

Is it not a fact that the first amendment that was brought up here was a bipartisan amendment of mine and Senator Hatch? Shortly thereafter, the Senator from Iowa came with an amendment. Following normal courtesy, I allowed mine to be set aside so he could bring up his. So isn't it a fact that we asked if he might set it aside for some non-controversial amendments on either side? He told me he could not. The Senator is correct.

You cannot talk out of both sides of your mouth unless somebody understands they are listening to what you say both times. The ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, the senior Senator from Iowa, he is talking out of both sides of his mouth. The people of Iowa should check this out and see what he said and what he does.

So he can come and criticize all he wants—criticize me. But it should be based upon facts, not standing his own statements on their head. He can't have it both ways.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that we proceed to a period of morning business with Senators allowed to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

ABLE ACT

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I wish to discuss the ABLE Act, which is a piece of legislation that has been the subject of enormous and substantial bipartisan support both in the Senate and in the House.

We know that a lot of families have relied upon and have really benefited from the so-called 529 plans—a section of the IRS Code that allows families to save tax-free for education. What we are trying to do with the ABLE Act is to replicate that opportunity so that families who have a loved one with a disability—it may be one disability or it may be more than one, but every family who has a loved one with a disability should have the opportunity to save just as they might for education in a tax-free manner, in a tax-advantaged way.

We have been working on this legislation for a number of years. Senator RICHARD BARR, the senior Senator from North Carolina, and I have led this effort in the Senate. As I said, it would build upon that 529 model for education.

The ABLE Act enjoys the support of 63 Senators, 63 cosponsors. In the House, it is up to 335 Members. That is why we mentioned that over 400 Members of Congress agree. That is why the hashtag #passtheABLEact! is important to highlight.

There are few measures which come before the Senate or the House which enjoy that kind of bipartisan support. In the Senate there are no more than 5 bills that enjoy the support of 63 or more Senators. We are pleased about

that, but we are not done yet. We still have a long way to go to get this legislation done.

So as important as it is to highlight the numbers, it is also important to highlight the people who did the hard work to get us there. I want to commend Members of the House and Senate, but the ones who are worthy of even more substantial commendation would be a lot of individuals, some of whom are here in Washington this week: The National Down Syndrome Society. I was just with folks from the National Down Syndrome Society this morning over on the House side. They allow a Senator to go across to the House side. Our current Presiding Officer knows this, as she served there. Once in a while we get to go over there, and they were kind enough to invite us over there this morning. They have done remarkable work on this legislation and are continuing their advocacy today, even as we speak. We are grateful for their work.

Autism Speaks is another great organization that has done enormous work to bring us to where we are today, and the Arc as well. So many Americans know a lot about the Arc, the National Down Syndrome Society, as well as Autism Speaks. So we are grateful for that support, but we still have a ways to go.

One of the best ways to ensure this legislation will get over the goal line—I don't want to use too many football analogies here—but if we are getting close, even if we are in the so-called red zone, we are not in the end zone yet. We have a ways to go. But one of the best ways to make sure that happens is to talk about the real people that legislation like this would affect.

I mentioned the number of supporters we have, but I didn't mention the full name of the bill: Achieving a Better Life Experience. That is what the acronym ABLE stands for. But I like to think about it in this way as well.

I have a constituent, Sara Wolff, who is with us here today. She knows the rules don't allow me to indicate where she is today, but she is very close by, and she is with us today. I am grateful Sara is with us because she is a great example of someone who has a disability but is very able. She has a disability, but on a regular basis—hour after hour, day after day—she finds a way to overcome her disability or to manage it as best she can. She is a remarkable speaker. She gives as many speeches in a week as I give, and I am an elected official. She is well-known in northeastern Pennsylvania where we live. We live in the same county, but I live in Scranton and she lives in Moscow. She works for the O'Malley & Langan Law Offices. She is a law clerk there.

But as smart as she is on the law and these issues, probably the most significant part of her whole personality is the dynamism she brings to issues. She is a dynamic person. She does some-

thing few of us do well—even people who work here as elected officials—because she knows how to engage with people. She knows how to deliver a message. She knows how to be candid and direct but to do it in a way that is engaging and warm and friendly. So once in a while I will take instruction from Sara Wolff. But even more than that, I take inspiration from her.

Sara is someone who is very able and talented and committed, but she is among the many Americans—Pennsylvanians in my case—asking us to pass this legislation so that if a family such as hers wants to begin to save to help pay for a whole range of services for an individual with a disability, they can do so in a tax-advantaged environment in order to save over time, and do it in a manner that doesn't put them at a disadvantage from a tax standpoint down the road.

So Sara is a great example of why the ABLE Act should pass, and she is doing more than her share to make sure that it does pass. So I am grateful to Sara Wolff for doing that, and I am especially grateful to people like Sara, who like a lot of us at some point in our lives have to overcome a tragedy. Sara lost her mother Connie not too long ago to a sudden and rapid illness. But she has been able to deal with that tragedy and still help us day in and day out to get the ABLE Act passed.

I will highlight one more story and then I will conclude. Angie Cain is a 28-year-old who lives in Indianapolis, IN, and like Sara Wolff she lives with Down syndrome. Angie has five different jobs and works 5 days a week. She works paid positions at Kohl's on Mondays and at the YMCA on Fridays. On Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays she volunteers for several organizations, including a hospital, a Down syndrome office in Indiana, and the Alzheimer's unit of an assisted living facility.

Unfortunately, like so many Americans with disabilities, Angie is unable to save enough to cover her future needs—the same problem I just highlighted—if we don't change the law with the ABLE Act. Under current law, she must have less than \$2,000 in assets in order to be eligible for Supplemental Security Income. That doesn't make a lot of sense, and that is one of the reasons we have to change the law. Angie is, therefore, forced to limit the amount of money she earns and work multiple paid and volunteer positions in order to benefit from the steady benefits that SSI provides.

Angie would like to live independently and, at the same time, she knows that she has limitations in that regard because without adequate savings and income, because of the current state of the law, she is forced to live with her family. She would like to be independent. That is something we all yearn for at some point in our lives. Angie's family is worried about her living and financial situation, especially down the line, years from now, when

her family may not be with her any longer.

Stories such as Angie Cain's story, the story of Sara Wolff, and individuals across the country like Sara and Angie are the reason we have to pass the ABLE Act. They don't need a lot of help. They need just a tool, one tool in their toolbox, to be able to reach down and have the opportunity to have their families save in a way that will help them down the road.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 19 percent of Americans live with one or more disabilities, 12 percent live with severe disabilities, and many of them are unsure about their ability to cover their basic expenses in the future because they are unable to build adequate savings.

We talk a lot about how folks should save. We encourage people to save for college. We encourage families to do that, and we encourage people to save for all kinds of things. Just the principle itself—to save and to conserve—is a good one to espouse and to advocate. But we have to give, in this instance, families an opportunity to save for a loved one with a disability or, in some cases, more than one disability. So whether it is Sara Wolff or Angie or others, we have to give them an opportunity to do that and give their families that opportunity.

When you see that number of Members of Congress—400—coming together, I believe it is not simply a question of whether this will pass but only a question of when the ABLE Act will pass. I hope that will take place in the next couple of months and that we can get every single Member of the Senate and House to join us.

This is one major thing we could do this year to show the American people we get it when it comes to one challenge that a lot of families face.

TRIBUTE TO BETSY SCHMID

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, 13 months ago, I inherited an awesome responsibility. In the blink of an eye, I had become Chairman of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, a position long held by Senator Daniel Inouye.

It was daunting to step into the shoes of a member of the "greatest generation," a Medal of Honor recipient, and one of the most respected advocates for the men and women who serve our country in uniform. It was my good luck that the gavel I inherited came with Betsy Schmid, the staff director of the subcommittee.

Betsy first came to the Senate in February 2002, on detail to the Defense Subcommittee as a Presidential management intern. While it was only a temporary assignment, I believe Betsy would be the first to tell you that she would have done anything to return.

Return she did, joining the Defense Subcommittee as professional staff in March 2003. Over the next 8 years,

Betsy served as a budget analyst focusing on some of the largest, most complex, and politically sensitive programs in the Department of Defense.

After years as an outstanding budget analyst, Chairman Inouye appointed Betsy to serve as the staff director of the Subcommittee on Defense in February 2011. It is a daunting job. The subcommittee oversees more than half of the Nation's discretionary budget, plus tens of billions more for the costs of overseas conflicts.

As staff director, Betsy has done an outstanding job of serving me this year, and Senator Inouye before me. But more importantly, her time here was in service to the Senate, the Nation, and our Armed Forces.

During her service, she had been handed the unenviable task of reducing the defense budget by scores of billions of dollars.

Many said that the cuts could not be made without sacrificing major critical military capabilities, but Betsy and her staff proved them wrong. Betsy made the numbers work, and there is no doubt in my mind that our Nation is more secure today because we got many of these budgetary decisions right.

This is Betsy Schmid's last week with the Subcommittee on Defense. She has been given an offer that she simply could not refuse. I wish her well and know she will contribute in important ways, but we will miss her.

During her service in the Senate, she has continued the tradition of bipartisanship and putting the men and women of the Armed Forces and Intelligence Community first. No one has worked harder to achieve these goals, working late nights, weekends, and more than a few holidays to serve her country to the utmost of her considerable abilities.

So with this distinguished record of public service, I would like to provide my sincere thanks and congratulations to Elizabeth Lynne Schmid. I wish her the very best in her future endeavors.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I rise today in recognition of Black History Month.

First established in 1976 as part of the U.S. Bicentennial, President Gerald Ford marked the inaugural Black History Month with a call to "honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history."

The State of Illinois has played a significant role in this ongoing struggle for justice. President Abraham Lincoln led our Nation through its bloodiest war to save the Union, abolish slavery, and begin the work we continue to this day to end discrimination.

It was Illinois Senator Paul Douglas who raised the Illinois standard and joined in lending support for Hubert Humphrey's call for civil rights at the 1948 Democratic Convention. Douglas

was a stalwart on civil rights as a Senator, defying filibusters and the wrath of his colleagues to make this principled stand in the 1950s and 1960s.

It was Illinois Senator Everett Dirksen who worked with Members of both parties to help pass the historic Civil Rights Act of 1964 50 years ago this July. That Dirksen Senate seat would later be filled by three of the nine African-American Senators who have served in this body—more than any other State in the Nation.

In 1992, Carol Moseley Braun became the first and only African-American woman to serve in the Senate. In 2004, I was joined here in the Senate by Barack Obama, who would of course go on to become the first African-American President in American history. Roland Burris assumed his seat when President Obama moved into the White House.

The Senate has since welcomed Senators TIM SCOTT of South Carolina, Mo Cowan of Massachusetts, and CORY BOOKER of New Jersey. This 113th Congress marks the first time that two African-American Senators served concurrently.

The Senate is changing to better reflect the diversity of this Nation, but the pace of that change is painfully slow. Our challenge is to shape a nation where America's leaders look like America and where the talents of all people are welcomed.

We proudly celebrate the tremendous work of the courageous men and women who have come before us to make this country a better place. During this month, as we do throughout the year, America continues to fight so that we may all live in a fairer and more equal nation.

SENATE EMPLOYEES' CHILD CARE CENTER

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I wish to recognize the 30th anniversary of a special place in our Senate community—the Senate employees' childcare center. The teachers and administrators at the center are some of the unsung heroes of the Senate, and it is a privilege to be able to pay tribute to them today.

The Senate employees' childcare center opened its doors on February 27, 1984, as the result of a small group of Senate employees who came together as parents to create a childcare program for their children that would best meet the unique needs of Senate employees. Although operating out of different buildings, the center has been in continuous operation since its opening day. In 1989, the center became the first childcare center in Washington, DC, to receive accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children—a hallmark of quality in the child care world—and it has remained accredited ever since.

Over the years the center has grown in size and has moved locations several times, but one thing that has never