

in crippling backlogs, not just for years but for decades. Close to 5 million future Americans—close to 5 million—are in line waiting for green cards. Hundreds of thousands are working in the United States on a temporary visa 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 a real hardship on these families caught in immigration limbo. For example, children in many of these families age out and face deportation. While their parents are waiting for the green card, the child reaches the age where they are deported, at age 21.

The green card backlog includes thousands of doctors currently working in the United States on temporary visas. These doctors face many restrictions due to their temporary status, such as not being able to take shifts at hospitals in COVID-19 hotspots where they may be desperately needed.

The solution to the green card backlog is very clear: Increase the number of green cards.

In 2013, I joined a group of four Republicans and four Democrats who authored bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform legislation. Our bill, which passed the Senate on a strong bipartisan 68-to-32 vote, would have eliminated this green card backlog.

Last year I introduced the RELIEF Act, legislation based on the 2013 comprehensive immigration reform bill, which would clear the backlogs for all immigrants waiting in line for green cards within 5 years. I will keep fighting to help these immigrants here in the United States who simply want a chance to continue to serve this Nation.

Last month I joined with my colleagues—Senators PERDUE of Georgia, YOUNG of Indiana, CORNYN of Texas, COONS of Delaware, and LEAHY of Vermont—to introduce legislation to quickly address the plight of immigrant doctors and nurses 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 effort that will strengthen our healthcare workforce and improve healthcare for Americans in the midst of this national emergency.

Our bill would reallocate 25,000 unused immigrant visas for nurses and 15,000 unused immigrant visas for doctors. These are visas that Congress has previously authorized but were not used.

It is important to note that our bill requires employers to attest to a very important fact. They have to attest that immigrants from overseas who receive these visas will not displace an American worker. We want to ensure that the beneficiaries of this bill help build our workforce but not at the ex-

pense of those already here in the United States.

Our bill now has 13 Republican and 13 Democratic cosponsors and broad support from the medical community. As Congress works on the next legislation to address the COVID-19 pandemic, I am going to join my Republican colleagues and push for the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act to be included.

Today, let me tell you the story of one immigrant healthcare worker stuck in this green card backlog waiting indefinitely, for years, and he would benefit from the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act: Dr. Parth Mehta, born in India.

As a child, he was inspired to pursue a career in medicine by his grandfather, who worked as an assistant to a physician, and by his older sister, who is a surgeon.

Dr. Mehta came to the United States in the year 2004. He has been here 16 years. He obtained a master's in public health at Saint Xavier University in the city of Chicago. He then completed his residency in internal medicine at St. Joseph's Hospital in Chicago.

In 2010, 10 years ago, Dr. Mehta began working as a hospitalist at UnityPoint Health Methodist Medical Center in downstate Peoria, IL.

He sent me a letter, and here is what he says about being a doctor:

I feel that it is a great privilege to help people, comforting them, healing them, and making them better when they are most vulnerable.

Dr. Mehta lives in Peoria with his wife and his 10-year-old son and 4-year-old daughter, and he writes, in addition:

We have called Peoria home for 10 years now and we love our community here. We have bought a home here, built a career here, and we plan to stay in this community as long as we can.

Now Dr. Mehta is on the frontlines of the pandemic, treating COVID-19 patients. He was also selected as the principal investigator for a COVID-19 trial for which the hospital has applied, but unfortunately, Dr. Mehta is one of thousands of doctors who are stuck in this green card backlog. He has been on a temporary work visa for 13 years. He has been forced to renew his visa four times since he became a doctor. His green card petition was filed in 2011, but he will have to wait years and years and years before he receives a green card.

In the midst of this pandemic, Dr. Mehta's immigration status puts him at great risk. If, God forbid, he contracts COVID-19 and becomes disabled or dies, his family would immediately lose their immigration status and be forced to leave the United States.

Dr. Mehta has written goodbye letters to his wife and kids and prepared an emergency binder with all the necessary information for his family if he dies. To keep his family safe, Dr. Mehta has isolated himself by living in the basement of his home. He is espe-

cially worried about his wife, who has asthma. In March, she was diagnosed with pneumonia and was hospitalized for 10 days, including a stay in the intensive care unit.

Here is what Dr. Mehta wrote to me about this:

Seeing COVID patients, treating them, taking care of them, and saving their lives is part of my job, and I will never shy away from doing my job. But how is it fair that my family gets no protection if I die doing my job?

Dr. Mehta's story makes it clear why Congress needs to pass the Healthcare and Workforce Resilience Act. Under our bill, Dr. Mehta and thousands of others like him could receive their green cards. They and their families would get the permanent immigration status they deserve and be able to use their skills to serve on the frontlines of the pandemic, where they are needed most.

Don't put a sign in the window saying that you love healthcare workers, don't come out at 7 at night and beat on a pan to show that you care for healthcare workers and ignore the reality that this man in Peoria, IL, is risking his life every day to treat those patients, and we have written a law that says you are basically not welcome in the United States.

How can we say this to him, to thousands just like him, doctors and nurses who are really caring for the people we love and risking their own lives in the process?

It would be great, in these times of political division, if we could come together in this Congress to quickly aid these immigrant healthcare heroes.

The bill that I have introduced with Senator PERDUE, Senator YOUNG, and others is a step toward reality, toward realizing that people just like these make us a better nation and a stronger nation.

Dr. Mehta and his family, with all their fears, should know that there are many here in Congress, particularly here in the Senate, who want to move as quickly as possible and make sure that their lives are better because they have done so much to make the lives of others better.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah is recognized.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

HONORING NATE LYDAY

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, it is with a very heavy heart that I stand today in

the Senate to talk about the death of two Americans last week. One tragedy is tearing our communities apart. The other may well show us a path back toward unity.

We all know about the brutal, senseless killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis last Monday. There is no excuse for what the police did to Mr. Floyd. His killers are being brought to justice.

His death, we hope, will not be remembered for the senseless violence launched falsely in his name but, rather, hopefully, in the long-term reform of policing policies across our country.

In my home State of Utah, the city of Ogden is mourning another death, that of Police Officer Nate Lyday.

On Thursday, May 28, a woman called 9-1-1 saying that her husband was threatening her life. Lyday and a group of officers arrived promptly at the house. The man began shooting at them from inside the home. Lyday was mortally wounded.

He was just 24 years old. He was about to celebrate his fifth wedding anniversary with his wife Ashley.

He had been on the job as a police officer for just 15 months. By all accounts, he did that job honorably and completely up to the last moment. Nate Lyday was an officer who sought to uphold justice and protect the innocent, even making the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of a threatened and fearful family.

Nate Lyday was a “son of Ogden,” as Police Chief Randy Watt said. Ogden was where he was born and raised, where he went to high school, and where he worked on a regular basis at the Fresh Market on 20th Street and where he got his degree in criminal justice from Weber State University.

And it was where he was proud to serve and protect his community as a sworn police officer. According to Lieutenant Brian Eynon, Lyday was an officer who “worked over and above the call of duty.” Eynon said that whenever he passed Lyday in the hallways, the young officer would always smile at him, even before he had a chance to smile first.

As his colleagues, his friends, and his classmates remember him, Nate Lyday made everyone around him feel like a friend, no matter how well they knew him because they were indeed his friends.

This Saturday, while far too many other communities throughout our Nation were tearing themselves apart, Ogden came together. Hundreds of Ogden residents gathered near the front steps of the Ogden Municipal Building to honor the memory of George Floyd and to call for nationwide police reform.

But this was not a divisive event designed to make everyone choose sides between police and protesters. As Malik Dayo, an Ogden activist and organizer, said that day:

This is a peaceful protest. . . . This is not an anti-cop rally. This is a solidarity rally.

The protesters at the event honored George’s memory, they condemned racism, and they called for policing reforms. They also thanked the officers who were there, the same officers there protecting them and protecting their First Amendment rights to speak freely and gather peacefully. And they honored the memory of Officer Lyday, who lost his life answering the call of duty just a few days before.

“I gave them my condolences for their fallen officer—our fallen officer—because we’re all part of the same community,” Dayo said of the police after the protest.

And Dayo is right. Nate Lyday’s loss is our loss. George Floyd’s loss is our loss. And we ought to honor and remember them both.

We must all work to uphold justice for all. Both of these tragic, horrific deaths last week show us just how far we still have to go to achieve this goal. It is work that must be undertaken by each and every one of us, each and every day. We cannot do that work by pitting ourselves against one another—race versus race, police versus protester.

We will never move forward if we continue to reduce human beings to the color of their skin or the color of their uniform. We are all one Nation, and it will only be in standing and in working together, in peaceful solidarity, that we can finally heal the wounds in our Nation.

What the people of Ogden did this weekend is an example for us all. And it is a reason for hope.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

THE GULF OF MEXICO

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I want to talk for a few minutes today about the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Great American Outdoors Act, and fairness.

Let me start with the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act—GOMESA, as you know.

Louisianians started drilling off our coast in the Gulf of Mexico in the 1930s. They were Louisiana people, Louisiana companies. There were some other States represented, as well, but they were primarily Louisiana companies.

A lot of people laughed at us, said it can’t be done: We know you can drill for oil and natural gas and supply the country’s energy needs by onshore production, but offshore, man, you are dreaming.

We did it. Then we did it again and we did it again and we did it again.

All of a sudden, the Federal Government said: Huh, there is money to be had. And the Federal Government came in and said: Louisiana, you can’t do that anymore. We own all the land under the oceans and the Gulf of Mexico.

Well, predictably, Louisiana disagreed. We went to court. After 30

years of litigation, Louisiana lost. The courts ended up ruling that Louisiana owns the land in the gulf from its coastline out to 3 miles, and the Federal Government owns the rest. And the Federal Government owns the rest. That is a little bit of oversimplification but not much.

I always thought that was unfair. For example, Texas, our sister State—I love Texas—owns from its coastline 10 miles out. We only own 3 miles out.

More oil and gas wells were drilled in the Gulf of Mexico. It became one of the major—if not the major—sources of oil and natural gas for energy needs of America up to the point that we were producing and still are producing about \$5 billion that goes right into the Treasury of the United States of America.

In 2006, Congress passed GOMESA. Thank you, Congress, for doing this. GOMESA said that the Federal Government is going to start sharing some of those oil and gas royalties. We are not going to share all of them. We are just going to share the oil and gas royalties from lands under the ocean in the Gulf of Mexico for all future leases after 2006—not past leases, only future leases. Here is the new deal, according to Congress. On all these new leases drilled after 2006, the U.S. Treasury will take 50 percent of oil and gas royalties. The gulf-producing States will take 37.5 percent. By the gulf-producing States, I mean Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, and Alabama. And 12.5 percent of the oil and gas royalties from these new leases—not old leases, these new leases—will go to the Land and Water Conservation Fund. I will come back to the Land and Water Conservation Fund in a moment.

Keep in mind, I said that under GOMESA, Louisiana, Texas, Alabama, and Mississippi share in 37.5 percent of all the oil and gas royalties from the new leases, not the old leases. But the amount that we are entitled to receive is capped.

To give you an idea of the money we are talking about, in 2019, the four Gulf producing States received about \$350 million in offshore oil and gas royalties. Louisiana received \$155 million of that \$350 million. There is a formula that apportions the money between and among the four gulf-producing States.

GOMESA caps, in a fairly complicated formula, the amount the gulf-producing States can receive under GOMESA at \$375 million. Our four States will hit that cap in 2024. It doesn’t matter how much drilling increases in the Gulf of Mexico, the four gulf-producing States can only receive \$375 million, split among themselves, until, I think, 2055.

Other States not located on coastlines also have Federal lands on which oil and natural gas and coal and other minerals are produced. I am happy for them. They, as a result of congressional legislation—by “they” I mean those other States, 24 of them—get 50