

to the United States. While these are certainly the most sympathetic group of people whom we need to address—and I think we can, and we will in a compassionate and honest sort of way—I am grateful to President Trump for returning the fate of this program where it belongs—in the hands of Congress. That is after President Obama's DACA provisions failed in Federal court.

I am confident that both sides can come to an agreement regarding the legal status of these roughly 800,000 individuals who were brought to the country illegally while they were still quite young. That includes 124,000 DACA recipients in my State of Texas alone.

Many of these individuals make valuable contributions and should not be penalized for decisions made by their parents, the legal ramifications of which they could not at such a young age fully understand or consent to. But any such agreement must include corresponding measures regarding an enforcement of our immigration laws.

I think that one of the biggest tragedies in recent years in our country is that the American people have simply lost confidence in their government when it comes to securing the border and enforcing our immigration laws. I believe this provides an opportunity, not only for us to provide compassionate relief to the DACA recipients I mentioned a moment ago but to restore an enforcement of our immigration laws, including border security, the additional personnel, and the technology required in order for us to know who is coming into our country and why they are here and to make sure that they only do so by legal channels.

My hope is that our Democratic colleagues will abandon their threats to shut down the government and will engage with us in good faith, because we stand ready to talk to them and negotiate in good faith as well.

Finally, on my personal to-do list is my goal to pass the bill we call the Fix NICS Act as soon as possible. This is to fix the National Instant Criminal Background Check System that is checked by federally licensed firearms dealers when somebody goes into a store to buy a firearm—whether it is a shotgun to hunt, a pistol to defend themselves, a rifle for hunting, or for home defense. I think it is really important in the wake of Sutherland Springs for us to get this bill passed.

This is the bill I filed after those terrible shootings in Sutherland Springs, which resulted in the loss of 26 innocent lives, with about that same number injured as well. This tragedy was entirely preventable because the individual who committed that heinous act on that day was legally disqualified from purchasing a firearm by the fact that he was a convicted felon, he had been convicted of domestic violence, and he had been committed to a mental health institution. But none of that information was uploaded by the Air

Force into the National Instant Criminal Background Check System.

What did he do when he went in to buy firearms? He simply lied, and he said he had no disqualifying event in his life like those I mentioned earlier—convicted felon, mental health institutionalization, and a domestic violence conviction. He simply lied about it. The background check system failed us and the people who were victims of that terrible day in Sutherland Springs. We need to get that fixed.

This is one of those rare times when folks who are ardent believers in the Second Amendment, as am I, and those who are perhaps less inclined to be enthusiastic about the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens can come together and say: Let's at least fix the current law. Let's make sure that if somebody is disqualified from buying a firearm, this National Instant Criminal Background Check System actually works.

I am delighted to say that Senator MURPHY from Connecticut, Senator FEINSTEIN from California, and Senator SCHUMER, the Democratic leader from New York, have joined me and Majority Leader MCCONNELL and so many others on our side of the aisle to say that this is something we can and we should do. I simply cannot face the prospect of looking into the eyes of somebody who has lost a loved one as the result of a preventable mass shooting incident like we saw in Sutherland Springs. We have the ability here to pass legislation that will save lives and to prevent people who are legally disqualified from purchasing firearms from doing so.

All of these on this list are just a few of the challenges we face as a new year begins. I think these are things we can address on a bipartisan basis. I know we had some tough fights last year on healthcare and tax reform, and our Democratic colleagues seemed disinclined to help at all to work with us to pass those pieces of legislation. I am hoping that with this new year and, hopefully, the optimism that goes along with it, our colleagues will work with us in goodwill for all and a renewed determination to do what is right, not only for the folks we have the honor of representing but for our entire country.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill 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. TOOMEY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### DACA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on September 5 of last year, Attorney General Sessions announced the repeal of the

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program, which has been called DACA. The same day, President Trump called on Congress to come up with a solution to "legalize DACA."

The history of this issue I have explained many times on the floor, and I will say it briefly. Seventeen years ago, I introduced a bill called the DREAM Act, which said that if you were brought to the country as an infant, a toddler, a child, and you were raised in America and went to school here, had no problems of any serious nature with the law, that you would be given a chance to become a citizen of the United States.

Many of these children, of course, didn't have a voice in the decision of their families to come to this country, and this is the only country they know. They have gone to our schools. They have graduated from our schools. They stood up in the classrooms of those schools each and every day and pledged allegiance to that flag. It was their flag and their country. Many of them didn't learn until they were in high school, that technically, in the eyes of the law, this wasn't true; they were undocumented. They were illegal in the eyes of the law.

So what I tried to do with the DREAM Act was to give these young people a chance—a chance to become part of America's future and to become, ultimately, earning their way to legalization and earning their way to citizenship. That was the DREAM Act. We have passed it at various times in the Senate. We passed it in the House over the years. We have never done it at the same time, same year.

So I called on President Obama and asked him if he would issue an Executive order and do something to help these young people. He created DACA. DACA said to the young people: Come forward, pay your filing fee, go through a criminal background check, and we will let you stay in America for 2 years at a time, renewable, and we will let you work in this country. Well, more than 780,000 young people did that. They signed up, paid their fee, went through the background check, and received that protection. Then came President Trump who said: That is the end of the program. We are not going to protect these young people any longer.

Well, whatever happened to those 780,000 DACA-protected young people? Many of them are in school, they are in college, law school, medical school. Some of them joined our military. That is it. They went and took the oath and said: I will serve this country. I will bear allegiance to this country. I will give my life for this country in the U.S. military. Nine hundred of them are in the military today.

DACA is going to be eliminated as of March 5 of this year by President Trump, which means they will be asked to leave the U.S. military, to stop this volunteer service to our Nation. Another 20,000 are teachers all across this

country. High schools, grade schools, you name it, they are teaching, trying to find a way to help other young people do better with their lives. They lose their jobs when DACA expires and their DACA protection expires.

Thousands and thousands of them are doing important work, including as engineers, as police officers in training, as medics. These are people who are making this a better country, and all they have asked for is just a chance to be here and to be part of our future, but President Trump said: It is over. Now, Congress, do something about it.

Do you know what we have done since September 5, when the President issued that challenge? Take a look at this empty floor. That is what we have done—nothing. Nothing. Despite the President's challenge, despite the lives of all these young people hanging in the balance, we have done nothing. That is why I come to the floor today. This has to come to an end. We have to do the right and just thing for these young people. We have to make those who are eligible for the Dream Act, those who are eligible to be part of our future—we have to give them a chance, and that is why I come and ask for help today.

I can tell you we are losing about 1,000 of these young Dreamers each week. Their protection under DACA expires. What does it mean? It means that at any moment of any day, a knock on the door could mean they would be deported and many times other members of their family with them. Their lives in the United States would come to an end, and many of them would be deported to countries they have never ever known. They might have been there as infants. Perhaps it was Mexico; maybe it was Korea. They knew it, not personally, but only through family stories, and they would be sent to these countries, many times with no family, no connections, sometimes with no knowledge of the language that is spoken there.

They believe they are Americans. I think they should have a chance to become Americans in the full sense of the law.

(Mr. GARDNER assumed the Chair.)

I have come to the floor over the years after introducing the DREAM Act and urged my colleagues to do something. I am not alone. The coalition that has come together behind this issue is interesting. Over 75 percent of the American people think Congress—both Democrats and Republicans—should come together and pass the Dream Act. Over 75 percent of Americans believe that, and 60 percent of the people who voted for President Trump believe that.

We have Governors from both political parties urging us to do something, urgently, to help. Eleven of them, Democrats and Republicans, sent a letter to Congress, calling on us to pass the DACA legislation. Democratic Governors from Minnesota, Montana, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina; Re-

publican Governors from Nevada, Massachusetts, Vermont, Utah; and Alaska's Independent Governor all asked us to do something about it.

Poll after poll shows bipartisan support for the Dreamers. Even FOX News found that 79 percent of Americans support a path to citizenship for Dreamers. As I mentioned earlier, this support includes 63 percent of those voted for President Trump.

I have told this story many times on the floor, but it doesn't have the impact of telling the real-life story of those who are affected by this conversation and would be impacted by this law.

This is Zarna Patel. She is the 106th Dreamer whose story I have told on the Senate floor. When she was 3 years old, her family came to the United States from India. She grew up in North Carolina and in Coral Springs, FL. She was a brilliant student. In high school, she received the AP Scholar with Distinction Award from the College Board and the Math Scholars Award from her school's math department. She was president of her high school's environmental club. She started a recycling program at her school and led the school beautification project, beach cleanups, and an environmental science competition every year.

She was a member of the National Honor Society, the treasurer of the Science National Honor Society, a member of the Spanish National Honor Society, and a member of the Rho Kappa History National Honor Society. She was some student.

She still found time to volunteer as a tutor for disadvantaged kids and as a youth leader for the South Florida Hindu Temple.

She was brought to this country as a baby. She was the only undocumented person in her family. She, of course, didn't know it when she was brought here at age 3. But she didn't let her immigration status stop her at all.

She began college in Florida. Keep in mind, if you are one of these undocumented Dreamers, you don't qualify for any Federal assistance to go to school. If you want to go to college, you get a job and save the money to pay the tuition. She did it.

In Florida, she was on the dean's list. She graduated cum laude from the university's honors program, with a bachelor of science in nutrition and a minor in anthropology.

In college, she volunteered as a student leader for a community health clinic, helping uninsured and underserved patients. She was a leader of the Friends for Life pediatric cancer student group, and she volunteered at the pediatric ICU of Shands Hospital, spending time with patients there every single week.

She volunteered with a sports program for children with physical and mental disabilities and was a volunteer camp counselor for a week in summer camp for kids with diabetes. She was a summer volunteer for a community-

based effort to reduce healthcare disparities in her county.

Zarna says that she threw herself into these activities to prepare herself for her life's dream. Her life's dream was to go to medical school. She knew, though, that she didn't have a chance. She was undocumented. She didn't have a country. She grew up here. She did all these things in America, but legally, she wasn't recognized in America. Her immigration status was going to kill her dream. Despite being brought here as a baby, she did the very best with her life that she could possibly do.

Then, in 2012, President Barack Obama established the DACA Program. She heard about it and realized, miracle of miracles, she had a chance. She was now able to step out of the shadows, submit her name for a criminal background check, pay a \$500 filing fee, wait in line, and hope that she would be allowed to stay in America, protected by DACA, and it worked.

Something else happened at the same time. A university in my home State of Illinois, which I am very proud of—Loyola University—decided to do something that no other university in America would do. They decided to open up the competition for medical school to DACA-protected young people across America. They didn't give them special slots or quotas. No, they threw them into the pool. If you are good enough, you can compete with the best students in America. Guess what. These DACA students turned out to be some of the best students in America. They have 32 students at Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine studying to be doctors today under the DACA Program, which was eliminated by President Trump.

You say to yourself: It is lucky they got in under the wire. There is a problem. The problem is that on March 5, the DACA Program is eliminated by President Trump. By March 5, students like Zarna will lose their protection under the law, and as they lose their protection under the law, they are subject to deportation, which means a knock on the door and you can be gone.

They will not be allowed to legally work in America. What difference does it make if a medical student can't legally work? Well, I have come to learn it makes a big difference. You see, to be a successful medical student and become a doctor, you need a residency. A residency is a job in a hospital. It is a tough job. It isn't a 9-to-5 job during the course of the week. It is many hours of hard work. You don't get paid a lot of money, but you learn what it means to be a doctor and to treat people as they come into the hospital. So if you want to go to medical school and you want to graduate with a residency in a specialty, you need to be allowed to legally work in America.

Because of President Trump's decision to eliminate DACA, Zarna Patel and dozens just like her cannot seek a residency out of medical school. That

is the end of medical school. Despite all the success in their academic lives, they are stopped from going forward.

Zarna is a second-year student. If she is given a chance, she wants to be a doctor. In my State, we help pay for her education.

Here is the deal though. Zarna Patel, if you want to go to medical school and you don't have the money, my State of Illinois will loan you the money to go to medical school on one condition. You have to give us one year of service as a doctor, once you become a certified doctor in our State of Illinois, for the money we loaned to you. You can serve in the city of Chicago or you might serve in a rural community downstate.

She signed up for it. She said: I will do it. I will give a year of my life for each year of medical school if you will give me a chance to be a doctor.

Does this young woman sound like the kind of person we need in this country in the future? Does she sound like the kind of person who would be just the kind of doctor you would like to have? Well, sign me up. I am one of those who believes in her. I know her. I met her.

There are 31 other students at Loyola's medical school just like her. Their future is hanging on what happens in this empty Senate Chamber—whether in the next 2 weeks, the Senators from both sides of the aisle, Republican and Democrat, will come together and solve this problem.

I want to thank the Presiding Officer for being a positive part of this conversation—and he has been. It means an awful lot to me, and it means a lot to her and a lot of people who are counting on us to do our jobs as Senators.

We haven't worked out a perfect solution to this yet. We need to give and take, compromise, agree to some things I don't want to agree to—maybe the other side does the same—but to do our work, to pass a law. Isn't that why we were elected—to solve these problems rather than sit here and give speeches about the problems?

I want the day to come when these poor staff people breathe a sigh of relief and say: The Dream Act finally passed, and maybe DURBIN will stop giving these speeches on the floor about these magnificent young students. I would like that day to come soon, certainly before January 19.

Zarna wrote me a letter. She says:

As I got older . . . I began to understand just how complicated US immigration laws were and how stacked the odds were against me. Here I was, in a country that I loved, that I rooted for, that I thought to be the greatest in the world, while my family paid taxes for services that I would never be eligible for. There I was, serving a country that did not even value me as a human being, all because of a piece of paper. And yet, after all that I have been through and after all that this country has said about me, I still call it my heart, my passion and my home.

Close to 70 Dreamers are enrolled in our medical schools. I mentioned Loy-

ola, but there are others. I thank them all for giving these young people a chance. If DACA goes away and isn't replaced by Congress, they can't become doctors. They will be deported back to their countries, in many situations, where they haven't lived since they were babies.

Will we be a better country if Zarna Patel is asked to leave? Will we be a stronger Nation? Would Chicago, would Springfield, would Illinois be better? Of course not.

The Association of American Medical Colleges reports that the Nation's doctor shortage is going to get worse because a lot of boomers and others are getting older and need help. We need more doctors, and we need good ones—good ones like Zarna Patel promises to be.

Both the AMA and the Association of American Medical Colleges have warned that ending DACA will make the physician shortage in America worse. They have urged Congress to do something about it.

Here is what the American Medical Association says:

Estimates have shown that the DACA initiative could help introduce over 5,400 previously ineligible [doctors] 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 particularly create care shortages for rural and other underserved areas. . . . Without these physicians, the AMA is concerned that the quality of care in these communities will be negatively impacted.

When we introduced the Dream Act, Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, Republican of South Carolina, said: "The moment of reckoning is coming." It is coming soon and coming in a matter of days. By January 19, we have to do something. We have run out of time, and we have run out of excuses. We have run out of the opportunity to help Zarna Patel and a lot of people like her be a part of America's future. Now is the time to act.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Thank you, Mr. President, and happy new year to you.

For my 191st "Time to Wake Up" speech, I want to take the change of years to reflect on what 2017 meant for our carbon pollution of the Earth's climate and what 2018 may bring.

Our human use of fossil fuels continued to pour carbon dioxide into the atmosphere in 2017. The concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere now stands at almost 407 parts per million—the high-

est in human history and more than 100 parts per million above the safe range in which human development for millennia has flourished. Each year brings a new record concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> in our atmosphere, and this will continue to worsen until the world weans itself off fossil fuels.

Of course, the contamination of our Earth and atmosphere by carbon pollution is matched by the contamination of our politics by unlimited and often hidden fossil fuel industry money, threats, and promises. When the accounting comes for what they have done to the Government of the United States, there will be a lot to answer for.

We are in a heck of a cold snap now, as the boundaries of normal weather get blown out in all directions by climate change, but the underlying, steady warming trend through all these new extremes of hot and cold and wet and dry is obvious.

Here in the United States, everyone in the lower 48, except for a few pockets up in the Northwest where things stayed fairly steady, has seen hotter than average temperatures. This represents hot. This represents cold. As you can see, most of the map matches the hot end. These are the mean temperature departures from average for January to November 2017.

Residents of the desert Southwest and of coastal Texas and Louisiana and much of the Southeast lived through their hottest year ever in 2017. Record warming is this color. You see it all through these areas, record warmest temperature.

Up in the Arctic, where temperatures are rising twice as fast as the rest of the globe, 2017 was the second hottest year ever. In Barrow, AK, the temperature rose so rapidly that computer algorithms kicked in and flagged the underlying data as suspect. The computer felt something must have gone wrong with the equipment and flagged the data as suspect. In fact, the readings were extraordinary, but they were real. That was the temperature.

We also saw a punishing onslaught of extreme weather in 2017, making it the most expensive disaster year in U.S. history, costing nearly \$400 billion in damages. The United States had averaged fewer than six billion-dollar weather-related disasters a year. Between January and late October 2017, we experienced 16, which killed 282 people. Final estimates of the devastation during 2017 aren't complete. It may prove that 1,000 lost lives are attributable to Hurricane Maria and its aftermath in Puerto Rico.

The 2017 Atlantic hurricane season brought 17 named storms, 10 hurricanes, and 6 major hurricanes—those with average wind speeds exceeding 115 miles per hour.

In August, Hurricane Harvey roared ashore with winds over 130 miles per hour, dropping more than 60 inches of rain over the Houston and Port Arthur areas. Areas that aren't even on the