

respond because they don't want the public to know. They think if they can ignore these requests, then people will not know and will not begin to question how things are being conducted. Congress should not acquiesce to the President's refugee funding request when he refuses to even publicly disclose the immigration history of these 72 terrorists, many of whom are involved with and directly connected with Al Qaeda and ISIS.

An outright majority of the public opposes resettling Syrian refugees in the United States. In fact, voters across all parties wish to see a reduction of Middle Eastern refugee settlements. It is in the data. That is what people think. They are worried about this issue. Why shouldn't they be? We have had our own problems. We have had 9/11, we have had the Boston bombers, and many other instances, such as Chattanooga, and look at what is happening in Europe. I don't think the American people are mean or unkind. They are just rightly concerned. They want to protect their families, their Nation, and their interests, and I think we should consider their concerns.

The safe and proper course is to focus on regional resettlement. One report says that for the price of placing one refugee in the United States, 12 can be helped in their homeland. Our goal must be to help refugees find safety and help them return to their homes, not for us to depopulate the region.

How serious is this? Only this strategy will protect the security of the United States and the West, protect the finances of our country from further debt, and protect the long-term stability and safety of the Middle East itself. That is what our goal should be, and our President is not focused on this issue. It has been raised in committee after committee and nothing has been accomplished. He just sticks with the plan he has.

What then is Congress to do to stop the President from carrying out a plan the voters oppose and Congress has not approved? The answer lies in the power of the purse. Each and every year the President submits a request to Congress to fund his Refugee Admissions Program. Only with these funds can the President carry out his plans. Congress, which has been run over time and again by this President, must not write the blank check the President is asking for. He can also bring in more refugees than he has currently indicated. Secretary Kerry has told the Judiciary Committees of the House and Senate they just may well bring in more than this.

My colleague Senator SHELBY and I outlined in a joint statement that the answer is for Congress to include in the year-end funding bill a clear requirement that the President must submit his annual refugee plan to Congress for approval. Senator SHELBY is on that Appropriations Committee. Under this plan, Congress must approve how many refugees are brought in and from where.

Mr. President, is it time to wrap up?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I thank the Chair and ask for 1 additional minute to wrap up.

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

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, we are facing a humanitarian crisis of monumental proportions. In large part, it is because the President has mismanaged the situation in Syria. He is the Chief Executive, he is the Commander in Chief, the military does what he says, and this has not been good. It just has not been good. It has caused danger, it has caused innocent people to be killed, it has caused people to have to flee, and it has also allowed the surge of ISIS and Al Qaeda-type terrorist organizations in Syria to be able to create an entire state of their own and to export their terrorism.

We have to create safe zones in Syria and other places in the region where people can stay in their homes, and we need to work to end this fighting as soon as possible so people can go back home permanently. It cannot be the position of this country that we just bring in millions of people because of the dangers abroad. It just does not make common sense.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, as my colleague from Alabama prepares to leave, I want to wish him and his family a happy Thanksgiving holiday and I look forward to seeing him in 10 days.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, Senator CARPER is one of our most delightful colleagues. He is always gentlemanly and calls us to consider and think on the higher things. I thank my friend from Delaware for that and his service.

ISIS

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, it has been quite a week. I think we have all learned a bit about Syrian refugees, the challenges they face, and the potential challenges they create for us in this country. One of the things we have learned is that it is not easy to come here as a refugee to this country. In fact, it is pretty difficult. It is not something one can do easily. If you want to come over thinking that you might wait a couple of weeks or a couple of months—you might wait a couple of years. You have to go through a vetting process with the United Nations. You go through a vetting process overseas with the U.S. folks. You have to have your information go through any number of databanks to determine whether you are a person of special interest and could potentially be a problem. It is a long process.

I will be honest. If I were a bad guy over there, one of these ISIS folks trying to get into the United States and create mayhem, there is no way I

would want to wait 2 years, go through a refugee program, and probably get bounced out somewhere along the line through all these background checks and access to intelligence databanks and personal interviews. I think I would find another way to get here, and there are other ways to get here. We have been talking about that more recently today and yesterday.

One of the potential ways to get here is through what is called the Visa Waiver Program. It is an agreement we have with 38 different nations. The Visa Waiver Program started a number of years ago, and it has now grown to include 38 countries. It started off as a travel facilitation program, kind of like the TSA precheck or the global entries we have at the airports here in the United States. It started off as a travel facilitation program, and over time it has turned into an information sharing partnership with 38 different foreign countries. The idea is to make it a little easier for folks who we believe are trusted travelers to get into this country from several dozen nations. One of the things we don't focus on very much in this program is we believe it is to our economic advantage to facilitate travel and tourism for those visiting our country. That is hard to argue with. It also facilitates tourism and traveling to the other 38 countries.

We didn't just enter willy-nilly into this agreement with these other 38 other countries. There are certain requirements we have in terms of access about the people who would like to come to this country under the Visa Waiver Program. We have any number of different kinds of access to intelligence data files and databases, and we insist on that before we allow these countries to participate. If they don't want to do that, they are not part of the Visa Waiver Program.

If they change their mind during the course of our relationship with them as part of the Visa Waiver Program and become not very good partners in this, we bounce them out, they are no longer part of the Visa Waiver Program, and then those people have to go through the regular visa process.

Anyway, that would provide another option. It is probably a more favored option for somebody who is anxious to get over here from Syria or for anybody who wants to do mayhem. That might be an option if they live in one of those 38 countries. People can go to U.S. consulates all the time in other countries. They ask to come here. Sometimes they ask to come here on a visa. It could be a tourism visa. A lot of people want to come to the United States as a tourist. It could be that they want to come here to study. Those may be perfectly legitimate, but in some cases they may not be. Folks come here in many other ways.

We had an interesting hearing today in the Senate's Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. We had two witnesses from the Federal

Government, and then we had five witnesses from a variety of different backgrounds. One of the things we asked were: Where do the real threats lie for our country? It could be Syria. It could be ISIS people from Iraq. It could be folks who have been radicalized from other countries who have gone to Syria to fight and have become jihadists and want to somehow get into our country and create not just mischief but mayhem. Everybody who testified said the primary concern should not be the Refugee Resettlement Program. Why would anybody want to go through that? It wastes 2 years. Maybe they will get through it, maybe not. If you are lucky, you get through it 2 years later.

The 2,000 people or so who have come through that program from Syria this year, I am told they were mostly women and children, older men—very old men. Out of the 2,000, in terms of the folks who are male and of fighting age, only about 2 percent fall into that category. They all have to provide family connections of the people they are related to and will be reunited with over here. That is part of the deal for getting in. It is not like every refugee who comes here would even be someone who would be expected to be of fighting age.

One of the other things most of the folks agreed on was that one of the greatest concerns we ought to have for folks getting into our country and doing mischief here would not necessarily be folks from other countries. The concern is about the folks who are already here and may be natives to the United States who have become radicalized. We heard that again and again and again. That is a major concern, and that is something we have to be serious about.

One of the best ways we can reduce the likelihood that folks living here would be radicalized and want to be a part of the ISIS army overseas or right here is to do what we are trying to do as a country; that is, to degrade and destroy ISIS militarily. And that would be not just us by ourselves—us using our air superiority, us using our ability to gather and disseminate intelligence, with direct strikes, and to provide help to the people on the ground, to the boots on the ground—not us—but to help other countries that are doing that sort of thing.

My guess is—and this was confirmed by most of our witnesses today—that the folks who most likely want to be a homegrown jihadist, be affiliated with ISIS, and do their job here in this country as opposed to over in Syria want to be on the winning side. They are not interested in affiliating with a loser. So the question is, What can we do to make sure that ISIS is degraded and destroyed?

I will mention a couple of things that happened in the last couple of weeks that would suggest to me that at long last the coalition of 60 nations is beginning to get its act together and make

progress on the ground. Over the past year ISIS has lost 25 percent of its safe haven in Syria and Iraq. Our coalition has conducted more than 8,000 airstrikes against ISIS. We have killed ISIS fighters at a rate of 1,000 fighters a month.

The Iraqi Security Forces have now liberated Tikrit, which is a city in Iraq that is Saddam Hussein's old hometown. It has been liberated from ISIS now. About 70 percent of Tikrit's pre-ISIS citizens have been returned to the city.

With Syrian Kurdish forces on the ground and the United States in the air, the Syrian town of Kobane was kept from falling to ISIS, despite the fact that most analysts thought the town would fall within days earlier this year.

Just last week in Iraq, Kurdish forces supported by the United States in the air took back the key town of Sinjar from ISIS. That strategic town sits on the top of a key roadway that connects ISIS's stronghold in Mosul with ISIS's capital in a place called Raqqa.

Now these Iraqi Kurds are working with the Syrian Kurds, an Arab coalition, and the United States to fully sever that key supply line and isolate Mosul and Raqqa.

In August, a U.S. drone strike killed a fellow named Junaid Hussain, one of ISIS's online propagandists who had helped to direct the homegrown attack at Garland, TX, last May.

Just last week, a U.S. drone strike also killed Jihadi John, ISIS's chief executioner. Jihadi John has publicly executed dozens of people, including at least three Americans—James Foley, Steven Sotloff, and Peter Kassig.

Last week, an American airstrike took ISIS's leader in Libya, a guy named Abu Nabil.

Now, is that the ball game? No, it is not. Is that encouraging? Yes, it is. It has to be discouraging to folks with ISIS, and it has to be discouraging to fans here in the United States. The idea is to degrade them and ultimately destroy them, and I am encouraged that we finally seem to be on the right track to accomplishing that.

The other thing we heard from our witnesses today is that there is a Federal program run by the Department of Homeland Security called the Office of Community Partnerships Countering Violent Terrorism. The idea there is to work with the Muslim communities throughout the country—and there are a number of them—to counter the social media message that some find so alluring that is put up by ISIS. Part of the ability to compete with that and to degrade that message is to degrade ISIS on the ground.

The other way to do it is to do what the Department of Homeland Security is doing in conjunction with Arab communities and Muslim communities throughout our country and in conjunction with, for example, the district attorney in Minneapolis, to develop a good partnership in saying: Let's see if

we can't convince our young people living there not to want to go to Syria, not to want to go to fight, not to want to go anywhere, but just to live their lives and not to be jihadists in this country. It is a good program. It seems to be bearing fruit. It has been well accepted, I am told, by many in the Muslim community. We are being asked to help fund that through the appropriations process, and it is very important that we do.

I will close where I started. It has been a bit of a wild and crazy ride this week. Every now and then I feel—when I was raising my kids, my boys, I would just say, why don't we just take a deep breath and chill for a little bit, and then figure out what to do. Given everything that has come across in the media and the scare that has been visited on so many people, it is probably a good time for us to just take a deep breath and to think about some of the things that I have said, some of what we learned in our hearing today.

There are threats to this country that are real. They are probably not posed by the refugee problem. We are reminded by the Pope that we have an obligation to follow the Golden Rule and treat other people the way we wanted to be treated. We have an obligation, as we were reminded just two months ago by the Pope on the other side of the Capitol when he addressed a joint session of Congress. He told us to remember Matthew 25: When I was hungry, did you feed me? When I was thirsty, did you give me a drink? When I was naked, did you clothe me? When I was a stranger in your land, did you take me in?

He posed to us sort of a moral dilemma and certainly reminded us that we have a moral obligation to the least of these in our society. We also have a moral obligation as leaders here in the Congress to make sure that we are not only trying to be true to that moral obligation to the least of these but the obligation that we have to protect the people of this country.

The question for us as we approach Thanksgiving—maybe in the spirit of Thanksgiving—is that it possible for us to be true to both of the moral imperatives, to the least of those in our society and, frankly, outside this country, and the moral imperative to our country men and women to protect them. I think we can do both.

As we leave here today to head for our homes and for Thanksgiving, I am encouraged we can do both, and that if we are smart about it, we will do that.

I wish the Presiding Officer and all of our pages and all of the staff here a blessed Thanksgiving holiday. Thank you all for your service. I will see you in about 10 days. God bless you.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO BONNIE CARROLL

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, the Presidential Medal of Freedom is our Nation's highest civilian honor, presented to men and women who have made "an especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural or other significant endeavors."

It is the highest honor a civilian of the United States can achieve. In all, the recipients have included seven Presidents, nine Supreme Court Justices, countless Members of Congress, First Ladies, military leaders, lawyers, artists, athletes, civil rights leaders, and doctors. It is the list of the best of America. It is a diverse list. The recipients come from all backgrounds and all walks of life. They all have one thing in common. They have dedicated their lives to achieving excellence in serving causes greater than themselves.

On November 24, next week, Bonnie Carroll, a proud Alaskan, will join this honor roll when she is presented with the Presidential Medal of Freedom at a White House ceremony. It is certainly an exciting time for all of us in Alaska. We are so proud of Bonnie, who just happens to be here tonight in the Gallery.

Let me tell you a little bit about Bonnie Carroll, a woman of determination, perseverance, honor, and strength. You can't talk about Bonnie without talking first about how she met her husband Tom, which in many ways—in tragic ways I will get to—led to the great work she has done for a grateful nation.

In 1988, Bonnie was working at the White House when news broke that three whales were trapped in the ice off the coast of Alaska. Now I know this doesn't happen in the Presiding Officer's State that often, but in Alaska we have certain challenges that other States don't. She picked up the phone to see what could be done, and on the other line was her future husband, Alaska Army National Guard COL Tom Carroll, who worked with many others to help rescue the whales. This was part of the love story between Bonnie and Tom and part of a story so unique that what happened up in Alaska actually caught the attention of Hollywood. You can see their love story portrayed in the film "The Great Miracle."

For the Carrolls, the story didn't end with the saving of the whales. Unfortunately, their story is in many ways happy but also did not have a so-called Hollywood ending—unfortunately, far from it. After they were married in 1992, COL Tom Carroll of the Alaska National Guard died in an Army C-12 plane crash in the mountains of Alaska. Seven other top Alaska National Guard members were tragically lost

that day. It was a horrible tragedy for America, for Alaska, for the Carroll family, and for all the other families who suffered tragic loss that day in Alaska.

After the crash Bonnie realized there were no organizations established in this country to help people like her who had lost loved ones—military members and family members who had lost military members in tragedies such as the day of that crash. What she did after that was amazing. What she did was heroic. She took her deep grief and put it to use for the rest of us.

Just 2 years after her husband's tragic death, Bonnie founded the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, also known as TAPS. The idea for TAPS came in part as a result of her consultations with former Senator Ted Stevens, another great Alaskan and great American, who would also tragically die in a plane crash in Alaska. This is why Bonnie is being honored by the President next week. Since 1994, her organization, TAPS, has offered support to 50,000 surviving families of our military members whom we have lost. Fifty thousand surviving family members and caregivers have benefited from the services of TAPS, which Bonnie founded. Think of the grief and think of what she has done across America to soothe grieving families.

TAPS provides a variety of grief and trauma resources, including seminars for adults and a summer camp for children in Alaska to help families heal and to help them work through their grief. I heard many of these stories, and you can't help but be touched and moved by the power of what TAPS does to help Americans, family members of our military, work through some of the most difficult times. For years those of us in the military and those of us in Alaska have known how Bonnie's work and the work of TAPS has been healing families throughout this country, for those we have lost—our heroes who have been defending this country. We have known in the military, we have known in Alaska, and as of Tuesday the world will know when Bonnie is presented with this incredible honor at the White House.

As she puts it: "Out of an Alaskan tragedy came hope and healing for tens of thousands of our military families."

For the work that she does with the families of our heroes who have made the ultimate sacrifice for all of us, Bonnie Carroll is utmost deserving of this great honor. She is a great Alaskan, a Great American, and she has made us all very proud.

Congratulations, Bonnie.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

THE ANNIVERSARY OF EXECUTIVE ACTION ON IMMIGRATION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, a year ago today, in a nationwide address, President Obama announced a series of measures to improve our broken immigration system. He outlined efforts to focus scarce resources on identifying and deporting those people who pose a danger to our communities, to modernize our legal immigration system, and to provide temporary relief from the threat of deportation for hard-working, law-abiding members of our communities. For many, the President's announcement offered at last a hope for stability. It acknowledged the longstanding presence and contributions of immigrants to our country.

But the President's announcement also underscored the real human consequences of the House of Representatives failing to allow a vote to reform our immigration laws. Importantly, it highlighted the impracticality of deporting 11 million undocumented immigrants. Many of them have strong family ties in the United States and a deep desire to become fully integrated in our country. They are mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, sons and daughters. To suggest that we can simply remove them is unrealistic and it would conflict with fundamental American values.

The President's Executive action is no substitute for legislation. He reminded critics of that very fact during his address, pointing out that the commonsense, responsible solution to the problems in our immigration system is to pass a comprehensive reform bill. A year later, the Republican-led Senate has failed to debate, let alone pass meaningful immigration reform. Instead, it has repeatedly taken up divisive and partisan proposals that do not reflect a desire to fix what we all agree is a broken system.

These political gimmicks are not serious attempts to address an issue as important as immigration and could not be more different from what the Democratic-led Senate accomplished in 2013 when we passed a bipartisan immigration bill supported by 68 Senators. During the Senate Judiciary Committee's consideration of the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act, I convened multiple hearings, and we heard from 42 witnesses. Government officials and individuals representing a range of perspectives—including law enforcement, civil rights, labor, faith, business, and State and local governments—testified about the challenges confronting our current immigration system.

We heard the powerful testimony of witnesses such as Jose Antonio Vargas and Gaby Pacheco who pressed the urgent need for immigration reform. The compelling stories of DREAMers, young immigrants brought to this country as children, who have grown up as Americans and have every desire to make meaningful contributions to their communities, continue to inspire.