

West Valley View

The community newspaper of Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear, Litchfield Park & Tolleson, AZ ♦ Phone (623) 535-8439

News Opinions Sports Classifieds Community Blog

home : news : cbs 5 - kpho - top stories

Share

May 24, 2012

5/18/2012

President engages Avondale in discussion of student loans

Sara Clawson
staff writer

President Barack Obama called on Avondale to support an initiative to keep federal student loan interest rates at 3.4 percent.

Avondale Mayor Marie Lopez Rogers was among leaders from across the country who were invited April 7 to participate in the White House conference call with Obama.

In 2007, student loan interest rates were cut in half from the original 6.8 percent rate. The rate is scheduled to return to 6.8 percent July 1 unless a budget proposal created by the Obama administration, which maintains the current 3.4 percent interest rate, is approved by Congress.

The interest rates would affect all new undergraduate federal student education loans, including the Direct Subsidized Student Loan and the Stafford Loan.

In a statement made April 21 by Obama and published on the whitehouse.org website, the president said reinstating the interest rate at this time would be counterproductive.

"We cannot just cut our way to prosperity. Making it harder for our young people to afford higher education and earn their degrees is nothing more than cutting our own future off at the knees," Obama said in the statement. "Congress needs to keep interest rates on student loans from doubling and they need to do it now."

The student loan debate has been racked by partisan politics and no outcome is clear. Republicans want to fund the student loan rate cut with portions of President Obama's sweeping health care reform passed in 2009, but Democrats want to fund the rate cut by closing tax loopholes for businesses and wealthy business owners, according to reports by the *New York Times*.

Cecily Davis, a graduate of Estrella Mountain Community College in Avondale; Chris Lopez, youth services coordinator for Avondale; Christopher Reams, director of Parks, Recreation and Libraries; and Patrick Simeri, a Westview High School junior who serves on the city's youth commission, also participated in the conference call.

Davis works for EMCC and as a clerk for Foothills Sports Medicine. She's also a part-time student at Arizona State University majoring in mass communications.

She has paid for her education entirely with student loans because she did not qualify for grants, she said.

"I started with them. I have them now and I'm going to be using them until I complete my bachelor's and master's degrees," she said. "I don't even want to think about my total."

If the interest rate returns to 6.8 percent, it would equate to Arizona borrowers adding an additional \$965 to their debt total, according to information on studentaid.ed.gov.

The conference call with Obama was an opportunity for municipalities to learn more about the issue so they can inform their constituents, Lopez Rogers said.

Article Search

View more photos

- Editor's Picks
- View and Purchase Photos!
- Click Photo Blog

Get E-Mail Updates

- Click Here To Sign Up!

Calendar

- Add Event

School Links

- School Boards
- Tax Credit Form

About Us

- Did We Miss You?
- Circulation
- Helpful Links
- Contact Us

Subscriptions

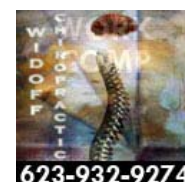
Volume

Helpful Links

- Discover more about your community

Dining

- Featured Listings
- Dining List



"He was really just trying to raise awareness of the issue facing our students," she said, while noting that parents and relatives may also be affected by a rate hike.

"It's really not just affecting students. I'm a parent with two grandkids going to the University of Arizona. I help them out. It affects us across the board," she said.

Today, higher education is more important than ever, Lopez Rogers said.

"As I look at our workforce, we estimate about 61 percent of all jobs in Avondale require education beyond high school," she said.

Davis said she's keenly aware that a university education is necessary for her to obtain a career in the communications field.

"Nowadays, everything requires a degree," Davis said. "An increase [to the rate] discourages students from going to school or continuing to go to school. Thinking about the loan itself and then the interest rate on top of that - it just gives me a headache. It's hard that I can't pay it back with the jobs that I have now and I want to be able to pay it back with the career my degree will place me in."

Congress has not voted on the upcoming fiscal year budget. Officials are urging the public to voice their opinion on the interest rates by contacting their representatives and by using social media forums like Facebook and Twitter. Use the hash tag #DontDoubleMyRate.

Sara Clawson can be reached by email at sclawson@westvalleyview.com.



Article Comment Submission Form

Please feel free to submit your comments.

Article comments are not posted immediately to the Web site. Each submission must be approved by the Web site editor, who may edit content for appropriateness. There may be a delay of 24-48 hours for any submission while the web site editor reviews and approves it.

Note: All information on this form is required. Your telephone number is for our use only, and will not be attached to your comment. By clicking Submit, you agree to the Westvalleyview.com [Terms of Use](#).

You may put paragraph breaks in your comments by using the code.

PLEASE NOTE: If you wish to contact the writer of the story, use the email address listed above. These comments are read for approval only and are not read by the writers.

Submit an Article Comment

First Name:
Required

Last Name:
Required

Telephone:
Required

Email:
Required

Comment:
Required

Passcode:
Required

[Click here to see a new mix of characters.](#)

This is an anti-SPAM device. It is not case sensitive.

Submit

Reset

Life

© 2012 West Valley View-Material may be copied for private, non-commercial use only.
No material may be copied for commercial use. All Rights Reserved.
Software © 1998-2012 1up! Software, All Rights Reserved