

won't be able to single-handedly solve this serious economic crisis in rural America before we go home for the year. But, we shouldn't wait to address this important issue and offer some assistance. We should act soon and in a bipartisan fashion. We should explore short-term fixes, like lifting the cap on marketing loans, as well as long-term solutions, like tax fairness and expanded trade opportunities. We should stand up for the men and women in rural America and let them know that Congress and the Administration will work with them to help alleviate some of the economic pain and uncertainty they face.

To do anything less would be a disservice to our farmers and American agriculture.●

SOMERSET COUNTY RED RIBBON CAMPAIGN

● Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, Communities across our nation are being plagued by the numerous problems associated with drug and alcohol abuse, and this disease is playing an increasing role in the lives of our children. I rise today to commend Somerset County in Pennsylvania for its efforts to raise awareness and show our children that by choosing a drug-free lifestyle, they can reach their full potential.

The Somerset County Red Ribbon Committee is sponsoring its annual Red Ribbon Campaign, which offers citizens throughout Pennsylvania the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to a drug-free lifestyle. The Committee has designated October 23-31 Red Ribbon Week. Businesses, schools, churches and community organizations across the state will play an active role by participating in drug education and prevention activities throughout the week.

Our children are the future of our country. By joining together to fight the war on drugs we are investing in that future. I commend Somerset County for their efforts in confronting this difficult challenge. Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join Pennsylvania in recognizing Red Ribbon Week so that all of our children's futures may be promising, healthy and drug-free.●

CONFERENCE REPORT ON THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1998

● Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise to express my strong support for the Higher Education Act Amendments of 1998.

The Higher Education Act has been of enormous benefit to millions of students over the past three decades in providing more affordable access to institutions of post-secondary education. Many of these students simply would not have gone to college or vocational school without the assistance provided through such programs as Pell Grants, student loans, and work study.

With the increased competition faced by workers in the global economy, the importance of these programs is even greater today, not only for students, but also for our nation's economy. The Higher Education Act programs account for 68 percent of all financial aid available to students. In FY 1999, the student aid programs authorized under the Higher Education Reauthorization Act will provide \$50 billion of aid to over 8.8 million students.

The cost of a college education continues to grow far faster than inflation, leaving more and more students with a large debt once they finish. Last fall, the College Board released a nationwide survey of tuition costs, finding that tuition and fees would rise about 5 percent for the fifth year in a row.

In contrast, inflation in the overall economy has been held under control during these years, hovering at, or below 2 percent.

As costs have increased, student borrowing has expanded to make up the difference. Student loans now comprise about 60 percent of all financial aid, whereas in the 1980-81 school year, loans were just over 40 percent of the total.

Given the increased reliance on borrowing, it is notable that this reauthorization legislation provides for a reduction in interest rates on new student loans from 8.25 percent to 7.46 percent, saving \$11 billion for students over the life of their loans. The typical borrower at a 4-year college, who graduates with \$13,000 in debt, will save about \$700 over a ten-year repayment period. This is a major educational milestone, allowing student borrowers the lowest interest rate in 17 years.

Nearly 84 percent of South Dakota students receive financial aid in some form, with an average annual award of \$5,400 to students who receive aid at the six public universities. Approximately 16,000 students in South Dakota receive Pell Grants, accounting for \$28 million in federal assistance.

I am pleased that this bill gradually increases the size of the maximum Pell Grant to \$5,800 in academic years 2003-4. In the 1970s, Pell Grants covered three-quarters of the costs of attending a four-year public school. Today, these grants cover only one-third of the cost. I realize that finding the budget resources to fund this maximum grant fully will be a struggle, however Pell Grants are the most effective program we have for helping low-income students afford post-secondary education.

This legislation also continues the essential Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) program. This program alone has enabled forty million Americans to attend college over the past thirty years. Although direct lending by the federal government has consumed a portion of the overall student loan volume, all of the colleges and universities in my state of South Dakota continue to use the FFEL program and remain satisfied with the services they receive. Accordingly, I

have been skeptical of efforts that might destroy the balance that has existed between direct lending and the FFEL program. Federal policy should not be changed in ways to either favor direct lending or undermine the financial viability of lending by the private sector.

There are some lesser-noticed provisions of this bill of which I am particularly proud. Promoting the availability and affordability of child care has been one of my highest priorities in the Senate. That is why I am so pleased that legislation I cosponsored earlier this year, the CAMPUS Act, has been incorporated into this bill. CAMPUS stands for Child Care Access Means Parents in School. This provision will establish a grant program to assist colleges with the costs of establishing child care centers to provide campus-based child care for low-income parents attending college.

The obvious benefit of easy access to child care is that students with young children will have a much greater probability of staying in school and completing their degree. More and more students today are non-traditional students, and the need for campus-based child care is greater than ever before.

Additionally, this bill establishes an innovative new program to offer student loan forgiveness for those who earn a degree in early childhood education and become full-time child care workers in a child care facility. Child care, unfortunately, is one of the lowest-paying professions that one can find, and this low level of pay is completely incommensurate with the value of those who are caring for young children. Not surprisingly, turnover in this field is very high, as workers find better paying jobs elsewhere.

It is especially tragic when highly-trained graduates, those who have earned a degree in early childhood education, are forced to leave the child care profession because they cannot pay their student loans. We still need to do all we can to raise wages for child care workers, but helping with student loan repayment is a remarkable step forward. This concept was included in child care legislation I cosponsored last year, and I am very pleased that it has been included in this bill.

I am pleased this bill develops new distance education partnership models through the Learning Anytime Anywhere Partnership (LAAP) program. This creative initiative provides partnerships grants between schools and other entities to assist in the expansion of student achievement in distance education. LAAP, combined with the expansion of student aid for distance learners, will allow more non-traditional students to obtain higher education, including full-time workers, parents, people in rural areas, or individuals with disabilities.

In addition to meeting the needs of rural America through distance learning, the Higher Education Act speaks to an equally important population of

students: Indian Country. This bill includes a new initiative to provide grants and related assistance to Indian Tribal Colleges and Universities to improve and expand their capacity to serve Indian students. The bill authorizes \$10 million for FY 1999 and such sums as may be necessary in the years beyond FY 1999. This new initiative for Tribal Colleges will provide much-needed funding to strengthen academic programs, develop faculty, and improve student services.

Finally, I support the extension of the Special Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership Program (LEAP), formerly known as the State Student Incentive Grant (SSIG) program. SSIG provides funding on a dollar-for-dollar match to help states provide need-based financial aid to students through grants and community service work study awards. Without this federal incentive, many states would not have established state financial aid programs. As a cosponsor of the LEAP Act, I am pleased that states will now gain new flexibility to use these funds for activities such as increasing grant amounts, carrying out academic or merit scholarships programs, community service programs, and early interventions programs. This program is yet another example of a federal-state partnership developed to create maximum opportunities for students seeking higher education.

While I am pleased with the inclusion of numerous programs that will benefit students pursuing higher education, I am deeply disappointed the conference report failed to include an important amendment to count higher education as a work requirement for purposes of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program. I was a proud cosponsor of this amendment which enjoyed a bipartisan majority in the Senate-passed bill.

Throughout this Congress, the leadership has echoed the importance of taking personal responsibility and achieving independence. As a supporter of welfare reform, I support imposing work requirements on individuals who receive cash assistance. However, to not allow students to earn a degree, a certifiable ticket to self-sufficiency, is irresponsible and thoughtless.

I have heard from a number of my constituents that the current system has had the unfortunate effect of forcing TANF recipients out of college or vocational school and into dead-end, entry-level jobs. It seems obvious that enabling these individuals, which are usually single mothers, to complete a degree would be far more effective in achieving long-term benefits. Education leads to higher income levels, helping move these families out of poverty for good and making them productive taxpayers. Federal requirements should not be so rigid and inflexible that states are prevented from exercising this option. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in addressing this need in the Higher Education Act of 1998, how-

ever, I am committed to working with Senator WELLSTONE and other advocates to revisit this issue in the future.

Passage of the Higher Education Reauthorization Act of 1998 was absolutely essential for the continuation and improvement of a system that helps keep post-secondary education within the reach of typical American families. I was pleased with the expeditious manner by which Congress responded to the conference report and President Clinton's prompt signing of the bill.●

ENSURING SAFE SCHOOLS

● Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, I am delighted that the Senate has approved legislation which I cosponsored to help ensure the safety of our nation's schools. Senators CAMPBELL, JEFFORDS, and FAIRCLOTH introduced S.2235, "The School Resource Officers Partnership Grant Act of 1998," in June. It was approved unanimously by the Judiciary Committee and approved by the Senate yesterday.

The goal of this legislation is to help put a stop to crime and violence in our nation's schools. Through this legislation, partnerships will be developed between state and local law enforcement agencies and the school districts in which they serve. While national statistics on violence in schools indicate an overall downward trend, the types of violence that have occurred recently, particularly in the last school year, are nothing short of traumatic.

The sight and sound of schoolyard shootings have become all too familiar. Americans were shocked, time and time again, by the devastating sight on the evening news of youngsters being carried to ambulances from school grounds following shooting sprees by other youngsters. Looking back at the 1997-1998 school year, several particularly alarming incidents occurred:

In October, a 16-year-old at Pearl High School in Mississippi went to school with a hunting rifle. He shot and killed a student and a teacher, leaving a second teacher with a bullet wound in the head.

In December, a student at Heath High School in West Paducah, Kentucky used a pistol to kill 3 other students. The shooter was 14-years-old.

In March, 2 boys in Jonesboro, Arkansas, an eleven year-old and a thirteen year-old, pulled the fire alarm in their school. As students and teachers left the building, the two boys began shooting. They killed five people: four young girls and a teacher.

In April, a 14-year-old boy in Edinboro, Pennsylvania went to a school dance with a gun he apparently removed from his father's bureau drawer. He killed a science teacher and injured two students and another teacher.

At Thurston High School in Springfield, Oregon a 15-year-old who was suspended for carrying a gun to school, returned to school the next day and

opened fire in a crowded cafeteria. He killed two students and wounded 19 others. Police suspect he shot and killed his parents, as well.

It is no secret that I support tougher restrictions on gun ownership. Earlier this year, Senator DURBIN and I offered an amendment to the spending bill for the Departments of Commerce, State and Justice. Our amendment would have held adult gun owners responsible if their weapon—which had not been stored properly—was used by a child to injure himself or someone else. I felt that this was the least we could do to help protect children from needless gun violence. Unfortunately, the majority of my Senate colleagues didn't agree, and our amendment was defeated.

Despite that setback, I believe that it is Congress' responsibility to take steps to assist local communities in their battle against school violence. Children bringing weapons to school and drug use among youngsters aren't problems of big city schools alone. In my own State of Rhode Island during the last school year, there were more than 400 weapons-related suspensions. To put that number in the proper perspective, we have fewer than 450 elementary and secondary schools in Rhode Island, including private and religious schools. We should not fool ourselves into thinking that the kind of atrocities that all of America witnessed in schools last year can't happen in our children's schools.

It is my sincere belief that The School Resource Officers Partnership Grant Act is a step in the right direction. This legislation will make federal funds available to local law enforcement agencies, working in partnership with local school districts, for "school resource officers." These SROs, who must be professional law enforcement officers, would address gang-related crime and violence, including drug use, in and around schools. They would work with students, teachers, and administrators on crime prevention and personal safety. And perhaps most importantly, they would work directly with students on conflict resolution to help avert violent outbursts that can leave innocent children dead or injured.

There are communities throughout our nation whose police officers have undertaken these very tasks. In Rhode Island, police officers in Newport, Providence, and West Warwick, to name a few, already are working with in schools on crime prevention, mentoring, and conflict resolution. Our bill would allow local law enforcement agencies to use a portion of their federal Community Policing funds for these officers.

I applaud our teachers and administrators for their efforts to confront and address violence in schools, but we cannot expect them to undertake this battle alone. This bill will make the knowledge and resources of professional law enforcement agencies available to our schools. I know it will help keep our children safe.●