

years. That is more money to save for a home purchase or a college fund. It is more to save for retirement or to spend on a family vacation. U.S. consumer confidence is higher today than it has been since the year 2000, and, last week, news broke that U.S. manufacturing is expanding at its fastest pace since 2004.

Look, it is not complicated. The bill passed by the Republicans in Congress last year was designed with a very simple philosophy in mind: that when we put more of Americans' hard-earned money back in their own pockets, they will know what best to do with it, that when we level the playing field and take weight off the shoulders of small businesses, they will help their communities thrive, and that when we welcome investment from entrepreneurs and job creators, instead of discouraging it, the economy will respond in kind.

The idea was simple enough, but as we are already seeing, because the Republicans in Congress and the President were able to overcome lockstep partisan opposition on the other side and get tax reform across the finish line, that simple idea is having an extraordinary impact.

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#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

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#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

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#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

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#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Karen Gren Scholer, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

#### DACA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today is the day—March 5—the deadline imposed by President Trump on those who are being protected and allowed to stay in the United States under the DACA Program.

It was last September 5 when President Trump's Attorney General held a press conference and said: That is it. The protection that is currently given

to 780,000 young people in America to allow them to stay in this country and pursue their dreams will end on March 5 of 2018—today—780,000 who were brought to the United States as infants, toddlers, children, and teenagers, who have lived their lives in this country, who have gone to school, who have never had a serious run-in with the law, who have gone through criminal background checks, come up with \$500 filing fees, and who were given permission under an Executive order by President Obama to legally stay in this country for 2 years at a time. During that period, they would not be deported, and they would be allowed to work.

Who are these young people? They are known as the Dreamers, although President Trump hates that term. They are known as the Dreamers because they represent young people who went to school in America, stood up in their classroom every day and pledged allegiance to that flag. This is the only country they have ever known. This was to be the country of their future, but at some point in their lives, a member of their family sat down and said: We have to have a serious conversation. You see, we never filed the papers when we brought you to this country as an infant, and right now you are undocumented in the United States of America.

What that means is that any minute, there could be a knock on the door and you and perhaps your entire family would be asked to leave. I introduced a bill called the DREAM Act 17 years ago. Senator HATCH was my cosponsor when I introduced it. The purpose of the DREAM Act was to say to these young people: We will give you a chance. Though you are illegal in the eyes of the law in the United States—undocumented—we will give you a chance to earn your way to legal status, give you a chance someday to be a citizen of the United States. It will not be easy. There is no helping hand for you. If you want to go to college, there will be no Federal assistance for you. You are going to have to make it on your own. You will have to work and work harder than perhaps the person sitting next to you at their desk in high school. See if you can do it. If you can, we will give you your chance.

That is what the DREAM Act said. It passed with a majority vote in the Senate many times, but it never quite made it to 60 votes, which it needs to become the law of the land.

President Obama, when he was a Senator in this Chamber, was my colleague from Illinois. He cosponsored the DREAM Act with me. So the time came when he was elected President, and I wrote him a letter. Dick Lugar, Republican of Indiana, joined me in that letter. He supported the DREAM Act when he served in the Senate. We wrote to President Obama and said: Can you do anything to give these young people a chance, to spare them from deportation? He worked on it for

1 year. Then President Obama came up with something called DACA, a program by Executive order that gave these young people their chance—780,000 of them went through the background check, paid their filing fee, and proved they were eligible.

They were spared for 2 years at a time and allowed to stay in this country. During the course of the campaign, President Trump said many strong words about immigration. We remember them well—it is hard to forget—the words about the wall, words about Mexican rapists, on and on, but he seemed to have a soft spot in his heart for these kids. Many times he would say: We have to give them a chance. They are different.

The very first time I met President Donald Trump was minutes after he had been sworn in. It was at a luncheon here in the Capitol.

I went up to him and said: Congratulations. I want to thank you for the kind words you said about the Dreamers and those protected by DACA.

He said: DICK, don't worry about those kids. We are going to take care of those kids.

That is what President Trump said on January 20, 2017. I brought it up to him several times too. It is an issue that is important to me, but, more importantly, it is an issue that is critical to the future of these young people.

Then, what happened on September 5 of last year, just 9 months after the President was sworn in? His Attorney General held a press conference and said: That is the end of the protection for these young people. As of March 5, 2018, no protection.

Then he challenged Congress. He said: Pass a law. Do what you are supposed to do here in the House and Senate. Pass a law that will protect these young people.

A number of us took up the President's challenge. We had a bipartisan effort, six of us—three Democrats and three Republicans—and we worked through some really hard issues on immigration and on these young people. I want to salute my colleagues who were part of that: LINDSEY GRAHAM, Republican of South Carolina; JEFF FLAKE, a Republican of Arizona; CORY GARDNER, a Republican of Colorado; joined with myself and MICHAEL BENNET, a Democrat of Colorado; BOB MENENDEZ, a Democrat of New Jersey, and we put together an approach that gave these young people protection and a fighting chance to prove they deserve to stay in America.

We felt pretty good about it. The President called a meeting in the White House on January 9—I remember these dates. I will always remember them—with about 25 Members of Congress, Democrats and Republicans, House and Senate. He held an open press conference for an hour, which is unusual and rarely done in the White House.

We talked about DACA and we talked about Dreamers and we talked about