

DACA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, as you know, and many do, 16 years ago I introduced a bill called the DREAM Act. The DREAM Act was written to cover young people, brought to the United States by their parents, who have grown up in this country but do not have legal status. They are undocumented. Some of them don't learn that until they are in high school or later. They think they are Americans. They have gone to school with a lot of American kids. They pledge allegiance to the flag. They sing our national anthem. They truly believed they were Americans and didn't learn until later in life that they had overstayed their visas. Their parents had overstayed their visas, is probably a better description, and that has affected their legal situation.

So I introduced this bill—a simple bill—that reads, if you have children in America who are caught up in that circumstance, we will give them a chance to get legal. They didn't make the decision to come here in the first place, but they ought to have a chance to become legal in America and become citizens. That is what the DREAM Act said, and we set up certain standards.

How do you become legal in America?

First, if you have a serious criminal record, goodbye. We don't want you. We don't need you. Second, if you are not going to finish school and are going to drop out, sorry, there is no future for you in this country—or a limited future. Third, would you consider serving in our U.S. military as a way of proving that you want to be a part of America's future? We set that up with the DREAM Act.

Time passed, and we didn't pass the bill. One of my colleagues in the Senate went on to be elected President of the United States, Barack Obama.

I reached out to him and asked: Mr. President, can you figure out a way to protect these young people who are subject to deportation through no fault of their own? He did. He came up with an Executive order called the DACA Program.

Under the DACA Program, young people, like those I described, came forward. They paid a \$500 filing fee, then went through a criminal background check to make sure they had no problems, and they submitted their information. Each of them was given a 2-year renewable protection plan so they could live in America, not be deported, and be able to legally work.

What happened to those people? There were 780,000 of them who showed up, paid the fee, and got the protection under the DACA Program.

Then came a Presidential campaign—the last one—in which Donald Trump, as candidate for President, said: I am going to get rid of this DACA Program. I think it is wrong. It never should have been done by Executive order.

He said that and then was elected and set out to do it. Last September 5, he did just that. It was announced by

the Attorney General of the United States. They said that by March 5 of 2018, the program would end.

What it means is, today and every day, more and more of these protected young people fall out of protection—about 120 a day. There are 10,000 of them who were protected by DACA who can now be deported, and the number will continue to grow until March 5, when the President said the program should end—when 1,000 young people a day in America will lose DACA protection, be subject to deportation, and will not be able to legally work.

When he eliminated the DACA Program on September 5, President Trump said to us: I challenge Congress. Do what you are supposed to do. Pass a law to take care of this.

I accepted that challenge, and I joined with Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, the Republican of South Carolina. We introduced the Dream Act. We are ready to pass the Dream Act. I think there are the votes on the floor to pass the Dream Act.

Some of my Republican friends have said to me: We support it, but we want a show of good faith on your part that you will strengthen our border operations to reduce others from coming into this country.

I said: Sign me up. As a Democrat, I will join with you as a Republican to fund things that are sensible, realistic, and effective to take our tax dollars and make our borders safer. I accept that.

Now we are in a position in which the President's challenge has really come to the spot where we have to do something. We are going to leave here by December 22 to go home and enjoy the holidays. If we do not fix this problem before we leave, imagine what that will mean to these 780,000 young people. They don't know what their futures are going to hold.

Who are they?

There are 20,000 of them who teach in grade schools and middle schools and high schools across the United States—20,000 of these DACA-protected young people. When they lose their right to legally work in America, they are finished as teachers—finished, out the door. These are 20,000 teachers who could be lost.

In addition, there are students who are in a pretty tricky situation. About 30 of them go to the Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine in Chicago. They won the competition to be accepted at that medical school because Loyola, unlike other medical schools, said they will open competition to DACA-eligible people. Some of them are the most brilliant kids in America who never dreamed that, in being undocumented, they could make it to medical school. They have. They are doing well.

There is a problem. You cannot finish medical school and move on to where you want to be unless you complete a residency after medical school. The residency is actually a job—a job in-

volving a lot of hours in hospitals learning to be a doctor. All doctors go through it, and these medical students would go through it as well except, if they lose DACA protection, they cannot legally work; therefore, they cannot even apply to be residents and complete their medical educations. Our failure to act, our delay in acting, jeopardizes their medical educations.

Do we have a surplus of doctors in the United States? No. The AMA tells us just the opposite. Across Illinois, I can point to communities downstate and to neighborhoods in the Chicago area that are desperately in need of doctors. Can we waste a medical student at Loyola's medical school because the Senate is just too darned busy to take it up?

Does it look to the Presiding Officer like the Senate is too busy to take up an issue like this? The fact is, we have done precious little this year, and we have plenty of time. It is also a reality that a lot of people are watching carefully to see if we do our job.

A long time ago, I started coming to the floor of the Senate, telling the story of these Dreamers—the stories of these people who are protected by DACA. I can give the greatest speech in the world, and people will yawn, but when I tell them the stories of these lives and these people, it changes the conversation. They come to understand who they are and why this is critically important. Today is kind of a milestone. This is the 100th story I have told on the floor of the U.S. Senate. They are all in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD for those who want to take a look at them.

It is the story of another one of these Dreamers. His story is particularly compelling. This is his photo.

His name is Kyungmin Cho. Kyungmin Cho was 7 years old when his family brought him from Seoul, South Korea, to the United States. He grew up in New Jersey.

From a young age, he was quite a good student and active in his community. In high school, he took multiple advanced placement courses. He was Vice President of the National Honor Society and president of his class. Here is a picture of him at his high school graduation. In high school, Kyungmin was a member of the Math and Science Academy and a member of the varsity track and field team. He was a volunteer at his church, and he taught summer school. At the same time, he was working over 40 hours a week.

You see, these kids, these young people—Dreamers—don't get Federal Government loans or Pell Grants so they have to work extra time to get the money to go to school. He worked 40 hours a week in a restaurant to help support his family and pay for his education. Now he is a student at Temple University's Fox School of Business and Management. He is studying accounting in the Honors Program. He continues to work two restaurant jobs a week for nearly 40 hours to help his

family, but, last year, something else happened that was significant in his life.

Kyungmin Cho, an undocumented student in America, was allowed to enlist in the U.S. Army. The program he enlisted in is called The Military Accessions Vital to National Interest Program. It is known by the acronym MAVNI. This program allows immigrants like Kyungmin, with special skills “vital to the national interest,” to enlist in our Armed Forces. More than 900 DACA recipients with these skills, just like Kyungmin, have joined the military. They took the oath. They said they were willing to die for this country and serve in our military.

Some Trump administration officials have claimed that DACA recipients are taking jobs away from Americans, but Kyungmin and hundreds of others have vital skills that our military just couldn’t find in other places.

Kyungmin, with many other Dreamers, is now waiting to ship out to basic training. He continues his undergraduate studies and works full time as he waits for a chance to serve the United States of America. He is willing to risk his life for a country that doesn’t recognize him as a legal resident.

He wrote me a letter, which reads:

DACA means everything to me. It gives me the opportunity to work and support myself. . . . It is with great pride that I call myself American even though my status says otherwise.

I recently visited the Phoenix Military Academy, one of the six military academies that is part of the Chicago Public School System. I am proud to say Chicago Public Schools hosts the largest Junior ROTC Program in America, with 10,000 cadets. You ought to see them marching at the Memorial Day Parade—just wave after wave of these uniformed, young high school students. It turns out that many of these cadets are Dreamers who want to do just what Kyungmin has done—volunteer to enlist in the U.S. military.

How can you question this man’s commitment to America if he is willing to die for this country? How many kids in high school would step up with that kind of courage? He has demonstrated, and others have, too, that they can give a lot to our country.

Without DACA, if it ends March 5, it is over for Kyungmin and 900 others who have volunteered to serve our Nation. They are finished. They cannot continue their service to America, even though the skills they bring are necessarily vital to our national interests. For the thousands of Junior ROTC cadets in Chicago who drill every day and take this seriously, it is over for them too. There is no avenue left for them to step forward and serve our Nation.

Would America be better if we deported Kyungmin back to South Korea—a country he may not even remember? Will we be a stronger country if we lose this kind of courage and this kind of commitment of a young man

who is willing to risk his life for a country that does not legally recognize him as part of its population?

In a few weeks, we are going to get to go home for the holidays. I am looking forward to it. I really am. It is a big holiday for my family, and I am sure it is for many others. Can we really go home and enjoy our families, knowing we have not answered the most basic question that the President said to us on September 5, when he asked: Can Congress act? Can you pass a law? Can you solve a problem? That is what it comes down to when it is DACA and the Dreamers.

When I introduced the Dream Act with Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, the Republican of South Carolina, he said: The moment of reckoning is coming.

He is right. LINDSEY is right. It is a moment of reckoning for this young man. More importantly, it is a moment of reckoning for this Senate as to whether we are serious about why we were elected. If we cannot solve this basic problem in a matter of days and weeks, shame on us. We are not over-worked, for goodness’ sake. We are just not inspired to do it at this point, and we need to be inspired to do it.

We shouldn’t do to this young man and to the thousands of others who count on us the unacceptable and walk away from our responsibility. Now is the time, before the end of this year, to let this young man know, when he is called to serve our country—and to proudly do so—that we have done everything we can to clear his path.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

REMEMBERING BOATSWAIN'S MATE SECOND CLASS JOSEPH LEON GEORGE

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I rise to honor the heroism of Boatswain's Mate Second Class Joseph Leon George.

On December 7, 1941, 26-year-old Joe George served as a crew member aboard the USS *Vestal*, a repair ship that was moored next to the USS *Arizona* at Pearl Harbor. The attack on Pearl Harbor was a history-defining event for our Nation, one we humbly observe each year to remember and honor the 2,403 Americans who perished.

On that day, Joe George, along with so many other courageous heroes, would take swift and decisive action, putting his own life on the line to save sailors whom he had never met and would never know.

When the USS *Arizona* was attacked, the forward ammunition magazine of the ship exploded—we have all seen that very famous photograph of the *Arizona*—and engulfed countless sailors in the inferno. Joe George, from his post on the nearby repair boat, recognized six badly burned sailors who were trapped in the control tower on the *Arizona*'s main mast, with no escape options available.

Despite the fact that he was ordered to cut the line—to cut the rope—between the *Vestal* and the sinking *Arizona*, Joe relentlessly heaved a line, over and over, which spanned a distance of almost 80 feet between the two ships, until Joe was finally able to reach the sailors with his rope.

Joe's selfless actions saved six sailors who would have otherwise perished in the flames on the USS *Arizona* that day. While two of those six would succumb to their injuries shortly thereafter, the remaining four survivors have Joe to thank for their lives.

Amidst all the chaos that day, Joe George was never identified as the sailor who threw that lifeline. In fact, the four survivors diligently sought for information to recognize the man whom they were never able to thank—Joe George, the person who saved their lives.

It wasn't until 36 years later that the unknown sailor would be acknowledged when Joe George conducted an interview with the University of North Texas on August 5, 1978. Joe George contributed his experiences while serving during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor as part of the university's oral history for the “Day of Infamy.”

This was the first time Joe would speak of the event, confirmed by his ship log records, commanding officer's remarks, and, most importantly, the two living survivors that have Joe to thank for their lives.

Joe's actions that day, which we find hard to match words that do it justice, are nothing short of what an American hero is in servitude, dedication, and sacrifice.

While the years of searching for Joe and establishing the basis for proper recognition do not go unappreciated, it is with great respect and admiration that we take a moment to honor this distinguished sailor's actions so long ago.

The specific events of December 7, 1941, 76 years ago today, continue to age with each passing year, but the memories and stories of heroes like Joe thrive as our Nation reflects in humility and gratitude.

It is with great respect that I recognize this time today to honor Joe George. Some 76 years ago today, Joe's actions saved six sailors.

Today Joe's family will receive the Navy Bronze Star for Valor at the remembrance ceremony at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. This is the first time a medal has been presented on the Memorial of the USS *Arizona*.

I was honored to work with Colorado Springs resident Donald Stratton to solidify this honor for Joe George. Don is one of the sailors who was saved, and he has been fighting for decades to make sure this day of recognition would take place. So 76 years later, we culminate the work of Don Stratton's mission to commemorate the man who the Stratton family has everything to be thankful for.

I am beyond words with excitement to be part of this momentous occasion