, among other schemes, manipulating the alloy content of their extruded aluminum products and shipping their products under a different name.

In other words, they were getting around the protections that are in place by simply relabeling the product. Again, this also happens by going around to other countries. That is why the ENFORCE Act is so important. Those 78 workers at Pennex Aluminum know it is important, and they know this legislation will help them to be able to get a fair shake.

Finally, I wish to thank the members of the conference committee on the customs bill for putting our BDS language into this legislation. It will help to avoid boycotts and divestment in sanctions of Israel. This is a way that some countries around the world are trying to delegitimize Israel. It is something that is important for us to take a stand on as a Congress, and we do that in this Customs legislation.

So again, I think there is some good legislation we can pass here in the next week or so in the Senate. I hope we will do it.

I thank the Presiding Officer for giving me the time tonight. We need to continue to stand up for our families,

our students, and our workers and ensure that, indeed, we do give the people we represent a fair shake.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

HONORING INDIANA SERVICEMEMBERS AND ALL AMERICANS WHO SERVED IN VIETNAM

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the service and sacrifice of Indiana servicemembers and their families and of all Americans who served during the Vietnam war, as this year marks the 40th anniversary of the end of that war.

Here is picture from the Indiana Historical Society of some of the amazing Americans who served during that time. Tens of thousands of Hoosiers bravely answered the call when they volunteered or were drafted to serve in Vietnam in almost every single capacity you could think of.

Bravely, and sadly, 1,243 Hoosier soldiers gave their lives in service to our country in Vietnam. In Vietnam, our vets endured 100-plus degree heat, monsoon rains, snake-infested rice paddy fields, staggering conditions, and incredibly dangerous situations.

Our servicemembers would rather have been at home in Terre Haute, Richmond, Indy, Evansville or Fort Wayne, but they served because they loved our country and they answered when our Nation called them, and their answer was: Count on me.

At the end of the war, many of our Vietnam vets didn't receive the welcome home or the recognition they deserved. Not all received huge hugs when they hit the tarmac back in America, but our Vietnam vets are heroes just like those who stormed the beaches in Normandy, trudged through frozen rivers in Korea, and went through the deserts of Iraq and the mountains of Afghanistan. Our Vietnam vets deserve to be held—and are held—in the same high regard as those who fought in World War I, World War II, Korea, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Our Vietnam vets are part of the seamless fabric that has saved our country and made it such a blessed place.

Today, our Vietnam vets get amazing receptions everywhere they go. In my home State of Indiana, a town in northern Indiana, LaPorte, IN, in LaPorte County, has their big parade every year on July 4. The streets are filled—5, 6, 7, 8 people deep for 2½ miles long—and every year the parade is led off by the Vietnam veterans of LaPorte County, and it happens all over our State. When the parade starts off, everyone gets out of their chairs and stands up—even those who have challenges and have difficulties—to applaud our men and women who were in Vietnam, and for 2½ miles they get an amazing standing applause the entire way. These vets are our parents, our brothers and sisters, our aunts and uncles, our grandparents, friends, neigh-

bors, and the folks who are sitting next to us in church on Sunday.

Our Vietnam veterans support and lead our communities as public servants, teachers, lawyers, nurses, business owners, factory workers, and bankers. Just about anything you can imagine—that is what our Vietnam vets are doing to make our country a greater place. They are a generation of veterans who have taught us about love of country and service, and they deserve to be honored for their selflessness and sacrifice.

Today, Indiana is home to nearly 150,000 Vietnam war veterans. We have a responsibility to provide them with the benefits and support they have earned and to show them the same commitment they demonstrated while they fought to protect us and our freedoms more than 4 decades ago.

We must ensure our veterans have access to timely and quality care at local VAs across our State and country, and that this care is delivered in a way that meets their needs. Expanding access to health care for our Hoosier vets has been and will continue to be a constant top priority of mine.

We recently broke ground in St. Joseph County, IN, on the new St. Joseph County Health Care Center. It will mean that many of our local vets in northern Indiana will be just a short ride away from the health services they have worked so hard to earn and receive.

We must continue to expand options for care, for example, through the Veterans Choice Program, which is bipartisan legislation that is now law. Provisions from our bipartisan servicemember and veteran mental health care package were signed into law recently as part of the national defense bill.

We are working every day to try to make sure our veterans have the chance to receive good physical health care and good mental health care and that we stand next to them and with them every step of the way. Our bipartisan Community Provider Readiness Recognition Act was included, and it helps connect Hoosier servicemembers and vets with local providers who can deal with the unique challenges that folks who were in our military face.

The demand for care among our vets has never been greater and our obligation to them has never been greater. In recognition of their service and sacrifice, we must deliver on our promise to care for all veterans long after their last day in uniform.

I have another picture here from the Indiana Historical Society. This is another group of our young soldiers. When they went off, as I said earlier, they didn't complain and didn't make excuses, and when our Nation called, as I said before, they said: Count on me.

We must keep the promises we made to our vets. We must keep those promises for their entire lives. Our Vietnam vets and their families made incredible sacrifices. We can do a better job of