

the federal courts, has recommended Congress double the number of judicial positions in the district.

In the late 1990s, the median time for civil cases to go to trial in the district averaged 2 years and four months. From 2009 to 2014, that number jumped by more than a year. The median time to resolve criminal cases nearly doubled to an average of 13 months.

"You're never out from under it," said Morrison England, the court's chief judge. "You're constantly trying to do what you can to get these cases resolved, and we just can't do it."

The weighted caseload per judge has climbed from an average of nearly 600 in the late 1990s to over a 1,000.

The Eastern District of Texas has seen similar increases.

"The way one older judge put it to me: 'If you have too many cases, you start to lose the time to think about them,'" said Ron Clark, the court's chief judge.

The vacancy in California's Eastern District is in Fresno, which is down to just one full-time district court judge.

Attorneys say they are reluctant to file cases in the Fresno court because of delays and have faced additional expenses from having to drive to Sacramento when their case gets assigned to a judge there who has been called in to help.

Gomez's April 2012 lawsuit was filed in Fresno and alleges that Castlerock Farming and Transport forced the workers—grape harvesters—to work off the clock and did not provide them with proper rest breaks.

Jim Hanlon, an attorney for Castlerock, said he does not comment on pending cases. The company says in court documents it did not directly employ the workers and has already defended their claims in a separate lawsuit.

Anthony Raimondo, an attorney for another defendant in the case, said at least some of the time it's taken to resolve the lawsuit can be attributed to its complexity.

The case lists multiple defendants and alleged labor code violations and seeks class action status on behalf of as many as several thousand employees. Early on, the judge overseeing the case, Senior U.S. District Judge Anthony Ishii, put it on hold pending a class certification ruling in a related case.

But Raimondo and Gomez say there have been delays that appear to have no explanation other than a backlogged court. Castlerock, for example, filed a motion to dismiss the lawsuit last September that the judge has yet to rule on.

A woman who answered the phone in Ishii's chambers said he would be away until the end of September and unavailable for comment.

Lawrence O'Neill, the one full-time district court judge in Fresno, said he could not comment on any pending case. But he said the court's caseload has made it difficult to get trial dates for civil cases.

He pointed to two cases on his docket—one alleging excessive force by police and the other race and sex discrimination by an employer—that were filed in 2013, but won't go to trial until 2017.

"We can slow things down because we simply can't work any harder or faster," he said. "But the real important effect of that is people who need our help to move their lives forward are delayed."

#### PERKINS LOAN PROGRAM

Mr. REED. Mr. President, unless we act quickly, our longest running student loan program—the Perkins Loan Program—will meet its demise on September 30. It will end not because it is

ineffective or because it does not make college more affordable for needy students or because we have debated and built consensus on how best to reform our Federal student loan programs. Rather, the Perkins Loan Program might end because some of my colleagues refuse to extend it as we routinely do with other programs awaiting reauthorization. We should not allow this to happen. I hope that my colleagues will swiftly approve H.R. 3594, the Higher Education Extension Act, a bipartisan bill to extend the Perkins Loan Program that the House of Representatives passed by a unanimous vote yesterday.

The Perkins Loan Program was created in 1958 as the National Defense Student Loan Program. Approximately 1,500 colleges and universities, including a dozen in my home State of Rhode Island, disburse more than \$1.2 billion in Perkins loans to students who have demonstrated exceptional financial need.

The Perkins Loan Program carries some of the most generous terms of all the Federal student loan programs. Perkins loans are offered at a low, fixed rate of 5 percent. No interest accrues until the student enters repayment, which starts after a 9-month grace period, giving the recent graduate time to get on his or her feet. The Perkins Loan Program also encourages public service, offering generous loan forgiveness for many public sector careers, including for school librarians, something that I have long championed.

Another compelling feature of the Perkins Loan Program is that participating institutions must contribute their own resources—\$1 for every 2 Federal dollars. Many institutions, including colleges and universities in Rhode Island, have invested more than their legal obligation. As students repay their loans, institutions are able to make new loans. In other words, participating colleges and universities have a real stake in students being able to repay their loans, something that is missing from our other Federal student loan programs and something that I have been advocating we need more, not less, of.

In Rhode Island during the 2013–2014 school year, over 9,000 students attending Rhode Island colleges benefitted from more than \$18 million in low-cost Perkins loans. Without this assistance, these students would face a gap in their ability to pay for college and could be forced into risky private loans or higher cost parent loans.

We need to maintain the Perkins Loan Program as we continue working towards a comprehensive reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. We cannot and should not leave needy students and families in the lurch by cutting off access to this vital program.

I urge all of my colleagues to support swift passage of H.R. 3594, the Higher Education Extension Act, to ensure there is no lapse in the availability of Perkins loans.

#### NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I wish to discuss the international nuclear agreement with Iran, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, JCPOA. Reached on July 14, 2015, after years of difficult negotiations among the United States and the other P5+1 countries—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and Germany—and Iran, the agreement confronts the Iranian nuclear program, which has long been the subject of U.S., European Union, and United Nations sanctions.

Throughout these years of international negotiations, and more recently, during these months of congressional debate, I have been focused on one goal—ensuring that our dual-track policy of diplomacy and economic sanctions results in an outcome that verifiably prevents Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. Iran getting the bomb is simply unacceptable, and blocking that is in our national security interests and that of our allies, including Israel.

This international agreement impacts the safety and security of Americans and our allies and is an incredibly serious matter, deserving careful and considered scrutiny. That includes a thorough and responsible debate in Congress. That is why I voted for the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015, P.L. 114–17, which provided Congress with a 60-day window to consider the JCPOA prior to its taking effect. And that window was filled with vigorous debate in the Senate. Regardless of one's position for or against the international agreement, one thing is clear: every Senator has had an opportunity to pass their judgement on whether we are right to choose a path of international diplomacy to achieve our goal of verifiably preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. In my judgement we are.

For me personally, I felt that it was critical to closely review the details of the agreement and hear from individuals on all sides of this debate, including experts and constituents, and listen to their arguments. I have attended numerous classified briefings with administration officials, including those with firsthand technical, scientific, and diplomatic expertise, heard from the Ambassadors of our P5+1 partners, and benefited from many candid conversations with Wisconsin constituents. All of these interactions have been invaluable and have informed my conclusion that rejecting this international agreement is not in our national security interest. According to the agreement, before receiving relief from sanctions, Iran must comply with a number of far-reaching and long-term obligations to limit its nuclear program, all of which will be verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency, or IAEA, through an unprecedentedly robust inspections and monitoring framework. Iran's obligations include redesigning the Arak reactor to eliminate the plutonium pathway to nuclear