

number of people in poverty, and statistically—I mean, we can prove it to you. We do the counts. The number of people who have been lifted out of poverty has increased over the last 3 years. Median incomes have gone up. Job creation has gone up. Our gross domestic product has gone up over the past 5 or 6 years by \$80 billion. We were at about \$400 billion, and now we are at \$480 billion.

So let me tell you how we are going to pay for these tax cuts. We are not going to pay for them by cutting Medicare for seniors. We are going to pay for them through the economic activity that will absolutely occur if we have the courage to fulfill the promise that we made last year to the American people. We are going to reduce the regulatory burden on businesses. We are going to get our tax policy consistent and competitive with nations that are eating our lunch on locating business expansion and having businesses come offshore—away from the United States to more preferable tax jurisdictions, and we are going to change people's lives.

I am motivated to support this plan because I have been in a position of leadership where I had great people in my caucus who had the courage to fulfill a promise that I made if I became speaker of the house. Now we are at a point in time to do the same thing for America that we did for North Carolina. If we do it, it is going to be extraordinary.

Let me reduce it down to an answer I gave to a little boy yesterday. I think he was in fourth grade. I had a Skype video conference with an English as a second language class in an elementary school down in North Carolina. One of the little boys asked me a great question, and it is a question that has never been asked of me. I have been in politics only for about 12 years. But he said: What piece of legislation are you most proud of? What is the thing you are most proud of since you have been in the legislature?

I thought about it. It was a tough question because I can think of many things I have done. But then I went back to this little boy in the classroom, and I said: You know what, buddy, it was something I did back when I was speaker of the North Carolina House. By the way, if any politician tells you "I did this," they are invariably not telling you the truth because you don't get anything done unless the team commits to it. So I, along with a lot of people in North Carolina, decided that your parents could not afford to pay the bills. They were having a difficult time paying the utility bills, their rent, and their groceries, paying for food. So we decided we were going to do something to make sure that government gave your parents more money to make sure you could go to school, to make sure they could pay their bills, to make sure they could have a better paying job. And, buddy, that is the thing I am most proud of.

The thing I am most proud of was tax reform that produced results that are indisputable. I have seen the theater before, and it didn't work out too well because it proved to be fiction in North Carolina.

If we have the courage over the next couple of days to take that same vote here, we are going to see the same results for those working families and those job employers in the United States. So I hope all of the Members of this body recognize that we are not going to fund the tax cuts on the backs of people who need the help the most. That is absurd. It is unfair. It is theater. We are going to take care of them, and we are going to take care of everyone else who is relying on us, this caucus, to fulfill the promise we made, get the economy back on track, and start winning more than losing against our international competition. I am completely convinced that the bill that is going to be before us over the end of this week is going to do just that.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

DACA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to speak about the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program, known as DACA. DACA, an Executive order of President Obama, provided temporary, renewable legal status for immigrant students if they registered with the government, paid a filing fee of \$500, passed a criminal and national security background check. About 780,000 young people stepped forward and did something they had been warned their entire lives never to do. Their parents knew they were undocumented. They knew that they had been brought to this country at an early age. They knew that they weren't technically legal, and their parents had warned them: Stay away from cops and government. All that can happen is that they will discover you are undocumented and deport you and maybe your family as well. Be careful.

So President Obama stepped up and said: If you will step forward, tell us who you are, and let us do a background check on you, we are going to give you a chance—a chance to earn your way to legal status in America—and 780,000 young people took that chance and signed up for DACA.

Just this last Monday I was up in New York City, and I went to Hunter College, which is part of the City University of New York, and there were about five young people on a forum with me to discuss this bill and the

issue of Dreamers and immigration. It was interesting because each one of them—bright students, impressive young people—before they would say anything, they would introduce themselves by saying something like "My name is Isadora, and I have 465 days." And the next one would say, "My name is Evelyn, and I have 270 days." They were telling me how much time they had left, protected, to continue on as students.

They know that President Trump's decision on September 5 to abolish DACA means that their protection is going to end as of March 5 next year, and then they face some terrible possibilities. The first is deportation. These people have turned themselves in. They have stepped up and identified themselves to our government with the belief that our government would not hold it against them, and now they worry that has changed. They are worried about what will happen to their family because they had the courage to come up and sign up for this program. These are very real, lifetime problems and challenges these young people face.

If you look through the list of those who could be affected if DACA disappears, as President Trump has called for on March 5, there are some heart-breaking stories. Do you know there are 900 DACA-protected young people who have volunteered and now serve in the U.S. military? That is right. Even though they are undocumented because of DACA, they were allowed to sign up for a program known as MAVNI, which is a specialized program for those who have talents that are needed in our military, and they literally signed up. Think of that for a moment. Here they are, illegal in America, undocumented in America, willing to risk their lives for America. Why? Because it is the only country they know. They have lived their whole lives here. They have gone to school here. They have pledged allegiance to that flag every day in the classroom. That was their flag, their national anthem, their country. But because they were brought here as children, toddlers, infants, necessary papers were not filed. They have no legal status in this country. Well, I hope we can change that.

When I asked President Obama to create this program by Executive order, he waited and worked for a year before he came up with it, and I thought it was a good program. It was controversial, but at least for these young people, it gave them a temporary renewable status, and that made all the difference in the world.

When Attorney General Sessions announced the end of DACA on September 5, the President challenged us. He challenged the Senate and the House of Representatives. He said: Do something about this. Pass a law. Take care of this problem.

I think DACA was legal, but I am not going to argue that point anymore. The new President does not, but I accept his challenge, and I think we all should.

What can we do that is fair to these young people and gives them the chance they are asking for that is consistent with a good immigration policy for America? That is why, years ago, I introduced the DREAM Act and why I still believe it is the right approach. The notion behind it, of course, is if you were brought here as a child, you have no criminal record of any serious nature, you have completed your education, you have a chance to earn your way into legal status and then ultimately into citizenship, and that is what we are working on now.

A number of us are getting together and talking about it on a bipartisan basis, and we have little time left. This has to be done this year, before the end of December. Why do I say that if the program expires in March of next year? Well, because I have been around the Senate for a few years, and I know in January and February there is little, if any, heavy lifting. There are few bills that have to pass, and we tend to put things off. So far this year, we really wouldn't get gold stars for our performance on the floor of the Senate in generating legislation and that is why I want to get that done—the whole Dream Act and DACA done—in the month of December before we leave. If we don't do it, if we fail—and I pray that we won't—but if we fail, as of March 5 of next year, 1,000 of these young people will lose their protection under the law every single day for 2 years—1,000 a day.

I mentioned those serving in the military. There are 20,000 under DACA who are teachers. As of March 5 next year, they will lose their jobs. School districts all around America will have to fill those vacancies because the teachers can no longer legally work for the school districts, and there are many others who face that as well. We have almost 90 percent who are engaged in some type of job. Many are students who work because they, as undocumented students, don't qualify for Federal assistance. So they hold down jobs to pay for their college education. I have met them. Some of them break down in tears and say: Senator, I am so close to graduating, but what's the point if I am going to be deported the day after? What's the point?

That is what we are up against, and that is what we face. What we need to do is take a look at the real-life stories.

I want to introduce to you a person who is a friend of mine. He is an amazing person. This is Cesar Montelongo, as shown in this picture. Cesar was 10 years old when his family brought him here from Mexico. He grew up in New Mexico, where his academic achievement was quickly recognized. He graduated from high school with a grade point average above 4.0. He was ranked third in his class. He was a member of the Chess, French, Spanish, Physics, and Science Clubs. He even took college classes during the last 2 years of high school.

Cesar went on to New Mexico State University, where he had a triple major in biology, microbiology, and Spanish, as well as two minors in chemistry and biochemistry. He is one smart fellow. He graduated with distinction in the honors track with a 3.9 GPA. He then earned a master's degree in biology.

He earned a master's degree in biology because his dream was to go to medical school. But before DACA, it was impossible. He could not apply for medical school. The medical schools of America were not accepting the students who were undocumented. He knew if he went to medical school anywhere and didn't have a legal right to work, he couldn't complete a residency at the end of medical school. So he got a master's degree in biology and a minor in molecular biology and worked as a teaching assistant.

Then DACA came along. Today, Cesar is the first DACA student who is enrolled in the MD-PhD program at Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine. He is entering his third year of this highly competitive program. They accept only a handful for an MD-PhD. On completion, he will receive a medical degree and a doctorate degree in science. He is one of more than 30 DACA recipients at this medical school, which I am so proud of, in Chicago. It was, in fact, the first medical school to admit students with DACA status, beginning in 2014.

DACA students don't get special treatment—no quotas. They have to compete. But amazingly bright, young people like Cesar were just waiting for a chance to compete.

In order to finish their education at this medical school, they borrow from the State of Illinois government, which gives them a loan for their medical education. For every year that they are given a loan, they pledge to serve 1 year as medical doctors in an underserved area of our State. It is a win-win situation.

He is now doing amazing research. He is researching how bladder viruses shape bacteria populations and the potential implications for urinary infections and disease.

He is a member of the pathology medical group. He is a Spanish interpreter at the local clinic, and a mentor to other medical students.

I asked Cesar: What drew you to medicine? Here is what he said:

When I was very young, my father became ill and then was bedridden for months. He was the primary breadwinner and I saw him as our protector. Watching him immobilized and screaming in pain had a huge impact on me. Years later we would find out that my father suffered from diabetic myopathy and neuropathy. Learning that both his illness and our family's suffering could have been prevented by education and relatively inexpensive medication was heartbreaking. But at the same time, it made me realize the potential of medicine.

What is Cesar's dream for the future? To become a practicing physician and a scientist and to develop new and improved clinical diagnostic tools so that

doctors can diagnose and treat diseases better.

Close to 70 Dreamers are enrolled in medical schools around the United States. Why is DACA important to him? Any student like him who is in a medical school today and wants to go on to a residency has to be able to work. Residents work long hours in hospitals while they are learning. If he didn't have DACA, he wouldn't have legal permission or legal authority to work in this country. No medical school will accept him for a residency unless he has that DACA protection.

Why in the world would we let this young man's vigorous pursuit of education and brilliance be wasted? We need him. We need him in Chicago. We need him in Illinois. We need him in America—and many others just like him.

The Association of American Medical Colleges reports that the Nation's doctor shortage will rise to 40,000 and even to 105,000 by the year 2030. Both the AMA and the Association of American Medical Colleges have warned that ending DACA will hurt when it comes to this physician shortage. They want Congress to do something.

Listen to what the AMA says:

Estimates have shown that the DACA initiative could help introduce 5,400 previously ineligible physicians into the U.S. healthcare system in the coming decades to help address [physician] shortages and ensure patient access to care. . . . Removing those with DACA status will create care shortages for rural and underserved areas. . . . Without these physicians, the AMA is concerned that the quality of care provided in these communities will be negatively impacted.

I know the Presiding Officer is from the State of North Carolina. In my State of Illinois, we have some great big cities, and we have some great small towns. Many of the best small towns and rural areas from my end of the State are desperate to make sure they have good doctors at their local hospitals and people available in the community.

We can't afford to lose Cesar. We can't afford to lose the thousands of others the AMA tells us are poised to become doctors and to fill our need across America. This aging population of our country is going to need doctors and nurses and physical therapists more than ever. If these young people can answer that call, they will not only be serving our Nation, but they will be serving their own goals to be part of our Nation's future.

Now it is up to us. We are supposed to leave here in a matter of days. That means those of us who are serious about this issue have to do something meaningful and important, and do it quickly.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

TAX REFORM

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I thank my colleagues who are on the Senate