

assistance for their education, so they have to find it in other places. His work with the United Way helped to pay his way at the college. He went to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and received multiple academic awards and continued his volunteer service with Alpha Phi Omega, a national service fraternity. He received the Distinguished Service Key, the fraternity's highest award. He graduated with a bachelor of science in kinesiology and then went on to earn a master's degree in public health at the University of Illinois.

In his last semester of graduate school, President Obama announced the DACA Program, which I described earlier. He applied, signed up, and became part of that DACA Program.

What is he doing today with his master's degree, with his opportunity to work in fields of public health and such? He signed up for Teach For America. We know Teach For America is a national nonprofit organization that places talented recent college graduates in urban and rural schools that have a shortage of teachers. Jose is currently a high school physics and public health teacher in the city of Chicago.

He wrote me a letter, and he said:

DACA changed my life in more ways than I can ever explain. It has given me the power to help others, the freedom to travel, and the right to legally work without fear of deportation. Simply put, without DACA, I wouldn't exist for my students and my community.

If DACA is eliminated, what will happen to Jose? The day after DACA, he won't be able to teach. He could be deported back to Mexico, where he hasn't lived since he was a 2-year-old toddler. That would be a tragedy, not just for Jose and his family but for this Nation. This is a fine young man who, against great odds, undocumented, has written this amazing record in his young life. He is a giving person. He could be making a lot more money than his pay with Teach For America in an inner city school.

Do we need Jose Espinoza in America's future? I think we do. That is why I am happy that this BRIDGE Act would give him a chance and Congress a chance to address this issue of DREAMers. I hope President-Elect Trump will understand this and continue the DACA Program. If he decides to end the DACA Program, I hope his administration will work closely and rapidly with Congress to pass the BRIDGE Act into law.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PROVIDING FOR AN EXCEPTION TO A LIMITATION AGAINST APPOINTMENT OF PERSONS AS SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WITHIN SEVEN YEARS OF RELIEF FROM ACTIVE DUTY AS A REGULAR COMMISSIONED OFFICER OF THE ARMED FORCES—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to S. 84.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to S. 84, a bill to provide for an exception to a limitation against appointment of persons as Secretary of Defense within seven years of relief from active duty as a regular commissioned officer of the Armed Forces.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The motion is nondebatable.

The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

PROVIDING FOR AN EXCEPTION TO A LIMITATION AGAINST APPOINTMENT OF PERSONS AS SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WITHIN SEVEN YEARS OF RELIEF FROM ACTIVE DUTY AS A REGULAR COMMISSIONED OFFICER OF THE ARMED FORCES

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 84) to provide for an exception to a limitation against appointment of persons as Secretary of Defense within seven years of relief from active duty as a regular commissioned officer of the Armed Forces.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the provisions of Public Law 114-254, there will now be up to 10 hours of debate, equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, we are on the Mattis waiver.

Anyone who would like to debate, please come over.

In the meantime, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak as in morning business for 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF JEFF SESSIONS

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, the Senate is holding hearings on each of President-Elect Trump's nominees

to his Cabinet. Traditionally, Presidents are accorded a very high level of deference on assembling their own team, in part because these nominees are directly accountable to the President. But they are accountable to the American people too.

No Cabinet member is more powerful or has more impact on the day-to-day lives of Americans than the Attorney General of the United States.

The Attorney General is, indeed, a general, in command of an army of thousands of lawyers whose words carry enormous weight and power. It is the weight and power of the people of the United States. He speaks for us. He charges defendants in our name. He has sweeping authority to bring criminal charges in all Federal offenses, enormous unreviewable discretion in cases ranging from minor misdemeanors to the most serious felonies. In every sense, as capital penalties can be sought for some of these crimes, he wields the power of life and death.

The Attorney General's authority is not only sweeping, it is uniquely independent of the President's Cabinet. His decisions must supersede partisan politics. In most cases, there is no recourse to overrule his decisions unless there is political interference. He is not just another government lawyer or even just another member of the President's Cabinet. He is the Nation's lawyer, and he must be the Nation's legal counsel and conscience.

The job of U.S. Attorney General at stake here is one that I know pretty well. Like some of my colleagues in this body, I served as U.S. attorney, the chief Federal prosecutor in Connecticut.

I reported to the U.S. Attorney General. For years afterward as a private litigator and then as attorney general of the State of Connecticut for 20 years, I fought alongside and sometimes against the U.S. Attorney General and the legal forces at his disposal. I have seen his power, or hers, firsthand. The power of this Attorney General is awesome, as is that of any Attorney General.

In the best of cases, they are inspiring too. Even as he protects the public from vicious and violent criminal offenders, his role is also to protect the innocent from unfounded charges that could shatter their lives even if they are acquitted. As Justice Robert Jackson, a former Attorney General himself, once said: His job is not to convict, but to assure justice is done.

So this job requires a singular level of intellect and integrity and non-partisan but passionate devotion to the rule of law and an extraordinary sense of conscience. That is because he is responsible for so much more than prosecuting and preventing crime and ensuring public safety. He is responsible for aggressively upholding our Nation's sacred constitutional commitment to protecting individual rights and liberties and preventing infringement on them, even by the government itself, maybe especially by the government.