

strengthen the program. That's because they don't care about the program. They just want to cut it. They want to eliminate it.

I'm taking this challenge to make a difference. I'm going to blog, I'm going to tweet, and I'm going to talk about my experiences to show that SNAP works, and I will do everything I can to push back and to fight these cuts. Reducing the ability of poor people to buy food is a rotten thing to do. If we can't restore the SNAP cuts, then I will do everything I can to defeat this farm bill because Americans deserve better.

Join me in this fight. Let's end hunger now.

COMMEMORATING THE 24TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TIANANMEN SQUARE CRACKDOWN AND BEIJING MASSACRE

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 24th anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown and Beijing massacre in China.

A quarter of a century ago, the world watched with horror as the atrocities in Tiananmen Square and nearby streets in Beijing unfolded. During this anniversary period, it is with solidarity that we remember the victims of that deep tragedy.

The courageous students protesting on those days in April, May, and June of 1989 sought basic freedoms. Prophetic in their presence, they called upon their autocratic, Communist government to embrace liberty, respect human rights, and put an end to deep-seated corruption. Chinese intellectuals like Wei Jingsheng championed political reform. They posted essays on the Democracy Wall in Beijing. For that, he was arrested and imprisoned twice for a total of 18 years. The Democracy Wall and its postings were shut down.

Today, still autocratic and still Communist, China faces many of the same challenges, despite promises by its new leadership that reform would occur. Millions of Chinese people remain denied adequate food, housing, and health care, and over 1,200 Chinese dissidents and critics are known to be imprisoned or detained for standing up for freedom of speech. Deep disparities between the rich and the poor of China exist. Eight hundred million Chinese, close to a billion people—60 percent of its people—exist on less than \$15 a day, all while the government seizes land and forces evictions.

Meanwhile, Communist Party leaders have become billionaires, often through corruption, graft, and theft, with immunity from a lawless regime. To rise economically in China, you must take an oath to the Communist Party and then be accepted into that club of politicians who become vastly wealthy as they climb the party ladder.

The Market-Leninism that drives China has resulted in 83 billionaires buying seats in their parliament. I can only imagine what that money power does to drive out the voices of the masses of the people longing to be free. The average fortune among these wealthiest 83 Communist Party delegates is \$3.35 billion.

Environmental issues are also a major source of concern for the Chinese people, and they remain unaddressed. The New York Times recently reported on the findings of the Global Burden of Disease Study, which states air pollution contributed to 1.2 million premature deaths in China in 2010.

It is no secret religious organizations are heavily restricted and monitored in China. The Catholic Church is banned, and phony bishops are sanctioned by the government in their stead. Often, ethnic and religious minorities are intimidated or harassed by government officials.

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Despite extensive documentation of the truth, the Chinese Communist Party continues to manipulate and censor the facts surrounding the events at Tiananmen Square and Beijing a quarter century ago; not to mention their ongoing censorship of the press and the Internet. The government blocks the social media, denying Facebook and Twitter the ability to operate. Journalists are regularly harassed and often imprisoned.

In remembrance of freedom's prophets, lost peacefully pursuing liberty at Tiananmen Square and in Beijing a quarter century ago, and those today who dream of a more liberty-loving future in that country, our Nation honors their noble spirits, their courage, their aspirations, and their lives given in pursuit of the cause of liberty.

TIME RUNNING OUT FOR STAFFORD STUDENT LOAN INTEREST RATES

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

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, in 17 days, unless Congress acts, the Stafford student loan program—which is the workhorse loan program for millions of college students all across America—is going to see the interest rate double from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent.

Stepping back for a moment, 6 years ago, the Democrats passed the College Cost Reduction Act, which cut that rate from 6.8 to 3.4 percent. It was a 5-year bill concurrent with the Higher Education Authorization Act. Last year, with minutes to spare, we extended that lower rate of 3.4 percent for an additional year. And now, once again, we are hours away from students who are about to embark on life decisions, in terms of which college to attend, which course to follow; and they need to know with some certainty the

borrowing cost, which for many is now a stark reality in terms of paying the cost of higher education.

This morning in The New York Times, there was a very encouraging story about the fact that the number of college degrees in the U.S. has hit an all-time high. Students are now completing college, and it's just in time in terms of the workforce needs of our country. The same study which was released yesterday shows that in fact we have workforce needs for high-degree skills for which the education system is still scrambling to catch up. So there is no question for young people in America. This question of protecting the affordability of higher education is of critical importance to both their future and to our Nation's future.

Unfortunately, the only action in the House of Representatives was a measure which the majority party rammed through a couple of weeks ago, which the Congressional Budget Office Monday issued an analysis of. What CBO told the country is that the House Republican bill—which is a variable interest rate program—would actually cost students more than if we did nothing and let the rates double to 6.8 percent. I want to repeat that. That measure actually worsens the situation if we did absolutely nothing and allowed the rate to go to 6.8 percent.

It's obvious what we need to do. As a Congress, we need to recognize the fact that we have a national interest in terms of maintaining access to higher education. We also need to recognize that families are being crushed with the cost of higher education when we need to protect the lower interest rate.

I have a bill, H.R. 1595, which has over 150 cosponsors in the House—it received 51 votes in the Senate—that would protect that lower rate for 2 years and allow us to do a new Higher Education Authorization Act. This morning, just a few minutes ago, I executed a discharge petition for Members of Congress to sign to get H.R. 1595 on the floor immediately so that we can protect the lower interest rates for young people embarking on next year's college curriculum and semester.

So I would urge all Members to sign the discharge petition, H.R. 1595, which will protect the lower rate so that we can, in a measured, intelligent way, come up with a Higher Education Authorization Act, which will go through the whole gamut of issues for college costs—whether it's the Perkins loan program, Pell Grants, allowing students to refinance after they leave college, giving high school students better information as they make a decision that really is almost the equivalent of buying a house when you go to college in modern day America. Again, the stakes are huge, but the payoff is even greater for students, which that report issued yesterday documents.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I want to join some of my colleagues who are going to speak later this morning who will note the fact that it is now 6 months ago to