

thoughtful in that he reflected not only on our mission and our responsibility but thoughtful in that he reflected on the cost, the cost in human lives and the cost in dollars and the challenge we face in Congress to make sure those dollars are well spent and no American life is wasted. I thank my colleague for that thoughtful presentation.

THE DREAM ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, last night I was on a conference call. It was an unusual one. There were 8,000 people on this conference call. I have never been on a conference call like that. They were from all across the United States of America. We spoke for a few minutes and then took questions.

A young woman came on. She didn't give her name but she said, I want to tell you who I am. I am a person who is about to graduate from a major university in California with a degree in pharmacy and I have nowhere to go.

You see, she is a Hispanic who came to the United States at an early age, brought here by her parents. She defied the odds by finishing high school. Half of the Hispanic students do not. She did. Then she defied the odds even more by going to college. Only one in twenty in her status actually attends college in America. Then she stuck around for 5 years-plus to get her degree in pharmacy science.

We know for a fact we need pharmacists desperately across America, everywhere, in North Carolina and New Mexico and Illinois—we need pharmacists. Why aren't we using the talent of this ambitious, energetic, successful, young woman? Because she has no country. She is in America but she is not an American. She has no status.

The DREAM Act, which I introduced 10 years ago, addresses this challenge across America. Children, brought to America without a vote in the process, children who came here and made their lives here, grew up in America, as Senator MENENDEZ has said on the floor, standing up and proudly pledging allegiance to that flag, standing up and singing the Star Spangled Banner at baseball and football games—but they know and we know that they are not Americans. They feel like Americans. Many of them have never seen and don't know the country they came from. This is their country. But because they were brought here not in legal status, undocumented, they have nowhere to turn.

The first time I heard about this issue was when a Korean woman called me in Chicago. She was a single mom with three kids. She ran a dry cleaners and her older daughter was a musical prodigy, in fact so good she had been accepted at the Julliard School of Music in New York. Before she went to school she filled out the application form and came to a box which said "nationality/citizenship." She turned to her mom and she said: U.S. nation-

ality, right? Her mom said: No, we brought you here at the age of 2 and we never filed any papers. Her daughter said: What are we going to do? Her mom said: We are going to call DURBIN. So they called my office and we called the Immigration Service and when the conversation ended it was very clear. Our government said to that young girl: You have one choice—leave. Go back to Korea.

After 16 years of living successfully in the United States and making a great young life, our laws told her to leave because she was illegal. That is a basic injustice. It makes no sense to hold children responsible for any wrongdoing by their parents, children at the age of 2 who are now going to be penalized the rest of their natural life because their mother did not file a paper? Penalized because we have no process for her to have an opportunity to be part of the United States?

So I introduced the DREAM Act. The DREAM Act says if you have been here for at least 5 years and came below the age of 15 and completed high school, no serious criminal record, a person in good moral standing ready to be interviewed, speaking English, paying all the taxes and fines and fees that are thrown your way, then if you are willing to do one of two things we will give you a chance to be legal in the United States. No. 1, enlist in the military. If you are willing to risk your life and die for America, I think you are deserving of an opportunity for citizenship. Second, if you complete 2 years of college—which, as I say, defies the odds; it is a small percentage who would be able to do this—if you are able to complete 2 years of college, then here is what the bill says: We will put you in a 10-year conditional immigrant status.

Let me translate. For 10 years you have no legal rights to any government programs in America—not Medicaid if you get sick, not Pell grants if you go further in college, no student loans—nothing. You can stay here legally but you cannot draw one penny from this government during 10 years after you have finished high school and qualify under this act; 10 years.

Along the way we are going to keep an eye on you. If you stumble and fall—criminal record—you are gone. No exceptions; for felons, they are gone. Basically, we will continue to ask hard questions of you as to how you are doing.

In the version of the bill we are going to vote on, you are going to pay a fee, \$500 at the outset and more later. Under that House provision, those students struggling to get by with no right to government assistance by our bill will have to spend 10 years in this country. If they make it—2 years in the military or 2 years of college and they finish their 10 years—then they get in line and wait 3 to 5 years more before they can ever have a chance to be citizens.

It is a long, hard process that not many Americans today could survive.

Some of these kids will because they have made it thus far. They are determined, they are idealistic, they are energetic. They are just what America needs.

Do you know what Michael Bloomberg, the mayor of New York, said about this:

They are just the kind of immigrants we need to help solve our unemployment problem. Some of them will go on to create new small businesses and hire people. It is senseless for us to chase out the home-grown talent that has the potential to contribute so significantly to our society.

Will these DREAM Act students be a drag, then, once they are part of America? Not according to the Congressional Budget Office. They concluded that the DREAM Act would produce \$2.2 billion in net revenues over 10 years. How can that be? Because these DREAM Act students would contribute to our economy by working and paying taxes. These are students who are destined to be successful.

Who believes they will be successful? Start at the Pentagon. Secretary of Defense Gates has asked for us to pass the DREAM Act. He has said that these bright, young, dedicated people will be great in service to America. He knows that many of them come from cultural traditions of service to their country and he wants that talent in the U.S. military and he wants that diversity in our military. Fifteen percent of America today is Hispanic. The number is growing. Almost 10 percent of the people who vote in America are Hispanic and we want to make certain our military is as strong as it can be and reflects America as it is and what we want to it be.

We will have a chance to vote. Senator HARRY REID, the majority leader, has said we are going to vote on the DREAM Act this year—and we must, we absolutely must. We owe it to these young people, we owe it to their families, and we owe it to this country to rectify this terrible injustice.

There comes a time occasionally in the history of this country where we have a chance to right a wrong. We fought for decades over righting the wrong of slavery, the mistreatment of African Americans. We fought for decades to right the wrong of discrimination against women—denied the right to vote under our original Constitution. We fought for decades for the rights of the disabled in America. Each generation gets its chance to expand the definition of freedom and liberty and expand the reach of citizenship and the protection of our laws. This is our chance. This is a simple matter of justice.

I have listened to some of my colleagues on the other side who do not support it and they have said, if we would spend more money on border security, then maybe, just maybe I would be willing to give these young people a chance.

First, if there were no border security, it would not enlarge the number

of people protected here. You have to have been in the United States for 5 years in order to qualify here so any newcomers to the United States are not going to be eligible anyway. But let's get to the point. I support border security. We need a strong border. We need to make sure those who are illegal, undocumented, do not come across that border. I have voted for the money, I voted for the fences, I voted for the walls, I voted for everything they called for, and we have dramatically under this President increased the border security in America and I will vote for more. I will vote for more. I give my word to my colleagues I will.

I have said to Senators from those border States: Count on me to be with you. But don't hold these children hostage to that demand. Don't hold them hostage to that demand because border security in and of itself has nothing to do with justice for them.

Others have argued we want to make sure at the end of the day they can never become legal citizens of the United States. Never? After living their lives in this country, never? I would say: Go to the back of the line. And they should. Wait in line patiently, even if it takes 15 years. That is only fair. But never?

Others have said we should give them the military option. If they join the military, then we will let them become citizens. I don't think that is right and I don't believe the military would support that either because many would be applying for the military who are not inspired to serve in the military but are only doing it for the purpose of this law. Let's let those who are not going in the military have their own avenue, their own path to legalization by education and achievement in this society, not in the military.

I would also say to my friends and colleagues, some have argued it is a little too close to Christmas for us to worry about an issue such as this. We ought to go home. These young people are home and they are asking for us to pass the DREAM Act so that home will welcome them.

America is the only home they have ever known. I am willing to stay a day or two or more, whatever it takes, so we can pass this bill, right this injustice, and give these young people a chance.

The House has done its part. They passed a bill last week. Congressman LUIS GUTIERREZ and Congressman HOWARD BERMAN did a wonderful job in passing this legislation. It is good legislation. We have had 57 votes on the floor of the Senate but because of our rules you need 60. All I am asking is some of the Republicans who have told me in their heart of hearts they support this and worry about it politically, to put themselves in the shoes of our predecessors in the Senate who, when given a chance to expand the civil rights—of African Americans, of women, of the disabled—said that justice trumps politics. We will stand on

the side of justice and let history be the judge. That is the challenge we have with the DREAM Act.

I urge my colleagues, support the DREAM Act. Let's give these young people a chance to make America an even greater nation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. JOHANNES. Madam President, I rise today to briefly discuss the so-called omnibus spending package that is apparently headed this way. This budget-busting, trillion-dollar spending behemoth is nearly 2,000 pages in length, and it is laden with over 6,000 earmarks for various special interests.

This is a debacle that could have been avoided. Today is the 349th day of this year. There are only 16 days until the end of the year. There are only 10 days until one of the most sacred Christian holidays—Christmas. Yet the majority waited until just now to unveil our first real appropriations bill that will be considered on the Senate floor in the entire year.

The fiscal year began on October 1 of this year. Yet we have waited over 2 months to even consider a fiscal year 2011 spending bill. How could anybody claim this is responsible management of our citizens' tax dollars? There is no way to sugarcoat it. Congress has been derelict in its duty to produce any of the 12 annual appropriations bills for the fiscal year.

We did not even bother to debate or pass a budget resolution this year to at least create the notion that Congress wanted to constrain spending. While Americans across this country are taking a hard look at their finances, prioritizing their spending, their government continues to max the taxpayer credit card. This one is a doozy: 1,924 pages, \$1.27 trillion in spending, \$9 billion more than even last year's unacceptable spending levels, over 6,000—let me repeat that—over 6,000 earmarks that were funded more on geography and political influence than on anything to do with merit. That is \$8 billion worth of earmarks when the American people are crying out for transparency and thought they had sent a strong message in November.

While we should have been considering how to constrain spending, the authors of this legislation were busy behind closed doors seeing how much pork they could return to their States. This "you get yours and I will get mine" mentality is one of the reasons we have the budgetary hole we have dug. Yet we see 6,000 earmarks tucked away in this legislation.

Let me just give three of the priorities, according to these earmarks: \$200,000 of somebody's hard-earned tax dollars for beaver management; \$1.5 million of somebody's hard-earned tax dollars for mosquito trapping; \$300,000 of somebody's hard-earned tax dollars for the Polynesian Voyaging Society.

The list goes on and on. I could be here for the next 24 hours going through the list.

When I was Secretary of Agriculture, we proposed a budget, and we would not have a single earmark in it. But after the logrolling occurred on Capitol Hill, we would get our funding back, and it would be absolutely stuffed with earmarks, spending somebody's hard-earned tax dollars.

It is a sad commentary that a few million dollars in home State pork can often convince someone to swallow \$1 trillion of government spending. Yet that is where we end up too often. It looks to me like this is greased, and it is going to happen again. The authors of this legislation simply missed the message of November 2. We should be passing appropriations bills that actually rein in spending instead of doubling down, spending more, and adding to the era of big government. Yet this massive bill is laden with end-of-the-year gifts.

One supporter of the spending bill actually admitted it was the Christmas tree of all time, adorned by spending somebody else's hard-earned tax dollars. This spending juggernaut is simply not what Americans want or deserve.

While we are faced with numerous challenges, none is greater than tackling this growing spending in our national debt. In fact, a bipartisan group of almost 20 Senators came to the floor yesterday—and I was part of that group—to pledge our commitment to address the national debt.

How ironic that this massive spending bill is being discussed the very next day. Maybe actions speak louder than words. It is time for us to actually back up the rhetoric on controlling spending. A look at the last appropriations bills just since I arrived a couple of years ago shows spending is growing by 17 percent. The sad truth of that number is there is no economy—no economy—that can grow the revenues fast enough to keep up with the spending appetite of Washington, DC.

In fact, in a few years we will be spending more on finance charges than the entire defense budget. It is like a family running up the credit card and then looking for more credit cards. But, unfortunately, it is now commonplace to pass bills that spend \$1 trillion when our citizens are saying: Please stop. Unfortunately, the spending has not stopped.

I will oppose this bill, and I will do all I can to advocate that my colleagues do the same. Government spends too much. We need to keep more at home with the people.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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