

THE DREAM ACT

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise today to express my support for the DREAM Act amendment to the 2010 National Defense Administration Act. This is bipartisan legislation that provides sound economic and national security benefits to our Nation.

I have long supported the DREAM Act primarily because it provides a pathway forward for young men and women who have played by the rules all of their lives, graduated high school and now want to give back to this country. These are young people who had no say in how or when they came to our country, but somehow, their parents or other relatives brought them here to live a better life.

Now, we could spend an infinite amount of time debating what to do with the undocumented adults who have come to the U.S.—and I hope that we do eventually get to that debate—but the focus of this measure is the children. We are talking about the innocent children, who, for the most part, have known no other home than America and deserve a way forward now that they are reaching adulthood.

Every year, thousands of undocumented students who live in the United States graduate from high school. Among these students you will find valedictorians, honor roll students, and community leaders who are committed to the United States and their local communities. It is estimated that there are 65,000 such young people who graduate from high school in the United States and find themselves unable to work, go to college, or serve this country in the military.

The young people who would be DREAM Act eligible would have graduated high school, passed a background check and be of good moral character. It is why the DREAM Act is supported by the Secretary of the Department of Education, the National Education Association, the Association of American Universities and many others. Leading businesses like Microsoft endorse the DREAM Act because they recognize these young people are talented and can be a benefit to U.S. businesses in this global economy. DREAM Act-eligible young people are exactly the type of individuals we want to be part of our great society.

The DREAM Act is a smart, targeted piece of legislation that will only benefit children who were brought to this country before the age of 16 and have been living here for at least 5 years.

From an economic perspective, the DREAM Act provides clear fiscal benefits to our local communities and our Nation. State and local taxpayers have invested time and money in these young people through elementary and secondary education expecting that eventually they will become contributing, tax-paying members of our society. With education budgets as tight as they are, why would any community throw away such an investment?

Take this for example: a young immigrant who graduates from college

will pay \$5,300 more in taxes and cost taxpayers \$3,900 less in government expenses each year than if he or she dropped out of high school. Additionally, our own Department of Defense recommended in their 2010–2012 strategic plan the passage of the DREAM Act to help the military “share and maintain a mission-ready All Volunteer Force.” The former Secretary of the Army, Louis Caldera, stated “the DREAM Act will materially expand the pool of individuals qualified, ready and willing to serve their country in uniform.” The DREAM Act provides a smart and narrow pathway for eligible young people to go on to college or enter our military.

Lastly, supporting the DREAM Act is the proper next step toward taking up comprehensive immigration reform. The American people have spoken on this issue. They would like Congress to step up and deal with this issue. According to a recent Fox News poll, 68 percent of voters, including Republicans, Democrats and Independents, say that efforts to secure the border should be combined with reform of Federal immigration laws. I agree, which is why I voted in favor of providing \$600 million for 1,500 new border patrol agents, additional monitoring and communications equipment in August. That funding and those resources were an important step to ensure our Nation’s borders are secure; just like passing the DREAM Act is an important step to ensure our country has the best and brightest individuals contributing to our economy and society.

Additionally, the DREAM Act has traditionally been a bipartisan effort. During this Congress Senator DURBIN and Senator LUGAR introduced the legislation. But in the 108th Congress the legislation had the support of Senator HATCH, Senator GRASSLEY, Senator KYL and Senator CORNYN. During the last Congress, 23 Republican Senators voted in favor of this legislation when it was offered as an amendment to the comprehensive immigration reform bill. There is a strong bipartisan history to this legislation and strong public support.

No child should be held accountable for the sins of their parents. This targeted, bipartisan legislation recognizes this fact and shows compassion to the innocent. It provides a pathway forward for young men and women who have played by the rules all of their lives, graduated high school and now want to give back to this country. These are young people who truly deserve a second chance. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

REMEMBERING STAFF SERGEANT HAROLD “GEORGE” BENNETT

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the memory of U.S. Army SSG Harold “George” Bennett. In the jungles of Vietnam, this young Arkansan displayed courage and honor while serving his Nation in uniform.

Tragically, he became the first American prisoner of war executed by the Viet Cong. This year marks the 45th anniversary of his death, and I am proud to join his family later this month to posthumously honor him with the Silver Star, the third highest military decoration that can be awarded to a member of any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces.

George Bennett was born on October 16, 1940, in Perryville, AR, a small town that rests just northwest of Little Rock in the foothills of the Ozarks. His father, Gordon, was a veteran of World War I, and he instilled in his sons the values and rewards of service to country. All four would follow his footsteps into the U.S. Army.

SGT George Bennett was trained in the Army as an airborne infantryman and served with the famed 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, made up of some of the finest soldiers in the world. He earned his Master Parachute Wings and Expert Infantry Badge before volunteering in 1964 for service in what was a relatively unknown area of Southeast Asia called Vietnam.

While deployed, Sergeant Bennett served as an infantry advisor to the 33rd Ranger Battalion, one of South Vietnam’s best trained and toughest units. On December 29, 1964, they were airlifted to the village of Binh Gia after it had been overrun by a division of Viet Cong. Immediately upon landing, Sergeant Bennett’s unit was confronted by a well-dug-in regiment of enemy forces, and despite fighting furiously and courageously throughout the afternoon, their unit was decimated and overrun. Sergeant Bennett and his radio operator, PFC Charles Crafts, fell into the hands of the Viet Cong.

Before being captured, Sergeant Bennett twice called off American helicopter pilots who were attempting to navigate through the combat zone to rescue him and his radioman. Displaying a remarkably calm demeanor, his focus seemed to be on their safety and not his own. His last words to his would-be rescuers were, “Well, they are here now. My little people [his term for the South Vietnamese soldiers under his command] are laying down their weapons and they want me to turn off my radio. Thanks a lot for your help and God Bless You.”

As a prisoner of war, the only thing more remarkable than the courageous resistance he displayed throughout his captivity was his steadfast devotion to duty, honor, and country. His faith in God and the trust of his fellow prisoners was unshakable. Sadly, the only way his captors could break his spirit of resistance was to execute him. Today, Sergeant Bennett lies in an unmarked grave known only to God, somewhere in the jungles of Vietnam.

Mr. President, Sergeant Bennett was a selfless young man who answered his Nation’s call to service and placed duty and honor above all else. Although he may no longer be with us, the example and selflessness of this brave young Arkansan will forever live on in our