

Mack and John Breaux, only 13 percent—think of this, only 13 percent—of taxpayers file without the help of either a tax preparer or computer software. Since enacting the Tax Reform Act of 1986, over 15,000 provisions have been added to the Internal Revenue Code.

It is not just a matter of saving taxpayers' time and effort. This is about saving real money. The Tax Foundation estimates that comprehensive tax reform could save Americans as much as \$265 billion a year in compliance costs associated with preparing their returns. Now, that would be a real tax reduction that wouldn't cost the Treasury one dime.

Mr. President, I have been working on tax reform for years. In 2003, I attached an amendment to the Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act that would have created a blue ribbon commission to study fundamental tax reform. The amendment was adopted by voice vote but later removed in conference. Then, in the autumn of 2004, I offered my tax reform commission amendment again, this time to the American Jobs Creation Act. The Senate again adopted my amendment. During conference negotiations, the White House contacted me and requested I withdraw my amendment because the President was preparing to take a leadership role by appointing his own tax reform panel. I enthusiastically agreed to defer to his leadership, and I withdrew my amendment. It seemed to me that the tax reform bandwagon was finally starting to roll.

In January 2005, President Bush announced the creation of the all-star panel headed up by former Senators Connie Mack and John Breaux, and that panel spent most of the year engaging the American public to develop proposals to make our Tax Code simpler, fairer, and more conducive to economic growth. In November of 2005, the panel issued its final report. While not perfect in everyone's mind, the panel's two plans provided a starting point for developing tax reform legislation that would represent a huge improvement over the current system. The panel's proposals belong as a key part of the national discussion on fundamental tax reform.

Tinkering with the current Tax Code won't get it done. Tinkering is what has got us in this mess in the first place. It's time to rip the Tax Code out by its roots and replace it with something that works.

The President's panel had a number of great ideas that we should incorporate into tax reform legislation. For example, we should simplify the code by repealing the complex, unfair, and antigrowth alternative minimum tax. We should consolidate all the various tax-preferred savings plans into just two or three plans that average workers and families can understand and utilize. We should scale back the tax subsidies that we use to pursue social engineering and dictate economic pol-

icy, forcing Americans who fail to qualify for tax breaks to pay higher rates to make up the lost revenue.

We must create a tax system that is conducive to job creation and economic growth. We should start by addressing one of the biggest problems with the current code, and that is it rewards moving production overseas. We are taxing our exports heavily and taxing our imports lightly. Such a system sounds absolutely perverse, but that's what we have in the United States.

In fact, a constituent of mine, Tom Secor, from Norwalk, OH, who owns his own small business, came to my office and told a story about a business trip he made to China. He said he saw an editorial in a Chinese newspaper that was discussing the concerns of Americans about Chinese competition. The conclusion of the editorial was that Americans could solve most of their problems with Chinese competition if they would just reform their own Tax Code. Imagine that, even Communist China knows the United States needs tax reform to stay competitive. But for some reason we refuse to learn that lesson ourselves.

We must also understand that unless we do tax reform, the lower marginal rates, the lower capital gains taxes, the lower taxes on dividends will evaporate and we will have gained nothing in regard to fundamental tax reform and entitlement reform. And I think such reform, folks, must take into account our failure to pay for the Iraq war. This administration will have to explain why they are leaving us holding the bag and why they did not keep their promise for tax reform. They promised us.

I know there is bipartisan support in this chamber to move forward on fundamental tax reform. Some of our colleagues have already taken steps towards developing legislation that would represent a huge improvement over our current system. As I already mentioned, we have Senator GREGG and we have Senator KENT CONRAD who want to get going, so we should endorse the approach they want to take and submit legislation that Congress could consider under fast-track procedures. The proposal basically is to appoint eight Democrats and eight Republicans, including two top administration officials, and it would require a three-fourths vote for submitting a proposal to Congress.

In other words, they do their work, and if three-fourths have said this is what we want to do for tax reform and entitlement reform, we have to vote on it up or down. That is really important because you can't ask some of our colleagues to spend that kind of time on tax reform and entitlement reform and not guarantee them that if they agree on something, they will get a vote on it.

Some say to me: George, it is too late to do something. Well, it is not. And I think of Bill Bradley. Bill Bradley, in 1982, came up with a tax reform pro-

gram. It took 4 years, but it was adopted in 1986. In other words, Ronald Reagan, working with Congress, reformed the Tax Code in 1986, and President Reagan is still fondly remembered as the leader who set the stage for years of prosperity at the end of the 20th century. He worked on a bipartisan basis. I think this President really has an opportunity to do something in regard to this. I think the President and the administration should say to Congress: Everything is on the table. No holds barred. I will sit down with you, and I will work on it. And you know what. Maybe we will not get it done, but at least we will start it. We will let the American people know that we understand that tax reform and entitlement reform is fundamental to the future of our country. What a nice legacy for our President, to at least say he got into the game and did something about it and didn't say you guys worry about it; it is your problem.

Mr. President, the time to act is now. When you look at the numbers, it is self-evident we must confront our swelling national debt; that we must make a concerted bipartisan effort to reform our tax system, slow the growth of entitlement spending, and halt this freight train that is threatening to crush our children and grandchildren's future.

Right now, in my lifetime, where I am at this stage, what I am worried about is the kids of America. I am worried about my grandchildren and other people's grandchildren. What is the legacy that we are going to leave those children and grandchildren? I don't know about my colleagues, but I am worried. I am really worried. I am worried about whether we are going to develop the infrastructure of competitiveness so those kids can compete in that global marketplace.

It is in our hands. Folks back home sent us here to take on the tough problems and make the tough decisions and do what is right for our country.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. 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 DREAM ACT

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, our Nation was built on the belief that no matter where we start from in life, we all have a shot at the American dream. I, for one, am very proud of this reputation, and I believe it is one we should continue to promote and maintain. Unfortunately, Mr. President, somewhere along the way, amid politics and rhetoric, the belief that we

should now turn our backs on certain children in our communities has gained a voice.

Mr. President, I am here on the floor of the Senate today because I believe we need to make sure that America remains a country of opportunity for all children, no matter where they come from, no matter what language they speak at home, and no matter what obstacles they have to overcome. Earlier today in the Senate we had a chance to pay more than just lipservice to the idea of opportunity for all. Unfortunately, a few Members of this body didn't think it was an American priority.

I still believe in the DREAM Act and its power to not only give hope to many today but to make our country stronger in the future. In fact, we can still give hope to many by passing the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act. This DREAM Act was narrowly tailored bipartisan legislation that would give a select group of undocumented students the chance—the chance—to become permanent residents if they came to this country as children, are long-term U.S. residents, have good moral character, and attend college for at least 2 years or enlist in the military. Certainly, Mr. President, those are criteria that all of us would be very proud of.

Senator DURBIN previously brought up the DREAM Act as an amendment to the Defense authorization bill to address critical manpower shortages that are facing our military forces. Under the DREAM Act, tens of thousands of well-qualified potential recruits would become eligible for military service for the first time. These are young people who love our country and are eager to serve in the Armed Forces during a time of war. The DREAM Act would add a very strong incentive to enlist because it provides a path to permanent legal status.

The DREAM Act would also make qualified students eligible for temporary, legal immigration status upon high school graduation that would lead to permanent residency if—if—they attend college.

Mr. President, critics of this amendment would have you believe this is simply a matter of politics. Well, it is not. This is about real people, and I want to tell you about one of them. Recently, the *Seattle Times*, a newspaper in my State, featured the story of a young woman named Maria who has lived in the United States illegally since her parents brought her here at the age of 5. Maria completed high school in my home State of Washington. She did really well and was an active member of the student body. In fact, she was elected class officer 3 years in a row. Maria was accepted to the University of Washington. She graduated with a high GPA and honors in her department of study.

Maria is now in her second year of law school, and to quote the *Seattle Times*:

By all rights, save one, she should have the world by the tail. But she is dogged by the questions: When she graduates, will she be able to take the bar exam? Will she be able to keep helping low-income people as she's done during her internship this summer with a non-profit legal-aid corporation?

"The DREAM Act is my only hope," Maria said in the article. "I hope and I pray for it."

Isn't Maria exactly the type of young person in whom we should be investing? She studied hard, she got good grades, she has served her school, she has served her community, and now she wants to continue to serve her community and our country—the only home she has ever known.

It is not Maria's fault that her parents brought her to America when she was 5 years old. It is not Maria's fault that Congress has not yet passed the comprehensive immigration reform we clearly need. But it is the thousands of Marias out there who are living the consequences. We do need comprehensive immigration reform, but we also need a Government that invests in our children and understands that the face of the American dream is not just one class or one race or one religion. Our Nation is filled with young people who love this country, have beat the odds, and whom we should be investing in. We will reap the return we invest.

The reason I know that is from personal experience. When I was young, growing up in a family of nine, I thought my family was doing fine. I knew we didn't have a lot of money. But my dad was stricken with multiple sclerosis when I was a young teacher. All of a sudden, seven young kids under the age of 16 didn't know if they would ever be able to go to college, didn't know if they would ever even be able to graduate from high school or how they were going to face the future.

Because this country was there for them and we had student loans and Pell grants and a country that said: We are there with you, all seven of those children graduated from high school and graduated from college. Today, this country has a Microsoft employee. They have a lawyer who works very hard. They have a young mom who stays home with her two kids. They have a newspaper reporter who follows sports around the country. They have an eighth grade teacher who has taught now, for 25-plus years, eighth grade students. And they have a U.S. Senator. That is a pretty good investment by our country for those seven kids who thought they had lost their hope. That was my family.

I know what it is like to lose hope, and I know what it is like to have hope behind you when your country steps in. That is what we are talking about with the DREAM Act—young kids out there who are just looking for a country to be behind them, who have the skills, who have the capability, who are willing to be a part of this country, to give back if they could.

This is a real issue which touches real communities and real people

across our country. I actually got a letter from the superintendent of the Lake Chelan School District in north central Washington. I wish to read what he wrote. He said:

Each year I watch students who have worked hard to be successful during high school struggle to continue their education after graduation because of their immigration status. These students are an important part of America's future and we must give them the opportunity to further their education, contribute to society, and help build the American dream for generations to come. Allowing these young people to flourish is not only fair to them, but it also adds value to our country's rich, vibrant, and diverse culture. They deserve that opportunity to succeed regardless of the outcome of the current immigration debate.

I couldn't agree more. I think it is important that we remember that this debate is not just about immigration. It really is about what type of country we want to be. It is about what we stand for. It is about what type of future we want to build.

It is pretty easy to get caught up in the specifics of the policies we debate. But I encourage all of my colleagues to not lose sight, today, as we struggle with this difficult debate, of the bigger picture, because this debate touches nearly every aspect of American life, from our economy to our security, from our classrooms to our workplaces. Most importantly, it speaks about our values.

I received a letter recently from a high school senior named Victor. Victor lives in Walla Walla, a small town on the Washington-Oregon border. Victor wrote to me and he said:

I came to the U.S. when I was 10 years old. My most difficult and only challenge I faced since I came to the U.S. is education. I came to this country not knowing a single word of English, therefore I had to learn it as fast as I could. I was held back a grade and put into English as a Second Language classes. It took me about a year to learn it well enough to where I was able to be in classes with native speakers.

I am currently part of the National Honors Society and I also take part in fall and spring sports. I have been accepted to the University of Washington and three other Washington universities. . . . My plans are to go to the University of Washington and get a degree in computer science.

Unfortunately, I come from a low-income family, making it hard for me to make further plans about my education. Currently the federal government will not help with any financial aid to any noncitizen in the United States. How do you expect us to improve ourselves and succeed in this country?

I would like to ask my colleagues how they answer Victor's question, how they expect our Nation to continue to be one of hope, one of opportunity, if we close down our children's future rather than handing them the keys to success. All of our children should have the opportunity to become more successful than their parents, and none of them should be punished for their parents' decisions.

We have thousands of dedicated, motivated, and gifted students who have been forced into the shadows through

no fault of their own. Like Victor, like Maria, they have beaten odds many of us could never even imagine, and they want to serve now and contribute back to America's future. It would be our mistake to say no.

I hope my colleagues will reconsider their votes today. I hope they will say yes to the DREAM Act and yes to a richer, stronger, more vibrant American dream for all of us, for generations to come.

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, more than 65,000 immigrant students will graduate from U.S. high schools this year only to see the doors of opportunity closed to them. These are gifted and highly motivated children who grew up in the United States. For these children, many of whom arrived to this country as babies, America is the only home they know. They speak English fluently, and for many it is their first and only language. Many have never even visited the country of their birth. They have been educated in our public school system. They have stayed in school and stayed out of trouble. These kids are honor students, team captains, student body presidents, and valedictorians.

Many would like nothing more than to contribute to the only country they have ever known as home. But for these children, because of their immigration status, they are often effectively barred from pursuing a post-secondary education and reaching their full potential. Through no fault of their own, they are forced to live in the shadows and denied their chance at achieving their God-given potential.

What are we saying to these hard-working students? Well I will tell you. We are saying they are not welcome in the only country they have ever known. We are telling them to go back to another country they often know little about, where they may not speak the language or understand the culture. These are children caught at a crossroads, and rather than providing them with an opportunity, we are holding them accountable for the actions of their parents.

That is not the America I know.

There is a solution to this crisis, but, sadly, the Senate today failed to act. The DREAM Act—which I have proudly cosponsored for several years—would help expand opportunities for our Nation's immigrant children. For those students who have grown up in the United States, have demonstrated good moral character, and are pursuing a college education or have enlisted in the military, the DREAM Act will provide an opportunity to earn legal status in this country.

There are many good reasons to enact the DREAM Act. In today's 21st century economy, where a post-secondary education is quickly becoming the minimum requirement for higher earning jobs, we need to provide the children in our country with every opportunity to achieve academically, both for their benefit but also for the

benefit of our society. The DREAM Act would also strengthen our Nation's military readiness, allowing these well-qualified young men and women to serve their country with honor. But most importantly, the DREAM Act ensures that the promise of the American dream becomes a reality for all our children.

I am disappointed that the Senate failed to pass the DREAM Act. The enactment of this legislation is long overdue, and I will continue to fight for its passage, for all of our children and our Nation.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask consent to speak as in morning business.

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank my colleagues for their remarks that were just concluded on the DREAM Act and for the vote in support of it. It is interesting to me that those who have taken no time to meet the students who were involved in this issue come away with a much different feeling. Once this goes beyond cliches and inflammatory rhetoric that you hear in what passes for entertainment—television and radio—and you actually sit down and hear these life stories, you just can't help but have your heart touched by them. It happened to me a long time ago, 6 years ago, and it continues to happen to me. But, unfortunately, we didn't have the votes. We had 52 votes when we needed 60. In the Senate, 60 votes is a threshold requirement.

I thank the 11 Republicans who voted with me. I will tell you, it took some courage for them to do it. It is not an easy vote for anybody. It is surely not an easy vote for them when the vast majority of their colleagues are going the other way.

I also thank the 41 Democrats who stood by me. Some of them did it with pain in their eyes, thinking about: Now I have to go home and explain this one. I understand that. I thank them for doing that.

After you have been around Capitol Hill for a few years—and I have—you try to put things in perspective about your public service. I don't believe there are many, if any, who come to the Senate with the ambition of retiring. Most of us come here with the ambition of doing something important for our Nation and serving our Nation. There reaches a point sometime in a career where risks have to be taken for important things to happen. What I did today was no great risk. I will probably

hear about it back home, and I already have a little bit, but I will just say in the course of our history the important things that have occurred here in this Chamber have involved political risk and controversy—whether it is a question of voting on war or voting on issues involving civil rights and human rights. It is rare that you find a great issue that makes a career that everybody agrees with.

I say to my colleagues who joined in this effort today, thank you from the bottom of my heart, but thanks also to the thousands of young people across America who continue to follow this debate and follow this issue so closely. The toughest part was not standing in the well and being told that I lost with only 52 votes; the toughest part was walking up those stairs and facing 3 of the kids in my office. I didn't quite know what to expect. These young people have been through a lot, through no fault of their own.

One young man whose stepgrandfather failed to file the appropriate documents is 20 years old. A few years ago, he was arrested and detained in jail over Christmas and New Year's. How is that for a high school graduation present, to be told that you are illegal and subject to deportation?

Another young woman—her parents were outed as being illegal and deported. I pled with the Department of Homeland Security to let her stay in school and finish her college degree, and they have allowed her to do that. I hope they will continue to. But she doesn't know where she is going from here. She has lived in the United States since she was a very young girl and this is her country, this is where she wants to be.

Another one is literally a young woman without a country. A refugee from Vietnam, she went to Germany and then came to the United States. Vietnam is not a safe place for her to return to, and Germany doesn't want her. She is without a country. She has a bachelor's degree and no place to turn.

I didn't quite know what to expect when I went up to see them after this disappointing vote, and they greeted me with smiles and encouragement. It is great to work around young people; they have such determination and energy, and they are not going to let anything get them down. It made me feel better, and I am glad we did it even though we weren't successful. It renewed my commitment to this issue.

I am not going to quit. I don't know when the next chance will be. I know we have a busy schedule, and Senator REID was kind enough to give me the chance today for a vote, but this is an idea whose time will come because it is an idea based on justice and fairness. To think these young people would see their lives ruined because their parents were undocumented, because their parents brought them to this country, to think we would turn them away from America, saying we don't need any

more electrical engineers, we don't need any more teachers and nurses and doctors—no, we know better than that. We need them. We need all of them, and their strength makes us a stronger Nation.

So the day will come, and I hope soon, when we will have a chance for those who follow the debate so closely and to those who understood their fate was in the hands of the Senators who voted this morning.

Do not give up. We have not given up yet and you should not give up. We are going to keep pursuing this. We are in a sad and troubling moment in American history when the issue of immigration is so divisive. But let's be honest, it has always been divisive. There have always been people saying: No more immigrants, please, in this nation of immigrants.

Immigrants have to play by the rules. They have to follow the law. I understand that. But let's not turn our back on our heritage as a nation. The strength of America is its diversity. The fact that we come from the four corners of the world to call this place home, the fact that our parents and grandparents had the courage to pick up and move, rather than to be content with a life of mediocre opportunity—those are the people who made America, those are the ones who defined who we are. It is why we are special in this world, if we are, and I think we are.

We cannot let these young people go. We cannot afford to let them go. For those several of the Senators today who stuck their necks out a mile, a political mile to cast this vote, I thank you from the bottom of my heart, and these DREAM Act kids thank you too. The American dream will be there some day, and we will keep working until it happens.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### IRAQ

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, last week marked the 5-year anniversary of President Bush's signing the Congressional resolution that authorized him to use military force in Iraq. That resolution has proved to be a disaster for our country, opening the door to a war that has undermined our top national security priority, the fight against al-Qaida and its affiliates.

More than 5 years after the authorization of war, America is mired in a conflict that continues to have no end in sight. Nearly 4,000 of our soldiers have died and more than 27,000 have been wounded. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians have been killed, if

not more, and at least 4.5 million have been displaced from their homes. The region is more unstable, and our credibility throughout the international community has been significantly damaged.

We have spent over a half trillion dollars and stretched our military to the breaking point. Who knows how many more billions will be spent and how many brave Americans will die while the President pursues a military solution to problems that can only be solved by a political settlement in Iraq.

At the same time, al-Qaida has reconstituted itself along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region and has developed new affiliates around the globe. Al-Qaida has been strengthened, not weakened, since we authorized military action against, and then want to war in, Iraq.

Indeed, this senseless war has made us more vulnerable, not more secure. Yet it continues endlessly with only a small token drawdown of forces expected in the coming months, and no timeline from this administration as to when more troops will come home.

The American people know this war does not make sense. They expect us to do everything in our power to end it. Now that does not mean neglecting domestic priorities, and there are plenty of those to address, but it does mean we cannot, in good conscience, simply put Iraq on the back burner. We cannot simply tell ourselves and our constituents we have done everything we could. Finding the votes to end this war is not an easy task, but for the sake of the country, we must keep trying. I, for one, am not prepared to say, in late October, with weeks to go before we adjourn for the year, that Iraq can wait until we come back in 2008. Believe me, the administration and its supporters would like nothing better than to change the subject from Iraq. Every time we insist on debates and votes on Iraq, they complain loudly that we are taking time away from the country's true priorities. But as we were reminded last November, however, ending the disastrous Iraq war is one of the American people's top priorities. It may well be their top priority, and we owe it to them to make it our top priority as well.

While the administration continues to refuse to acknowledge that we have severely strayed off course, the war drags on and on, and more brave American soldiers are being wounded or killed. But it is not only the President and his administration that is at fault; many of my colleagues here in Congress have expressed concerns about the war but refuse to take real action to end it. They have prevented Congress from acting to secure our country and restore our global leadership.

I will not stand idly by while this mistaken war continues. I will continue working to end this war and bring our troops home. I will continue looking in the days and weeks ahead for opportunities to debate and vote on

ending the war, this year, and, if necessary, next as well.

My colleagues may complain, they may be inconvenienced, they may prefer to focus on other matters. But this Congress has no greater priority than making right the mistake it made more than 5 years ago when it authorized this misguided war.

I do not want to have to come to the floor again in a year to mark another anniversary of the war's authorization, and to again implore my colleagues to act. I do not want the American people to lose faith in their elected leaders for pursuing a war they rightly oppose. I do not want more American troops to be killed for a war that does not serve our national security interests.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in morning business.

#### ALTERNATIVE MINIMUM TAX

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, this country is headed toward a total meltdown on taxes. I am going to spend a few minutes this afternoon to talk about how that can be cooled off for a bit.

Yesterday, Treasury Secretary Paulson warned that unless the Congress acts within the next month on the alternative minimum tax, up to 50 million households, more than a third of all taxpayers, could be clobbered with new taxes. Congress has known for some time that unless the alternative minimum tax is addressed, 23 million taxpayers would be hit with the double whammy of having to calculate their taxes twice, and typically pay a higher tax bill.

First, they are going to have to do their taxes using the regular 1040 form; then they will have to calculate their taxes using the alternative minimum tax, which has a completely different and more complex set of forms.

Having to do your taxes once is bad enough. On average, that takes something like 15 to 30 hours, depending on whether a taxpayer is itemizing. But having to do your taxes is simply bureaucratic water torture.

Yesterday's announcement by Treasury Secretary Paulson revealed that twice as many taxpayers as previously estimated could be put in bureaucratic limbo by the alternative minimum tax and face delays in processing their returns and getting a tax refund. The problem is going to get worse and worse each year, as more and more tax-paying Americans are dragged into the alternative minimum tax parallel universe of tax rules, because the tax law is now stuck in a time warp.

It was never indexed for inflation. If Congress does not act, an estimated 30 million taxpaying Americans are going to be hit by the alternative minimum tax double whammy in 2010.