

most instances, it is so they don't lose more money in caring for those veterans.

Just like at the conclusion of World War II, when General Bradley overhauled the VA, today's VA is in need of another major reform. Just as General Bradley did, we must keep the veterans' unique wants and needs in mind as we reshape and reform the delivery of healthcare. Veterans require and deserve the best our Nation has to offer. If the VA is serious about restoring the trust with veterans, then, the VA needs to be committed to creating a modern, functional healthcare system that increases access—both within the VA and within the community—for timely and quality care. We ought not miss this opportunity. We ought not shy away from legislation that helps to achieve that outcome.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to spend a couple of minutes talking about the Dream Act and the so-called DACA issue. There are so many acronyms here in Washington. Sometimes we rely too much on them, but in this case, a lot of Americans know what we are talking about—the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.

This policy was put in place in the prior administration. Then in September, in this administration, the President made an announcement to end the program, to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program. The President imposed, I would argue, an arbitrary deadline of March 5 of next year, which is looming now. Something on the order of 20,000 DACA recipients have already lost their protection from detention and deportation, and I believe that it is critical for Congress to act now to pass the bipartisan Dream Act.

What are we talking about here?

We are talking about young people who arrived in this country, in many cases, at very, very young ages—some of them babies, some of them young children at the time. When you hear their stories, you come away impressed that they have succeeded, that they have become part of the fabric of American life.

In a meeting a couple of months ago—sitting in a conference room, around a long conference table with other DACA recipients, because of the looming deadline and the potential that she could lose the status she has now and be deported—one DACA recipient said to me: The only country I have ever known doesn't want me—or at

least she was reflecting that the policy the administration had enunciated seemed to send a message to her that she was not wanted.

This makes no sense at all on a number of fronts, and I will get to each of them in a moment, but I will start with the word "promise." These young people were made a promise by our government. It was made by the President of the United States of America when he said: Come forward, and we will protect you because you have taken that affirmative step forward.

That promise cannot be violated, in my judgment, by any President or, certainly, by inaction on the part of Congress. If this government is willing to break that promise to what most believe is something on the order of 800,000 young people who have lived in the United States since their childhoods and after our having allowed them to better contribute to their families and their communities, why would any government around the world, let alone our own people, believe any other promise that we would make?

Would we have that moment, I would hope that we would be confident that a foreign government that happens to be an ally would be able to take our word for something—take the word of the President, take the word of a Federal official or a Member of Congress—when we make an assertion.

We all remember the story in the context of the Cuban missile crisis, when an American official went to see President de Gaulle of France—an ally, a close ally, an ally for generations. In discussion with President de Gaulle of France, that envoy said: The President of the United States wants me to present evidence to you to prove that there are missiles in Cuba.

As we were told, President de Gaulle said: There is no reason for you to show the surveillance pictures. If the President of the United States says there are missiles in Cuba, I believe him, and you don't need to prove it to me.

Part of that was because, over the generations, leaders of our country had built up a kind of credibility, a believability, that was very important to our international relationships—in this case, having to do with the French people.

Yet our government would break a promise to 800,000 young people—law-abiding young people, young people who have succeeded, in many of whom our country has invested by way of their educations. They have been educated in our school districts—educated in grade school and in high school and in our institutions of higher education in some instances. We are going to break a promise to them? Why would anyone trust us around the world if we would break a promise to 800,000 young people?

This is the responsibility not only of the administration but of both parties in both Houses because, if that promise is violated by inaction or action, then I think that we damage our credibility

here at home, especially, but also around the world.

We know that there are economic consequences to this action or inaction. By one estimate, when I consider just Pennsylvania, here are some of the numbers. In Pennsylvania, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program has allowed nearly 5,900 young people to come forward and to pass background checks to live and to work legally in this country. That was the promise. You come forward, and you allow a background check to proceed. You pass it, and you work legally in this country.

What kind of impact would play out in Pennsylvania if those 5,900 young people were to be lost because DACA would have ended?

The cost for our State would be, by one estimate, \$357 million. The national number is extraordinarily high. For the 800,000 young people who have lived in the United States since their childhoods, if DACA ends, the national economy will lose more than \$460 billion—that is billion with a "b" as opposed to the Pennsylvania number, which is in the millions—over the decade. So it would be, roughly, \$46 billion or so every year for 10 years. Why would we do that? Why would anyone want that to happen—to have that kind of economic hit to the national economy?

I think it is wrong just based upon its being a violation of a promise. It is a sacred obligation of any government, especially to the people who are living within the boundaries of the United States of America. That is offensive enough for me to speak out against action or inaction that would be against the interests of these young people. Even if you did not prioritize the violation of a sacred promise, you could also arrive at the conclusion that ending DACA would be a mistake for purely economic reasons if you were concerned about the national economy.

These young people, known as Dreamers, as I said, have lived in this country since they were very young. They are law-abiding residents. They have learned English. They pay taxes and have gone to school. They have secured jobs to support themselves and their families. For many of these Dreamers, America is, indeed, the only home they have ever known. Here are a couple of examples, in this case, from Pennsylvania.

Audrey Lopez, a Dreamer from Lancaster, PA, was brought to the United States from Peru when she was just 11 years old. Audrey spent most of her childhood in Pennsylvania, and her parents instilled in her the value of hard work and an education. Like so many Dreamers, Audrey Lopez only learned that she was undocumented when she started applying to college and learned that she did not have a Social Security number.

Despite her not having access to financial aid, Audrey worked hard and graduated from Millersville University

of Pennsylvania in 2012. After graduation, she took a job in public service at Church World Services in assisting refugees with resettlement. This past fall, Audrey accepted a nearly full scholarship to American University, here in Washington, where she will obtain a master's in international development. She has chosen that course of study, in part, due to fear of deportation. She is hoping to arm herself with the tools to make her country a better place.

We should be supporting young, hard-working people like Audrey who want to work in the service of others and our Nation. Instead, there are people here in Washington who are threatening their futures—not only her future but our Nation's future—by making us less safe and damaging the economy.

I say “less safe” if that is the way we treat law-abiding individuals in our country, people who have lived here their whole lives. They may not have been born here—they may not have a number—but for all intents and purposes, they are Americans. They live in American communities and attend American schools. They have achieved things that we would hope every American would achieve, and they have worked hard. In some cases, they didn't realize they were any different from any other child until much later in life when they were told they might not have had a number or a special status that others around them might have had. In any case, in addition to being the wrong thing to do—violate a promise—and in addition to hurting our economy, if you end DACA, it will not be good for our security.

Again, why would anyone believe that we could enter into a hard and fast security agreement or protect our own people if we would not be willing to protect people in our own country who have followed the law? This would be an insult and an outrage if it were hundreds of people, but we are talking about 800,000 who will be subject to losing their status and, ultimately, be deported because the U.S. Congress doesn't have the guts and doesn't have the integrity to protect them.

So this is a test, a test of the U.S. Congress—both Houses—and it is a test for the administration as well. I hope they can pass this test, the test of whether we keep our promise or whether we lie to the people. That is what this is about. This is about basic integrity, and there is no in-between here. You either keep your promise or you don't. We will see what the administration does, we will see what the Congress does, and we will see whether people care about the economy.

There is a lot of talk about growing the economy. How can we say we want to grow the economy, when you reject because of some ideology or some special interest—reject and compromise and damage the future of 800,000 people who live here? That is inexcusable and unforgivable. I hope we see some moral courage over the next couple of weeks when it comes to these young

people. Ending DACA is bad for our economy, it tears away the integrity of our government, and it is bad for our security. If this program is ended, we are less safe as a country, without a doubt.

This is why Congress must move immediately to pass the bipartisan Dream Act. It is a bill I was proud to vote for and move forward in 2007 and 2010. The bill would allow Dreamers to become permanent residents if they meet the very stringent qualifications outlined in the bill. This means giving those 5,900 Pennsylvanians who have been granted DACA status some security and a future they can count on. This is why we can say America is a great country, when we keep our promises, when we protect our own folks in our communities, especially these individuals who work very hard.

So this is a basic test. I hope our government will meet it. I hope the administration will work with us to make sure we can finally pass into law a measure that will remove this uncertainty and remove the fear people live with.

Let me conclude with one observation. I was in a meeting a couple of weeks ago with a young woman who said: The only country I have ever known doesn't seem to want me.

Another young woman in the same meeting said her whole goal in life was pretty simple. She wanted to be a nurse. She said she wanted to heal people. She had done well in school, had followed all the rules, and now she may be in trouble, subject to deportation down the road, if somehow this DACA policy isn't upheld, if our promise is violated, our sacred promise to 800,000 people. This young woman was telling a room full of people about this goal she had, this aspiration to be a nurse, and when she said, “All I want to do is heal people,” she became very upset.

Another young woman who had achieved in school and had done well was a volunteer firefighter in Pennsylvania. She worries about it as well. Story after story, example after example of young people who have worked very hard their whole lives, have achieved in school, their friends are all around them, and their families are a part of these communities. Is our government going to violate a promise to them? Why would anyone believe our government after that on any promise if it violates a promise that fundamental? Why would anyone trust the U.S. Congress if these young people aren't protected?

I hope Congress will meet this test, support the Dream Act, and get it done. If we get that done, then we can say we are a government people should trust. If you don't get this done, it is a lot more difficult to make the case that our word is good here at home and that it is good internationally.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

MAKING FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2018

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to H.J. Res. 123, which was received from the House, and that there be 30 minutes of debate, equally divided in the usual form, in relation to H.J. Res. 123; further, that following the use or yielding back of that time, the joint resolution be considered read a third time and the Senate vote on the joint resolution with no intervening action or debate.

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

The clerk will report the resolution.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 123) making further continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2018, and for other purposes.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the joint resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

RECOGNIZING THE UAA WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM AND THE GREAT ALASKA SHOOTOUT

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, every week I have been coming down to the floor to talk a little bit about my great State, about the wonders of its natural landscape—a land that everybody should see for themselves—and we talk about special people. I know the Presiding Officer looks at this as one of the favorite times in his long week. We talk about the people who have made a difference in Alaska, our Alaskan of the Week. It is one of the best things I get to do here as Alaska's Senator because I get to talk about Alaska's beauty; the people who make my State so special; the kind, generous people full of rugged determination, full of patriotism, full of drive, full of life.

Living in the North in some of the most difficult terrain and extreme conditions of the world breeds competition in the best ways possible. It also sparks creativity all across the State. When creativity meets competition, great things can happen.

You saw great things happen on the basketball court late last month when University of Alaska Anchorage's women's basketball team, who are our Alaskans of the Week, won the championship at the Great Alaska Shootout in Anchorage, the seminal sports event of the year that for four decades has corresponded with Thanksgiving weekend.

Let me talk for a few minutes about the Great Alaska Shootout. In the late 1970s, a coach from the University of Alaska Anchorage's basketball team had a vision to put the fledgeling UAA basketball program on the map. How