

Religious freedom is of deep concern to me as a Mormon. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have weathered extraordinary religious persecution. Much of it, especially initially, was sponsored by government actors.

The first Latter-day Saints were exiled from home to home. In 1838, the Governor of Missouri ordered that Mormons be driven from the land or “exterminated.” And yes, that is an actual quote.

Our first leader, Joseph Smith, once said: “The civil magistrate should punish guilt but never suppress the freedom of souls.”

That, of course, was before he was martyred by a bigoted, angry mob.

Our country’s ban on religious tests is a strong bulwark for religious freedom. As an original provision of the Constitution, this ban against religious tests predates even the Bill of Rights, and it applies not to just some religious adherents but to all of them equally.

The religious tests raised against Mr. Vought and Professor Barrett do not favor one sect of Christianity over another as was sadly common for much of our Nation’s history. Rather, these particular inquiries tend to favor the secular, progressive creed clung to so confidently by many of our Nation’s ruling elites. This creed has its own clerics, its own dogmas, its own orthodoxy, and as these nominees have discovered, it has its own heresies as well.

More and more, the adherents of this creed seek to use the power of government to steamroll favored groups, especially dissenters, from their own personal political dogmas. So they force evangelical caterers to bake cakes celebrating same-sex marriages, as is the case that is now before the Supreme Court of the United States, and they force nuns to purchase contraceptive coverage—nuns. They sue religious hospitals that will not perform abortions or sex reassignment surgeries for religious reasons. Yes, the secular progressive creed has proved that it is capable of triumphalism and intolerance, just as the creeds that have gone before it, not because its own adherents are uniquely wicked—to the contrary, because they are human.

There is a way out of this vicious cycle of religious intolerance, and it is a way that we have to find. That is for all of us to treat one another with civility and respect while jealously defending the rights of conscience for ourselves, our neighbors, and all of our fellow citizens—for Christians, Jews, Muslims, atheists, agnostics, and everyone else.

This body can do its part by supporting legislation like the First Amendment Defense Act and the Marriage and Religious Freedom Act, which would protect the people who have conscious objections to recent cultural changes and make sure they are protected against one of the most brutal forms of discrimination that can

be brought to bear; that is, the type of discrimination brought about by governments against individuals.

At a minimum, this body can do its part by respecting the constitutional rights of citizens who come before it. Lest we forget, we work for them, not the other way around. I trust my colleagues—Republicans, Democrats, and Independents—will take this to heart because religious freedom puts all Americans on the same footing. It helps men and women stand upright, honest before the law and before God.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

DACA

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I am here today to talk about the DACA Program, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program, which is very important in my State. We actually have 6,000 kids who have gone through that program.

As we all know, 800,000 young people who have lived in the United States since childhood are included and affected by this recent action by the administration, which I strongly oppose. These Dreamers were brought to the United States as children through no fault of their own and are working hard to educate themselves and contribute to our Nation. In fact, more than 97 percent of DACA recipients are now in school or in the workforce, and all DACA recipients are required to meet the program’s education requirements. One recent study found that 72 percent of all DACA recipients who are currently in school are pursuing a bachelor’s degree or higher. According to the American Association of Medical Colleges, more than 100 students with DACA status applied to medical school last year.

The young people who have benefited from DACA have often been in our country almost their entire lives after having been brought here as children. They are valuable members of our community, and they have contributed to our economy and to the fabric of our society. In fact, one recent study estimated that ending this policy would cost the country over \$400 billion over the next 10 years.

Ending DACA, which has been in place since 2012, would create tremendous uncertainty and risk deportation for nearly 800,000 Dreamers who are studying and working across our Nation.

When I think of the Dreamers, I think of, first of all, the night that the Judiciary Committee, on a bipartisan basis, passed comprehensive immigra-

tion reform. There were Dreamers there. They were there late at night and had tears streaming down their faces. Then I think about the time that President Obama put DACA into place and made it so that they could come forward, sign up, and legally work. Now we are going to turn our backs on those same people, those people who were brought here through no fault of their own. Whether or not the current administration disagrees with the past administration, our country made a commitment to them that they could sign up for this program. Back when we passed comprehensive immigration reform, I felt that our committee—the Senators who voted for that bill, both Democrats and Republicans—made a commitment to them that day that we were going to work on their behalf. That is why this is so wrong.

I do appreciate that this morning the President said that he wants to work to pass this bill and that he said the DACA young people do not have to worry over the next 6 months about any actions taken against them. Those are, of course, good things. I just wish this had not happened in this way, but it did.

I am also not surprised that so many people have stood up in support of Senator DURBIN and Senator GRAHAM’s bill, that so many Republicans, Democrats, leaders in business, leaders in labor, and religious leaders have stood up.

As we discuss the fate of these young people under DACA, I am reminded of someone who is not young—Joseph Medina, who is a decorated Army veteran and an immigrant who just celebrated his 103rd birthday this July. He is 103 years old. When I found him, he was a young 99 years old. The reason I found him was that we were talking about this very issue—about DACA and about kids, actually, today who want to serve in the military. As we know, through various ways, some of the DACA kids are courageously serving in our military right now. Of course, they will not be able to if they are deported, but just think that we are actually considering deporting people who are currently serving in our military.

In any case, let’s go back 103 years ago or so—actually, maybe a little before that. Joseph Medina came to the United States from Mexico when he was only 5 years old. He did not actually know he was born outside of our country. He had been brought across the border as an orphan by his aunt and his stepfather, and he did not know that he had been born outside of the United States. He had lived his whole life in Sleepy Eye, MN, until he was in an Army boot camp in 1944. At that time, Joseph Medina wanted to serve our country, but he found out that he actually was undocumented.

In his own words to me, he said: Well, back then, the Army really wanted us. The Air Force wanted us. The Navy wanted us. Everyone wanted us.

So what did they do back then?

He said: We would go over to Canada under, actually, the guidance of our military for 1 night.

He said he got to stay in a nice hotel. Then he came back, and he was a legal citizen. I have not looked into how they did this, but that is how they did it. That was, simply, back then.

Then what did Joseph Medina do? He went and served our country. He served under General MacArthur in the Pacific. That is what he did. When he came back after bravely serving our country, he got married, and he had a boy. I met that guy. That guy served in the Vietnam war.

So we have a dad who served our country in World War II, and we have a son who served our country in Vietnam, all because at that time there were people who said: Do you know what? You were not brought over with any knowledge that you were even being brought over. You were only 5 years old.

They did not deport him when he wanted to serve in our military; they made him a citizen.

Joseph Medina came out here to Washington, DC, at the age of 99 to see the World War II Memorial for the first time. I stood there with him as he looked proudly as that memorial, along with two Dreamers, who were high school students, who actually wanted to sign up and serve in the Air Force, but they were barred from doing that under the way our laws worked at the time.

I am proud of Joe's service, but I even want more. Joe's spirit and his devotion to our country can continue on and be passed on to other generations. That is what this Dream Act is really all about. It is about other kids who were brought into this country without their knowledge and without their even understanding what was happening and allowing them to be part of that American dream.

America is a country created by immigrants. Immigrants have been part of our Nation's greatest achievements. We need to fix our broken immigration system. Of course we do. That is why I supported comprehensive reform so that we would have had money for order at the border, which would have created a very, very long glidepath to citizenship, but there also was a moral compass to that bill. It has been 4 years since we passed that bill, and as we all know, despite the bipartisan support in the Senate, the House failed to act.

By the way, despite reform being good for our economy, I always like to point out to people that of the Fortune 500 companies, 70 of them in America are headed up by immigrants. Of our U.S. Nobel laureates, 25 percent of them were born in other countries. We literally cut off talent when we cut off immigration.

In my own case, my great-grandparents on my dad's side came over from Slovenia to work in the iron ore mines. When he was in about the sixth

grade, my grandpa had to quit school to go work to help raise his eight or nine brothers and sisters, but he always had this immigrant spirit. He never even graduated from high school, but he saved money in a coffee can so he could send my dad to college.

On my other side, my mother's parents—my grandparents—came over from Switzerland. My grandma came over when she was very young—I think at 3 years old. My grandpa came over when he was about 18. He was detained at Ellis Island because they had reached their quota of Swiss immigrants, so he put on his form that he was going to Canada. He did go to Canada, but he did not stay in Canada. He somehow got through to Wisconsin and was there as an undocumented alien, and he lived that way for 20 years. He married my grandma, had my mom and her brother.

When World War II came along, they required those aliens to register, so he had to register. That is when they found out how he had come in, and they still said that it was OK, that he could register. Then he was kind of emboldened, so he decided to sign up for citizenship. That was when they really looked into it, so he had to have a hearing. He made his case that he had lived here forever and had been there, had had two kids, worked his entire time at a pie shop, and they gave him citizenship. I still have that picture of his shining face with that bow tie. I wonder what would happen to him today if he were to come forward. I am not sure he would be made a citizen despite the long time he had spent in our country.

Now it has happened on both sides of my immigrant family.

My dad ended up being a newspaperman and got to interview everyone from Ginger Rogers, to Ronald Reagan, to Mike Ditka. My mom became a teacher and taught second grade until she was 70 years old. And I stand before you as the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate from the State of Minnesota.

That is the immigrant story. That is a story of a family who came in, not in an easy way, with my grandpa in an uncertain status, clearly, when he came into the United States. So you ask me why I support these Dreamers? Because I had Dreamers in my own family.

I am pleased that so many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle have spoken out in support of DACA, and it is essential that we now pass this legislation to protect these Dreamers. I stand ready to work with my Republican colleagues. I thank Senator DURBIN and Senator GRAHAM for their leadership. Let's get this done.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

THE NATIONAL DEBT

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, we have had a lot of action today in the Senate, which is unusual here, and I wish to address it.

I would like to address this to the people in Texas, Louisiana, and to all of those who just experienced the devastating results and the impact of Hurricane Harvey. Obviously, our hearts go out to those people, and, of course, we are going to do the right thing and help the people of Texas, which is just what we voted on today. But there is a bigger issue I want to speak to today. I relate to this personally because, just last year—almost exactly to the day—our family was evacuated from our home in South Georgia. As I speak today, we were just notified today that my wife and mother-in-law, who are there today, will be evacuating this weekend from the south coast of Georgia, trying to get out of the way of the next hurricane—Hurricane Irma—which looks to be a very dangerous storm as well, coming into Florida over the next day or so.

But this crisis that we just saw in Texas and that we might see in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina with the next hurricane—Hurricane Irma—reminds us of a bigger issue. It reminds us that because of our inability to get our financial house in order and as a result of the debt crisis we have today, we are losing the right to do the right thing. Whether it is medical research, whether it is infrastructure, or whether it is education, whether it is funding our military, which we will deal with next week, we are losing the right to do the right thing. By that I mean our own financial intransigence over the last 16 years, primarily, but, I would say, ever since 1965, when we had the Great Society and the great War on Poverty, which has failed miserably. That was another great, sweeping, progressive, liberal program that failed to make any dent in our poverty rate in the United States. The poverty rate today is fundamentally the same as it was in the days when that bill was signed into law.

Because of our intransigence, our ability to appropriate money to deal with disasters like Hurricane Harvey and potentially Hurricane Irma and others is in danger. Moving forward, we just simply will not be able to continue to deal with these emergencies and crises if we don't have a functioning Federal Government that actually pays its bills and has its financial house in order.

The national debt is actually what pulled me into the political process. It is the reason I am in the Senate today.