November 30, 2011

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—HOUSE

H7937

are going to continue to be a great Na-

tion.

Now, let’s look at what is happening here in Washington. I think one of the reasons why young people are going into the streets of this country is the fact that we have a Congress that is not only out of touch in terms of lis-
tening and responding to this, in fact, they want to take us backwards.

When I first came to Congress in 2007, a new majority moved swiftly to pass the College Cost Reduc-
tion Act, which was an effort to try to boost the Pell Grant program, which is the workhorse of higher education af-
fordability, a program which basically had been level-funded for 6 plus years despite the fact that higher education costs had gone up 40 percent. We passed the College Cost Reduction Act which infused new funding into the Pell Grant program. We cut the interest rates for the Stafford student loan pro-
gram from 6 percent to 3.4 percent, and we paid for every single penny of those expenditures by cutting the bank subsidies which were basically sucking Federal dollars away from families and students.

Last year we passed the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act, again with a Democratic majority, which provides for a cap in terms of loan repay-
ments of 15 percent of your discre-
tionary income and excuses loan repay-
ments after 25 years under the Stafford student loan program.

I was pleased that President Obama, again, just a month or so ago, acted to increase the benefit of that program by limiting the discretionary income pay-
ments to 10 percent of income and lower-
ing the forgiveness date to 20 years, from 25 years. This is an administra-
tion that understands middle class families with children who want to im-
prove themselves and compete in their future. This is one of the best tools of assisting these students.

What did this Republican Congress do? We had a Ryan budget last April which gutted and butchered the Pell Grant program and would take us back to 2008 levels. So, for example, in Con-
necticut, where I come from, the Uni-
versity of Connecticut would have seen its Pell Grant revenue from 2008, which was about $8 million going into the University of Connecticut, it would have been cut to $4 million, which is $12 million of annual Pell Grant revenue—a $4 million cut to the University of Connecticut. And the grant level for students, the maximum award, would have been cut from $4,500 a year down to roughly about $900 a year.

That is closing the doors of op-
portunity to millions of Americans. That’s what the Ryan budget values and that’s what its vision was at a time when, again, our country is in crisis in terms of needing skilled, qualified work-
ners to deal with the future chal-

The choice is clear. For those who care about spiraling education costs, the Democratic agenda is the one that is on your side.

IT TAKES AN ACT OF CONGRESS

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

Mr. WOODALL. I’m happy to be down here this morning. I often come down here with something on my mind, Mr. Speaker. Invariably, one of my col-
leagues says something that inspires me even more than what I had on my mind when I came down. That’s the case this morning.

My colleague who was here right be-
fore me said the value of higher edu-
cation in terms of future earnings is undisputable. The value of higher edu-
cation, Mr. Speaker, in terms of future earn-
ings is undisputable. And he then went on to talk about all the Federal programs that provide money so that people can seek higher education.

Now my question is, Mr. Speaker: If the value is undisputable, why do we have to pay people to do it? If the value is undisputable, why do we have to pay people to do it? That’s what happens in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. I think back to 1787 and the passage of the Constitution. The Constitution, as conservative as it is in terms of pre-
serving individual liberties, would not have passed, would not have been rati-
fied, without the addition of the Bill of Rights. Our Founding Fathers were so concerned about a Federal Government trying to do too much that the colonies would not ratify the Constitution in the absence of the Bill of Rights—the Bill of Rights, which sole purpose is to protect individual liberties.

Mr. Speaker, as I look around at what makes America great, it’s never something that comes out of this United States House of Representa-
tives. It’s something that comes out of the natural incli-
nation that exists in this body to think things through. Now my question is, Mr. Speaker: If the value is undisputable, why do we have to pay people to do it? That’s what happens in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we’re not in charge of providing happiness to America. We are in the charge of preserving Americans’ freedoms so that they can find their own happiness.

Mr. Speaker, there are lots of coun-
tries on this planet that do not share the freedoms that we have. There is only one country on this planet that protects individual liberty and freedom as we do. When we talk about the di-
rection of America, Mr. Speaker, we have to decide are we going to protect those things that have always made this country—great—individual liberty and individual freedoms— or are we going to go the way of the rest of the world, which is looking to a central government that thinks it has all the right answers.

Mr. Speaker, they had it right in the summer of 1787. I hope we get it right here in this Congress.

IMPLEMENTING SMART SECURITY
TO REPAIR A U.S.-PAKISTAN RE-
LATIONSHIP IN CRISIS

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, over the weekend, NATO airstrikes killed at least 24 Pakistani soldiers in a tragic “friendly fire” incident that has once again elevated tensions between the U.S. and Pakistan. Regardless of who was at fault—whether our forces were acting in self-defense or had legitimate reason to believe they were firing on insurgents—the Pakistan Government is furious and the bilateral relationship is facing a grave crisis.

Pakistan has said they are cutting off supply routes into Afghanistan. They have said they will no longer participate in a critically important international conference in Germany next week—a conference that will help chart Afghanistan’s future. This episode is fueling anti-American senti-
mement in a country whose people are al-
ready hostile. In the last few days, we’ve seen public demonstrations of
Pakistanis burning the U.S. flag and shouting, “Whoever is a friend of America is a traitor of the land.” Clearly, Mr. Speaker, instead of winning the hearts and minds, we are giving terrorists a recruitment tool.

Pakistan has not always been the most friendly nation, but they are an ally—and let’s not forget, a nuclear power—with whom we share important mutual interests. We need their cooperation if there is going to be political reconciliation and long-term stability in neighboring Afghanistan. This incident leads me to believe more strongly than ever that we must redeploy our troops out of Afghanistan. We have very difficult diplomatic work to do there—work that is being complicated, not facilitated, by our military presence.

After more than 10 years of failed war that is undermining our security interests, it’s time to change our role in the region from one of military occupation to one of constructive partnership.

Mr. Speaker, it’s time for SMART Security and Surge instead of a military surge. Pakistan and Afghanistan are the first places we could be implementing the SMART security strategy I’ve talked about so many times from this very spot.

While it’s true that we send enormous amounts of foreign aid to Pakistan, the overwhelming majority of it goes to the military, with very little trickling down to the people. We could instead spend more to boost Pakistan’s literacy rate, or more investment in key infrastructure projects, the growth of civil society, or life-changing humanitarian efforts.

To give one specific example, Pakistan is one of four countries on Earth—and Afghanistan is one of the others—that hasn’t completely eradicated polio. For pennies on the dollar, compared to our military expenditures, we can help provide the vaccination that would eliminate this dire public threat. Perhaps then we’ll be able to change the fact that only 11 percent of Pakistanis have a favorable view of the United States. Perhaps instead of destabilizing influences of 100,000 troops on the ground, we can build a stronger relationship based on mutual trust, one that promotes peace and empowers the Pakistani people with a humanitarian surge instead of a military surge.

Mr. Speaker, it’s time for SMART Security and Surge and it starts with bringing our troops home.

POVERTY AND HIV/AIDS

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

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, as a founding co-chair of both the Congressional Out of Poverty Caucus and the Congressional HIV/AIDS Caucus, I rise today to draw attention once again to the ongoing crisis of poverty in America. And, today, I also want to draw particular attention to the impact of poverty on our national flight to stop HIV and AIDS.

Mr. Speaker, December 1 is World AIDS Day, and this year marks 30 years after the first discovery of AIDS cases. The United States and the HIV/AIDS community globally have made tremendous progress in our collective response to this domestic and global crisis. We have reduced the stigma surrounding the disease and strengthened education and outreach activities worldwide. Consistently millions of new cases of HIV worldwide. The scientific community has improved the treatment of HIV and AIDS with antiretrovirals and combination therapies, and recent breakthroughs have revolutionized the way we think about AIDS.

We have come a long way in our battle against AIDS. Contracting HIV no longer has to be a death sentence. But we have much more work to do. Not everyone who is HIV positive has access to these life-saving therapies. For the near poor or near poor, HIV can still be the same death sentence that it was during the Reagan Presidency. Today, nearly one in five Americans with HIV do not even know their status, and only about half for Americans who do know their status are receiving the treatment that they need.

For the 100 million Americans either in poverty or living on the edge of poverty, much more must be done. Access to the drug cocktails, high-quality health care, housing, and healthy foods that are all critical for people living with HIV are out of reach for far too many.

Mr. Speaker, 30 years later, we continue to shortchange HIV efforts in poverty-stricken communities; we fail to fully include women in outreach education and treatment; and we lack the resources for communities of color. This is just simply unconscionable.

So let me encourage every Member and their staff to engage with the leading researchers and doctors in the worldwide fight against HIV and AIDS. Our global leadership will never be more important than at this promising moment of reversal, when we could move forward or we could go back.

Mr. Speaker, I hope every Member will join our bipartisan 60-plus members of the HIV/AIDS Caucus.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, November 21, 2011.

Hon. KAY GRANGER,
Chairman, Appropriations Subcommittee on State/Foreign Operations, Washington, DC.

Hon. NITA LOWEY,
Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee on State/Foreign Operations, Washington, DC.

Hon. PATRICK LEAHY,
Chairman, Appropriations Subcommittee on State/Foreign Operations, Washington, DC.

Hon. LINDSEY GRAHAM
Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee on State/Foreign Operations, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMEN LEAHY AND GRANGER, AND RANKING MEMBERS GRAHAM AND LOWE: As you begin negotiation for a final Fiscal Year 2012 Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill, we write to respectfully request that you secure funding for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. And I will enter this letter into the RECORD.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I was proud to have played a role in overturning the unjust and ineffective HIV travel ban in 2010. And, now, for the very first time in 20 years, the International AIDS Conference will be held in Washington, D.C. in July of 2012.

So let me encourage every Member and their staff to engage with the leading researchers and doctors in the worldwide fight against HIV and AIDS.

We urge support for $7.9 billion for global health programs contained in the Senate