

(B) making impressive strides in closing the academic achievement gap in schools in the United States and particularly in schools with some of the most disadvantaged students in both rural and urban communities; and

(C) improving and strengthening the public school system throughout the United States;

(2) supports the ideals and goals of the 21st annual National Charter Schools Week, a week-long celebration to be held May 10 through May 16, 2020, in communities throughout the United States; and

(3) encourages the people of the United States to hold appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities during National Charter Schools Week to demonstrate support for public charter schools.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I have 4 requests for committees to meet during today's session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

The Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, May 12, 2020, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

The Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, May 12, 2020, at 2 p.m., to conduct a hearing on the following nominations: Brian D. Miller, to be special inspector general for pandemic recovery, U.S. Department of Treasury and Dana T. Wade, to be Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

The Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, May 12, 2020, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, May 12, 2020, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a hearing.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

IMMIGRANT HEALTH HEROES

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, Americans owe a great debt of grati-

tude to the healthcare heroes on the frontlines of the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, I would like to spend a few minutes talking about one special group of healthcare workers: immigrants.

Consider this: 1 in 6 healthcare and social service workers—3.1 million out of 18.7 million—are immigrants. These immigrants are playing a critical role in the battle against the pandemic, yet our broken immigration system does not allow many of them to fulfill their dreams of becoming part of America's future.

I have come to the floor today to tell a story of one of our immigrant health heroes, and I will continue to highlight these stories in the coming weeks. I am also inviting my colleagues from across the Nation to come tell their own stories on social media or on the floor with #ImmigrantHealthHeroes, shown on this chart.

Thousands of immigrant health workers are suffering because of a serious problem in our immigration system: It is the green card backlog. This backlog puts them and their families at risk of losing their immigration status, and it hinders their ability to participate in the fight against COVID-19. Under our current laws, there are not nearly enough immigrant visas, also known as green cards, available each year. As a result, immigrants are struck in crippling backlogs not just for years but for decades.

Close to 5 million future Americans are in line waiting for green cards. Hundreds of thousands of them are already working in the United States on temporary visas, while many more are waiting abroad, separated from their American families. Only 226,000 family green cards and 140,000 employment green cards are available each year. The backlogs are really hard on these families who are caught in this immigration limbo. For example, children in many of these families age out and face deportation as their parents are waiting in line for their green cards.

The green card backlog includes thousands of doctors—medical doctors—who are currently working in our country on a temporary basis. These doctors face many restrictions due to their temporary status, such as not being able to volunteer at hospitals in COVID-19 hotspots where they are so desperately needed.

The solution to the green card backlog is clear: Increase the number. In 2013, I joined a group of four Republicans and four Democrats who authored a bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform bill. The bill passed the Senate with a strong vote, 68–3, and it would have eliminated the green card backlog.

Last year, I introduced the RELIEF Act, legislation based on the 2013 comprehensive immigration reform bill that would clear the backlog for all immigrants waiting in line for green cards within 5 years. I will keep fighting to help all immigrants who are stuck in this backlog.

Last week, I joined with my colleagues, Republican Senators DAVID PERDUE of Georgia, TODD YOUNG of Indiana, and JOHN CORNYN of Texas and Democratic Senators CHRIS COONS of Delaware and PAT LEAHY of Vermont to introduce legislation to quickly address the plight of immigrant doctors and nurses who are stuck in this green card backlog. This backlog poses a significant risk to our ability to effectively respond to this pandemic. Our bill, the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act, is a temporary stopgap bill that will strengthen our healthcare workforce and improve healthcare access for Americans in the midst of this crisis.

Our bill would recapture 25,000 unused immigrant visas for nurses and 15,000 unused visas for doctors. These are visas that Congress previously authorized, but we never used. Our bill would quickly allocate these visas to doctors and nurses who can help us today in the fight against COVID-19.

It is important to note that our bill requires employers to attest that any immigrant from overseas who receives these visas will not displace an American worker. We want to ensure that all beneficiaries of this bill complement our American healthcare workforce. As Congress begins to work on the next legislation to address this pandemic, I will push for the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act to be included.

Today, I want to tell you the story of one immigrant healthcare worker who is stuck in this green card backlog and would benefit from the act I just described.

This is Dr. Ram Sanjeev Alur. Dr. Alur was born in India. As a child, he survived a bout with meningitis, a disease that is often fatal. This experience inspired him to become a doctor. He went to medical school in India, then trained in internal medicine in the United Kingdom. Dr. Alur came to the United States in 2007 for medical residency training. In 2011, he began working as an internist and hospitalist in the Marion Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Marion, IL. Dr. Alur has led the emergency room inpatient unit for the last 3 years, and now, he is on the frontlines of the pandemic as a member of his hospital's COVID-19 response team.

Dr. Alur lives in Marion with his wife and three kids. Their ages are 12, 8, and 6. He sent me a letter, but listen to what he said about his life in southern Illinois living in Marion:

I consider the opportunity to work at the VA medical center as a blessing. To serve the veterans is an honor, responsibility and satisfaction that enhances anyone's life. I found my calling and hope to spend the rest of my career and raise my family here. I would like to see my children blossom in this community and grow into successful, responsible citizens.

Unfortunately, Dr. Alur is one of thousands of doctors stuck in this green card backlog. He has been forced to renew his temporary visa four times

since he started working serving our veterans at the Marion VA facility. He has been approved for a green card but will have to wait decades—decades—because of the backlog of people just like him, waiting for their green cards.

In the meantime, Dr. Alur's oldest daughter would age out—she is 12 now—but she would age out and be forced to leave the country before he is legally entitled to become a citizen of this country. Think of that heart-breaking situation, breaking up this man's family because he has been approved for a visa but has to wait to make sure he meets the quota in each year, and he will end up waiting for decades.

In the midst of this pandemic, Dr. Alur's immigration status puts him at a great risk. If, God forbid—God forbid—he contracts COVID-19 and becomes disabled or dies, his family would lose their immigration status and be forced to leave the United States. Tell me that is fair, that this man who is serving our veterans and has waited patiently to become a citizen of United States and be part of our future, should he get sick or die, his family would be deported.

Here is what he said to me about this:

The pandemic shook our family. Being a temporary worker on a visa never stared us in the face more. This lack of protection is every frontline immigrant doctor's nightmare.

Dr. Alur's temporary immigration status also prevents him from working part-time in a COVID-19 hotspot like Chicago. Here is what he said:

It is depressing to watch the medical system, stretched while the pandemic takes its toll, and not be able to help or participate. It is like a soldier sitting out a battle, player sitting out a game, fireman sitting out a house fire.

His family's plight led Dr. Alur to start Physicians for American Health Care Access, a nonprofit organization to advocate for doctors serving underserved communities who are stuck in this green card backlog.

I can tell you, in southern Illinois, we are desperate for good doctors. We need them not just at Marion VA, but we need more specialists around the entire region. This is a rural area of our State, small-town area, and they need these specialists more than ever.

How we can take a good man like this, who is willing to serve our veterans and do more in this COVID-19 epidemic, and tell him he is not welcome to be a citizen of this country, I just do not understand.

When I heard Dr. Alur's story, it inspired me to work with my colleagues on a bipartisan basis to introduce this law that I mentioned, the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act. Under our bill, Dr. Alur and thousands like him could receive their green cards. They and their families would get the permanent immigration status that they deserve and be able to use their skills to serve in the frontlines of the pandemic if they are needed—and they are.

I hope that, even in these divided times, we can come together in Congress to quickly aid these immigrant healthcare heroes.

REMEMBERING GREG ZANIS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, in this season of great mourning, last Monday, America lost a man who tried for years—during some of our darkest moments—to comfort our grief-stricken Nation.

His name was Greg Zanis, but he was known as “The Cross Man.” One month ago, he was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Last Friday, Mr. Zanis, his wife Sue, and their grown children watched from inside the Zanis family home in Aurora, IL, as a parade of neighbors drove past to show their love and respect for Greg.

This caravan of caring stretched for a mile and included more than 320 cars, trucks, SUVs, and motorcycles. It was a fitting tribute to a quiet man whose compassion and sacrifice helped ease the grief of countless Americans over the last 25 years.

You may never have heard his name before, but chances are you may have seen his work. After the Columbine High School massacre in 1999 and nearly every mass shooting and natural disaster since then, Greg Zanis crafted wooden memorials to honor the fallen. Over nearly 20 years, he made and personally delivered some 27,000 handmade memorials to communities across America. Most were crosses, but he also crafted wooden Stars of David and crescent moons to honor the fallen.

He drove to Sandy Hook, CT, after 26 children and educators were murdered in that grade school. He drove to Florida to honor the victims of the Pulse Nightclub shooting and returned a heartbreaking short time later after the Parkland High School mass shooting. He drove to Las Vegas after 58 people were killed at a music festival; to the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, TX, after 26 worshippers were killed; to Pittsburgh, PA, to honor the 11 worshippers killed at the Tree of Life Synagogue.

Greg Zanis considered his work a ministry, and it cost him financially and emotionally. He was a master carpenter who gave up much of the work he did otherwise to make and deliver these memorials. When he heard of a mass shooting or a deadly natural disaster, he loaded up his truck with crosses and drove, sometimes leaving in the middle of the night so he could get there as quickly as possible. One friend said that Mr. Zanis often wasn't sure, when he left home, how he would get the gas money to get back to Aurora. Somehow, he always did.

He was in Aurora a little over a year ago, February 2019, when the epidemic of mass shootings came to his hometown. Five workers were killed, five police officers wounded at a mass shooting at a warehouse. The tragedy hit Mr. Zanis hard. As he told a re-

porter for the New York Times, he could drive away from all the other tragedies, but he said, “I'm not going to be able to get away from this one.”

His ministry didn't take him only to places of mass suffering and death; he also made crosses for individuals. He made 700 crosses carried down Michigan Avenue in Chicago to honor those who died in that great city in 1 year.

He made his first cross in 1996 to honor his father-in-law, who had been murdered in a shooting. He learned from that experience that transforming wood into symbols of faith helped to make grief more bearable. That is the gift that he tried to share with others.

The mass shooting at a Walmart in El Paso last September shook him deeply. Among the 22 killed and 23 wounded were little children shopping for school supplies with their parents. Between the heat of the south Texas sun and the enormity of their losses, Mr. Zanis struggled to make enough crosses. He decided, after that, that he had to retire from his ministry. He was 69 years old. A few months later, his cancer was diagnosed.

In this time, when so many of the usual customs of grieving must be suspended, may we all find some consolation and inspiration in the extraordinary, ordinary man who helped to ease the grief of so many.

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

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that following leader remarks on Wednesday, May 13, the Senate proceed to the consideration of H.R. 6172 under the order of March 16. I further ask that at 12 noon, the Senate vote in relation to the McConnell side-by-side amendment to the Daines amendment, if offered. I further ask unanimous consent that following disposition of the McConnell amendment, the Senate vote in relation to the Daines amendment.

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

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2020

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10 a.m., Wednesday, May 13; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; further, that following