

This bill has not improved since the House voted on it earlier this year. This bill spends money on training police in Afghanistan as communities in New Jersey lay off police officers because of budget shortfalls. Our first responsibility to our citizens is to help keep them safe in their homes and their communities. This bill does the opposite: It allocates billions more for a war that cannot be won militarily while allowing our own communities to become much easier targets of crime and violence. Moreover, this bill is paid for by borrowing more money from countries like China, and it violates President Obama's pledge that the funding for our actions in Iraq and Afghanistan would be done through the usual appropriations process. By passing this unfunded bill, we will be adding tens of billions of dollars in new debt. I cannot support such reckless policy.

Further, the bill does not include funding that is essential to stop massive layoffs among teachers and other public servants we count on. The recession that began in 2008--the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression--has hit our communities hard, forcing school districts to layoff teachers and cut services. Previously, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act made several sound investments in public education to keep teachers in the classroom and help school districts avoid painful cuts. Most, if not all, of this emergency funding has been spent.

I cannot in good conscience vote for a bill that is so at odds with the most basic of our values, and I urge my colleagues to join me in voting against it.