

Mr. BROOKS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, America suffers from four consecutive trillion-dollar deficits and a \$17 trillion debt that risks a debilitating American insolvency and bankruptcy.

Financial responsibility is the key to minimizing America's risk of economic disaster wrought by crippling debt. Yet the Senate Gang of Eight amnesty bill is the height of financial irresponsibility. It makes illegal aliens a bigger financial burden on America, racks up higher deficits, and increases America's risk of insolvency and bankruptcy.

The Senate Gang of Eight bill immediately gives illegal aliens State and local welfare. That is in addition to the Federal welfare illegal aliens already lawfully and unlawfully get.

For example, watchdog group Judicial Watch reports that an assistant case manager in charge of food stamp applications stated:

Illegals would come by the van load and we were told to give them their stuff. Management knew very well they were illegal. It was so rampant that some employees would tell their illegal relatives to come and get food stamps.

Judicial Watch adds:

The promotion of the food stamp program, now known as SNAP, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, includes a Spanish-language flyer provided to the Mexican Embassy by the United States Department of Agriculture, with a statement advising Mexicans in the United States that they do not need to declare their immigration status in order to receive financial assistance.

Judicial Watch goes further:

The United States Department of Agriculture spent taxpayer money to run Spanish-language television ads encouraging illegal aliens to apply for government-financed food stamps. The Mexican Consul in Santa Ana, California, starred in United States Government-financed TV commercials and assured illegal aliens that receiving food stamps "won't affect your immigration status."

Judicial Watch concluded that:

Adding insult to injury, last spring, the United States Department of Agriculture Inspector General revealed that many food stamp recipients use their welfare benefit to buy drugs, weapons and other contraband from unscrupulous vendors, disclosing that the fraud has cost American taxpayers nearly \$200 million.

A comprehensive study by the Heritage Foundation found that "many unlawful immigrants have U.S.-born children. These children are currently eligible for the full range of government welfare and medical benefits."

The study notes that:

In 2010, the average unlawful immigrant household received around \$24,721 in government benefits and services, while paying some \$10,334 in taxes. This generated an average annual fiscal deficit, benefits received minus taxes paid, of around \$14,387 per household.

The Heritage Foundation confirms that the Senate Gang of 8 amnesty bill will:

After 13 years, unlawful immigrants would become eligible for means-tested welfare and ObamaCare. At that point, or shortly thereafter, former unlawful immigrant households

would likely begin to receive government benefits at the same rate as lawful immigrant households of the same education level. As a result, government spending and fiscal deficits would increase dramatically.

The Senate Gang of 8 amnesty bill is reckless with the truth and misleads the American people. Not only will illegal immigration increase American taxpayer burdens through welfare, ObamaCare, and other payouts, but illegal immigration is already costing the United States taxpayers more than \$14,000 a year per illegal alien household.

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All told, per the Federation of Americans for Immigration Reform, illegal aliens already cost American taxpayers roughly \$100 billion per year in net tax losses.

The Senate Gang of 8 amnesty bill does not properly manage welfare, does not give border security, mismanages tax dollars, thereby hammering already stressed and overtaxed American families and taxpayers while aggravating America's already bad financial situation, thus increasing America's risk of a debilitating insolvency and bankruptcy.

Mr. Speaker, the Senate Gang of 8 bill must be defeated at all costs. America's future depends on it.

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 5 days, unless Congress acts, the Stafford student loan program, which helps 7.5 million students pay for college, is set to see its interest rates increase from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent. Again, this is at a time when student loan debt now exceeds \$1 trillion. It's the highest form of consumer debt in the economy. It exceeds credit card debt and car loan debt. And yet, despite the fact that, again, students and families are facing this mounting, crushing burden, unless we move in a very short period of time, we are going to add to that burden by allowing the interest rates to go from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent.

Six years ago, this Congress acted to pass the College Cost Reduction Act, which cut that rate from 6.8 percent to 3.4 percent. It was a 5-year bill tied to the Higher Education Reauthorization Act. Last year, with minutes to spare, we extended that lower rate for 1 additional year. Again, here we are today, 5 days away from this rate doubling.

I've introduced legislation, H.R. 1595, the Student Loan Protection Act, and 196 Members of the House signed a discharge petition demanding that the Speaker of the House bring this bill up for debate and passage, which will protect that lower rate for an additional 2 years. We need that time so that we can pass a new Higher Education Authorization Act, which will deal with the broad range of issues that surround how we pay for college and access to higher education, which includes the

Stafford student loan program, the workhorse for families to pay for college. It deals with Pell Grants and Perkins loans. It also deals with the obstructions and hurdles that people face when they want to refinance student loan debt after they have left college. Again, that's a big part of that \$1 trillion debt burden that's out there in society.

We need a broad, long-range plan to pay for higher education because the stakes are huge. We know that the U.S. economy needs critical skills in our workforce if we are going to continue and grow and prosper. The baby boomers are now hitting retirement age at increasing numbers, and in a whole range of critical occupations, from medicine to science to engineering, we need to refill the ranks. And higher education is the avenue that we can continue to succeed as a country and as a nation. Our competitors know this. They are investing in higher education at a much higher rate than we are in the U.S. We must act to make sure that, again, we don't go backwards on July 1.

The House passed a bill on May 23. The Republican majority pushed a bill through which they claim solves the problem. It changes the fixed rate loan program to an adjustable rate tied to 10-year Treasury notes, which is roughly now at about 2.6 percent. It adds an additional 2.5 percent to that. They claimed when they passed that bill that that solves the problem. Unfortunately, the Congressional Budget Office drilled down deeper and analyzed what the real net impact would be on students. The problem with that variable rate program is that for a freshman entering this fall, like my daughter, who doesn't use the Stafford loan program, if some of her fellow students sign up for the Stafford loan program, under the Republican bill they really don't know what the rate is because it will reset over the 4 years that freshman is in college. Looking at where Treasury notes are projected over the next 4 years, the Congressional Budget Office has told us that, in fact, for that graduating student, 4 years from now the interest rate on the loan that they will graduate with will be over 7 percent.

So, in other words, as CBO told us, if we allow the Republican bill to go forward, it's actually worse than doing nothing and allowing the rates to double to 6.8 percent. President Obama has proposed a different version, which would, again, use the cheap cost of money today with an inflation add-on. But that plan that the President put forward locks in the rate for the student who takes that loan out next year. So, in other words, that freshman who signs up for a Stafford student loan that will go to school with my daughter next year, their rate will not reset from one year to the next. They will have at least the protection of a fixed rate based on the calculation using the Treasury note baseline. It is

a better proposal. The Republican bill has a cap in terms of how high these rates can go over time. The President's does not.

We need, obviously, to get both sides to come together and come up with a real compromise which comes up with an affordable, sustainable way for the Stafford student loan program to work. With only 5 days to go, I would argue that the better course now is just protect the lower rate, give us some time to come up with, again, overlapping good ideas from both sides of the aisle to fix this problem.

Let's not let the rates double. Let's pass H.R. 1595. Let's help 7.5 million college students pursue their goals and dreams and help the U.S. economy.

SYRIA—ANOTHER GUNRUNNING OPERATION BY UNCLE SAM

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, there is a civil war raging in Syria. No question about it, President Assad is a bad guy. He hates Israel and he hates his own people. The humanitarian situation in Syria is dire. I have been to Syrian refugee camps in Turkey and seen firsthand the devastation of this war. In one camp I went to, there were 150,000 Syrians in Turkey fleeing from the devastation of war.

However, there are numerous rebel groups trying to remove Assad from power. Who exactly are these rebels? We really don't know. But we do know the most powerful among them is al Nusra, an affiliate of al Qaeda. These extremists on both sides are killing each other in the name of religion, and the people of Syria are caught in the middle.

Lining up on President Assad's side are the nations of Russia and Iran; also, the terrorist group Hezbollah, of course, sponsored by Iran. Lining up on the so-called rebels' side are Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and numerous rebel groups from patriots to criminals to al Qaeda and outside mercenaries.

For 2 years, the United States has just ignored the situation; but now, suddenly, the administration has decided it's time to get involved. The administration's answer: send the rebels American guns. Send the rebels American guns? Blindly traffic American guns into Syria and, I guess, hope for the best.

Does this sound familiar, Mr. Speaker? We've tried this before. We've seen this song and dance in Libya and even in Mexico, our neighbor. This administration is gun-happy to give guns away. In Libya, the administration armed the rebel group to oust Muammar Qadhafi, another bad guy. Well, where are those guns now? Were they used in Benghazi? Who knows. The administration is still silent on Benghazi. Those guns are scattered all over the Middle East and in north Africa.

Were they used in Algeria? Remember, Mr. Speaker, in Algeria there were

Americans working at an energy plant there, along with other citizens from other countries. Two Americans were killed in that attack. Were they also used in Mali? Who knows. Only time will tell. And who has died because these weapons end up in the wrong hands every time we give American guns away to rebel groups?

By providing weapons to radical sectors fighting against Assad, we're really taking sides in somebody else's war. We're also arming some radicals who seek to destroy us, like al Qaeda, who is fighting on the side of rebels. More weapons will only escalate this conflict. More people are going to die because the United States picks sides.

But Syria and Libya are not the first time this administration blindly trafficked weapons to terrorists. Let's go back to our own hemisphere. Let's talk about our neighbor, Mexico. Do you remember Operation Fast and Furious? We still haven't gotten answers on that scandal.

In an effort to help fight the drug cartels, the administration sent thousands of weapons to Mexico without even telling the Mexican Government. And who got those weapons? The drug cartels.

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Of course these guns ended up in the hands of the terrorists—the narco-terrorists—and resulted in the death of at least two or three Americans and hundreds of Mexican nationals. Another botched gunrunning operation sponsored by the U.S. Government.

Too bad we don't learn from history and stop this nonsense of furnishing guns to groups in somebody else's country. Did we implement universal background checks on the violent criminals we armed in Syria, Libya and Mexico? Yeah, right. Is this the new foreign policy of the United States—international weapons trafficking?

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, this administration is on a tireless crusade to ban guns in the United States. Mr. Speaker, why is the White House so determined on disarming Americans while arming known potential terrorists, bandits, drug lords and mercenaries? Ironic, don't you think? But that's a different issue for a different day.

And I ask this question: What is the national security interest of the United States to be involved in Syria, in somebody else's civil war? There is none. This is not our war.

Mr. Speaker, this is a regional religious war that we should not be involved in. It's a war between the Sunnis and the Shias. These two religious groups have been fighting each other since the year 630, and now we're involved in this regional, religious war. What's next? Is the administration going to propose and implement a no-fly zone? Well, if this occurs, I believe the President must ask for congressional approval under the War Powers Act.

Almost 100,000 Syrians are dead.

No question, the U.S. should help with humanitarian aid.

The U.S. should work for a political solution, not a military solution.

But the Administration's policy seems to be traffic guns to third world countries and subversives and hope for the best.

However, recent history has shown this is a bad idea.

This is a dangerous foreign policy.

What area of the world is next for our gun running government?

Wait and see.

And that's just the way it is.

WAR POWERS ACT

(IN PART)

50 USC §1541—Purpose and policy

(a) Congressional declaration

It is the purpose of this chapter to fulfill the intent of the framers of the Constitution of the United States and insure that the collective judgment of both the Congress and the President will apply to the introduction of United States Armed Forces into hostilities, or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances, and to the continued use of such forces in hostilities or in such situations.

(b) Congressional legislative power under necessary and proper clause

Under article I, section 8, of the Constitution, it is specifically provided that the Congress shall have the power to make all laws necessary and proper for carrying into execution, not only its own powers but also all other powers vested by the Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any department or officer hereof.

(c) Presidential executive power as Commander-in-Chief; limitation

The constitutional powers of the President as Commander-in-Chief to introduce United States Armed Forces into hostilities, or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances, are exercised only pursuant to

(1) a declaration of war,

(2) specific statutory authorization, or

(3) a national emergency created by attack upon the United States, its territories or possessions, or its armed forces

AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE

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

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, having traveled home this weekend and listened to so many back in my district concerned about the lack of solutions and the lack of effort on behalf of the United States Congress to get things done, I told them to take heart, that sometimes these things are difficult. And I added:

What if I tell you that we could deal with the rising cost of health care, we could bring down the national debt, and do it all by providing better quality, coordinated, and patient-centered care? That would be a good goal, they surmised.

And what if I told you we could do this without raising taxes or cutting Medicare benefits? And what if I told you that all of this notion began from the seeds of an idea that was an outgrowth from the Heritage Foundation,