

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Nineteen minutes.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank the Chair.

DEFICIT REDUCTION

Mr. DURBIN. Let me thank my colleague from New York for his statement about the challenges we face. I have been involved for over 1½ years in deficit reduction talks on a bipartisan basis with the Bowles-Simpson Commission, the Gang of 6, now the Gang of 38—I believe was the last number of Democratic and Republican Senators who have publicly stated they are willing to move forward in a process based on the principles of the Bowles-Simpson Commission.

At a time when most Americans have given up hope that Congress will ever work on a bipartisan basis to solve our problems, I hope our effort will be viewed as positive and helpful to the supercommittee's work. We are doing everything we can to make sure they are successful and they have a very difficult assignment and a difficult timetable.

In the meantime, though, I understand, as the Senator from New York, my colleague who spoke earlier, that if we are serious about deficit reduction, it not only must involve cuts in spending, but it also must involve revenue and a serious look at the future of entitlement programs.

Currently, Social Security untouched will pay every promised benefit for the next 25 years with a cost-of-living adjustment; then it runs into trouble—a 22 percent cut in benefits, if we don't do something. The same cannot be said for Medicare. As strong as it is, as important as it is, it has about 12 years of solvency before we have to do something significant. Medicaid, which is a very critical health insurance program for millions of Americans, is threatened by State revenue declines and all the problems we have in Washington with our own deficit.

So these three entitlement programs need to be viewed in an honest context to keep them strong, to protect the basic benefit structure that underlies each of these bills and laws, and we need to do that as well. We need to put it all on the table. It is spending cuts. It is revenue. It is entitlement reform. It all has to come together. When the President says the wealthiest among us should be willing to help us through this crisis by sharing part of the burden, that is not unreasonable.

I have yet to hear the Republican plan for getting this economy moving forward. It appears they have no plan and are dedicated only to protecting those with the highest incomes in America. That is not a recipe for success. It may be somebody's ideas of a campaign platform, but it isn't a platform to build the economy.

I also heard this morning when the Republican leader came to the floor, Senator McCONNELL, and talked about the need to pass trade agreements. I

voted for trade agreements. I believe the U.S. workers and businesses can compete in this world successfully if the rules are fair and we are given a chance with the markets, and I voted for trade agreements in the past.

The Senator from Kentucky asked for us to pass more as soon as possible, but he did say something which caught my attention:

In a moment when 14 million Americans are looking for work—

Senator McCONNELL said—

it is indefensible for the White House to demand a vote on trade adjustment assistance as a condition for action.

I couldn't believe my ears when I heard that. Trade adjustment assistance is designed to put people who have lost their job because of trade agreements back to work. So it is totally defensible, totally consistent, and an important part of economic recovery.

The Alliance for American Manufacturing released a report this morning that 2.8 million jobs have been lost or displaced in America between 2001 and 2010 due to our growing trade deficit with China—2.8 million jobs. As we speak about expanding trade adjustment assistance so those who have lost their jobs to nonfree-trade agreement countries such as India and China, we are talking about putting Americans back to work. This should not be viewed as an obstacle, a diversion or inconsistent with economic recovery.

I couldn't follow the logic of the Senate Republican leader this morning when he was talking about trade adjustment assistance being indefensible at a time of high unemployment. It is totally defensible, totally consistent with putting Americans back to work.

For the record, since 2009, trade adjustment assistance has provided assistance to 447,235 workers in America who have been displaced due to trade agreements. It helps their families with income, with health care, with opportunities for retraining and education.

THE DREAM ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, it was 10 years ago when I introduced the DREAM Act. It is an important piece of legislation for thousands of people who are living in America who are literally without status, without a country.

The DREAM Act says, if one came to the United States as a child, if they are a long-term U.S. resident, if they have good moral character, if they have graduated from high school and they are prepared to complete 2 years of college or enlist in our military, we will give them a chance to be legal in America. That is what it says.

The young people who are affected by it are many times people who have never known another country in their lives. They got up at school, as Senator MENENDEZ has said so artfully, they pledged allegiance to the only flag they

have ever known. They sing the only national anthem they have ever known. They speak English and want a future in America. Yet they have no country. Because their parents brought them to this country as children, because their parents did not file the necessary papers, they are without a country and without a future. The DREAM Act gives them a chance—a chance to excel and prove they can make this a better nation.

The Obama administration recently made an announcement that I think is not only the right thing to do but paves the way for us to give these young people a chance.

We think we have 10 million undocumented people in America, and it is very clear the Department of Homeland Security is not going to deport 10 million people—that is physically impossible—nor should we. I certainly would be opposed to that notion. But what they are trying to do is to remove those people from America who are undocumented who pose a threat to our Nation.

They have been criticized by some. The deportations under the Obama administration are even higher than the Bush administration. They have tried to go after those with criminal records and those who are not going to be a benefit to the United States, and I think that is the right approach to use. But they said recently that they were going to make it clear that those eligible for the DREAM Act, these young people, of good moral character, graduates of high school, and those who are pursuing college degrees, are not going to be their targets. They have limited resources. They are going after the people who can threaten our country, those whom we don't want in the United States. I think that was the right thing to do, and I think that was a policy consistent with keeping America strong and building for America's future. But we need to do more.

In addition to having a sensible policy when it comes to deportation, we need a sensible immigration policy, and I think it starts with the DREAM Act.

I have come to the floor many times and told the stories about the young people who would be affected by the DREAM Act. Let me tell you two stories this morning that I think are illustrative of why this is morally important and important for us as a nation to consider as quickly as possible.

This wonderful young lady whom I have met is named Mandeep Chahal. She was brought to the United States from India 14 years ago, when she was 6 years old. Today, Mandeep is 20. She is an academic all-star. She is an honors premed student at the University of California, Davis, where she is majoring in neurology, physiology, and behavior.

Mandeep has also been dedicated to public service. In high school, she helped to found an organization known as One Dollar for Life, for poverty relief around the world. She was voted

the member of her class “most likely to save the world.” At her college, Mandeep is the copresident of STAND, an antigenocide group.

Mandeep has so much to offer America. But, unfortunately, she was placed in deportation proceedings earlier this year. Mandeep and her friends responded the way many young people do today—they went to Facebook and asked for help.

The response was amazing: 20,000 people sent faxes to the Department of Homeland Security to save this young lady from deportation. On the day she was scheduled to be deported, she was granted a 1-year stay.

Her first thought was to try to prevent other people from going through what she had just experienced. So just 1 week after her deportation was suspended, she came to the U.S. Capitol, where I had an opportunity to meet her. She spoke publicly about her experience, and she called for the deportations of all DREAM Act students to be suspended.

I met her while she was here and asked her to explain to me why she wants to stay. She said: “I will send you a letter,” and she did. Here is what it said:

I have spent years in the United States, and consider it my only home. My family, friends, and future are in the United States, which is where I belong. My dream is to become a pediatrician so I can treat the most helpless and innocent among us. I hope to serve families in low income communities who are otherwise unable to afford medical care. I wish to remain in the United States so that I can continue to make a positive difference and give back to the community that has given me so much.

Would America be better off if we deported Mandeep Chahal back to India? I don't think so. She left that country when she was 6 years old. In her heart, she is an American. She just wants a chance to prove it and to make this a better nation.

Let me introduce to you one other person whom I have also met, another wonderful story.

Fannie Martinez, brought to the United States from Mexico 9 years ago when she was 13. She lives in Addison, in the State of Illinois, a straight A student in high school. Earlier this year, she graduated summa cum laude at Dominican University in River Forest, IL, with a major in sociology. This month she is beginning to work on a master's degree at the University of Chicago's Harris School of Public Policy.

Keep in mind, these students who are excelling get no help—none—from the Federal Government. If we think college is a burden now for those who borrow the money or are given grants, most of these students have to earn the money if they are going to go through school.

Let me tell you something else about Fannie Martinez. She is married to David Martinez, who has served in the U.S. Army Reserves for the last 8 years. Here is a picture of the two of

them together. David is currently deployed to Afghanistan, putting his life on the line for our country. Yet his worry is not just the enemy in Afghanistan. His worry is that his wife Fannie is going to be deported while he is serving overseas.

Fannie sent me a letter, and here is what she said about her situation:

My husband is constantly worried about my status in this country. He knows that I am always at risk of being placed in deportation proceedings and he is afraid of not having his wife with him once he returns from Afghanistan. The passage of the DREAM Act will give me the confidence to live without fear and frustration. It will allow me and my husband to plan our future without having to deal with the possibility of my deportation and my lack of opportunities. I care about my community—

Fannie wrote—

and I know I can help improve society if I am allowed to live in the U.S. and am given lawful permanent residence.

David Martinez, her husband, is willing to give his life for our country. We should give him and his wife Fannie a chance to pursue their dreams—the American dream.

I don't know that I have ever dealt with an issue that has meant so much to me personally because there isn't a place I go in America—anywhere—that I don't have some young person come up and look me in the eye and say: I am a DREAMer. I am counting on you.

They are counting not just on me, but they are counting on the Senate, they are counting on the Congress, they are counting on our government and our Nation to step forward and realize this is the morally right thing to do and that these dynamic, wonderful young people will make this a better nation.

I urge my colleagues, please, put partisanship aside, support the DREAM Act. It is the right thing to do for the future of our Nation.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Madam President, it is my understanding the majority still has a few minutes left in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Four minutes.

Mr. REID. I yield that back.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The time is yielded back.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXTENDING THE GENERALIZED SYSTEM OF PREFERENCES

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the motion to proceed to H.R. 2832 is agreed to, and the clerk will report the measure.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2832) to extend the Generalized System of Preferences, and for other purposes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 633

Mr. REID. On behalf of Senators CASEY, BROWN of Ohio, and BAUCUS, I call up amendment No. 633.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID], for Mr. CASEY, Mr. BROWN of Ohio, and Mr. BAUCUS, proposes an amendment numbered 633.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under “Text of Amendments.”)

Mr. REID. Before noting the absence of a quorum, it is my understanding the Republican leader is on his way to the floor to offer an amendment, and I think everyone should understand there will be no business conducted until he shows up.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

AMENDMENT NO. 626 TO AMENDMENT NO. 633

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I call up my amendment No. 626, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. McCONNELL], for himself, Mr. HATCH, Mr. JOHANNES, Mr. COATS, Mr. LUGAR, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. THUNE, Mr. ENZI, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. HOEVEN, and Mr. CORNYN, proposes an amendment numbered 626 to amendment No. 633.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To provide trade promotion authority for the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement and for other trade agreements)

At the end, add the following: