

course, recognizing the remarkable courage and honor displayed by the men and women of law enforcement.

I wish to thank my colleagues for their support of this resolution, which I know will mean a lot to Officer Francom's family, his fellow officers, and their community.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

WEATHER IN ALASKA

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I rise to spend a few minutes on the Senate floor to talk about home—about Alaska. We have a tendency sometimes up north to do things in a big way, a bold way. We tend to brag a little bit about it. That is all OK. But we have been in the center of the news cycle for a few weeks this winter, at the onset of this year, because of our weather which has been big and bold.

As a consequence of some of the extremes that we are seeing up north, I think it has brought out the best of Alaskans and certainly the warmth that comes from a northern climate. I think the occupant of the chair sees that in her State where she has some conditions with snow and cold.

The neighbor-to-neighbor response that comes about when we are dealing with Mother Nature at her finest or at her most extreme, I think, is something that helps define us as a people.

Today, I wish to speak for a few moments to recognize the very extraordinary efforts we have seen recently of the U.S. Coast Guard and the Alaska National Guard in helping the residents of several of our communities since early this year.

Earlier on the Senate floor, my colleague, the junior Senator from Alaska, mentioned some of the events that have happened. He, too, acknowledged the hard work and very significant efforts of our Coast Guard and the Alaska National Guard. I think it is important to make sure we all take the time to tell the story, to share it with colleagues and with people around the country.

In many parts of the United States right now there are some areas that are just begging for snow. I have sons out in Colorado, and they are waiting. I know on the east coast many of us would prefer a little bit more snow. Sometimes it is one of those "be careful what you ask for" situations, or we may be like the town of Valdez and have 27 feet of snow in our community. That is a little bit more than I think most of us would ask for or hope for.

The community of Nome has been in the news for months now as they have felt the brunt of some early winter

storms, storms that have forced them as a community in the northwest region of the State to feel the pinch of Mother Nature in a very extreme way. Nome is a community of about 3,500 residents. It sits up on the west coast of Alaska. Most people in this country recall Nome from the early days of the Gold Rush. But more recently, Nome comes into the national news every March when the famous Iditarod dog sled race is run which finishes in Nome. It is a 1,100-mile race where man and animal are pitched against Mother Nature in a pretty intense way.

Nome makes it in the headlines for several different reasons. This year adds yet another reason that Nome is in the history books, where people are talking about this incredible part of the State. Alaska is known for our tough winters and, again, I started my comments by saying we kind of like the fact that we are tougher than the rest of the world, and we brag about it. This winter, though, has been particularly harsh.

We have seen record cold. We have seen snowstorms hit the State earlier than usual. I was up in the State last week, places such as Bethel where it normally averages about zero this time of year, and we are looking at 20 below for extended periods of time, not just a day or two. In southeastern Alaska not only have they been hit with below zero temperatures, but massive amounts of snow are hitting them as well.

Nome is, again, a coastal community. When they receive their annual fuel supplies, they basically fuel up for the winter. The only way to get to Nome is to fly in or to go by water. So in order to get the fuel tanks filled up for the winter, the annual fuel barges come in early fall before they have ice conditions out in the Bering Sea.

This year, if you will recall, back in October, everybody was watching the news because of the massive storms that were pounding western Alaska. Back in Washington, DC, every evening on the news we could see these major storms coming through. If we were here or down in Florida, they would have called them hurricane force winds. For us, it was a winter storm—a tough one.

What happened with that storm is that it prevented the fuel barge from reaching Nome, so the shipment of fuel that they would receive for the winter is not able to come in.

One might think, well, fuel up the community another way. Again, there are no roads. What is the other way? The other way is aircraft. So one would have to fly in barrels of fuel, driving the cost of fuel up, and, quite honestly, adding to the risk of transport. So it is an issue where fuel delivery by air, while it is possible, is not the preferable way. They are in a situation where they have not only a community of 3,500 but all of the surrounding villages in the region relying on Nome for their backup. So they are at risk too.

Without the fuel tanks being filled, what the community and region were looking at was a situation whereby about March—sometime in March, depending on how harsh the winter was—they were going to run out of fuel.

Well, if the January temperatures are any indication—on average, it is usually about 2 degrees, but it has been 20 below and colder recently. That means people go through fuel pretty darn quick. Then what do they do? They are stuck until spring. You say: Well, isn't April or March spring? Not in Northwest Alaska because fuel barges cannot get to port until all of the ice in the Bering Sea has melted, which doesn't happen until May or June—perhaps earlier if the ice moves.

That is the reality up north. So we have a major community and outlying villages that are looking at a very real threat to their community. Senator BEGICH showed a picture on the Senate floor of gas prices in Alaska. When I was in Nome last week, I saw firsthand the price of regular fuel at the pump was \$5.43. That is what residents of Northwestern Alaska are paying today. Diesel is a hair less than \$6. If they were having to fly in fuel for the balance of the winter, they were looking at about \$9 a gallon. This is on top of all of the other extraordinary costs they pay as a community that is reliant on air for just about everything they need.

Most of you may have seen the story in the news. Lots of people got to work to try to address the situation. I was in contact with the Coast Guard to see what they could do to help. The Coast Guard was amazing in saying: Yes, we are committed to this mission. We are going to help the people of Nome, the people of the region. So what came together was a pretty interesting story.

There is a fuel tanker, the Renda, which is home-ported over in Russia. The Renda filled up with fuel in South Korea and was going to pick up fuel in Japan. They got shut out of Japan by weather. They had to go to Unalaska, Dutch Harbor on the Aleutian Chain, to fill up. For those of us who know of the Jones Act, there is an issue there. They had to get the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, Transportation, and Energy to act to get a Jones Act waiver so the Russian fuel tanker could fill up in an Unalaska port and haul the fuel north to the people of Nome. It is a pretty interesting saga, just in describing the beginning.

This is more than a 1,000-mile nautical journey, and they were breaking ice for about half of the way. The Renda is a pretty capable ship, but she is not an icebreaker. How she got through that ice is an interesting part of the story. The Coast Guard Cutter Healy, which had been on a research mission since early May and was on her way back to Seattle to deliver the crew got a call that Nome needed help. The fine men and women of the Healy missed their Christmas, their New Year's, and headed back north to clear a path for the Renda to Nome.

Now, I think it is important to stop here and recognize that this is not the Coast Guard doing something for the people of Nome or the people of Alaska that is not part of the Coast Guard's mission. This month-long journey was the first fuel delivery through sea ice in Alaska's history, but not the first time the Coast Guard has worked to get fuel to a community. This is important.

Back in 2000, CWO Richard Glasgow testified about ice-breaking operations on the Hudson River. At that time, there were five Coast Guard cutters that performed ice-breaking duties from Sandy Hook, NJ, all the way up to Troy, NY. They were working to get heating fuel to about 4 million people in the communities along the river. Officer Glasgow testified that as a direct result of the Coast Guard's continuous ice-breaking efforts that winter, all 274 petroleum-bearing barges that started the trip up the Hudson made it through the ice.

He also noted if the Hudson had remained closed to barge traffic, it would have taken over 21,000 tank truck loads to move that petroleum, assuming that the trucks were available to make those deliveries.

So we basically had a situation on the East Coast where the Coast Guard came to the rescue. They cleared a path so that commerce could be facilitated, and these communities along the Hudson could have the fuel and the resources they needed. The Coast Guard made it happen in an efficient and environmentally responsible way—avoiding 21,000 tank truck loads of fuel on the roads.

This is not unlike the role the Coast Guard has played in Alaska. The difference with Nome is that there could not be 21,000 truck loads of petroleum because there are no roads for those trucks to travel to Nome. So we did not have the option for any other means of transport to the community short of air transport.

So when we look at what the Coast Guard Cutter Healy and Captain Havlik and all the crew members did, they were following in the footsteps of many members of the Coast Guard before them in carrying out the Coast Guard's stated ice operations mission, which is to assist vessels and communities in emergency situations and facilitate essential commercial maritime activities.

The Coast Guard carried out this mission by assisting with 680 ice transits, representing the transport of over \$2 billion of cargo. Similarly, just last year, Coast Guard cutters coordinated with the Canadian Coast Guard ships to facilitate the movement of about \$2 billion worth of critical goods on the Great Lakes.

I point this out because I think it is important for people to know that in addition to all the other critical missions the Coast Guard has, one of theirs is to assist vessels and communities in emergency situations and to facilitate

essential commercial maritime activities like getting fuel—an absolute bare necessity to the people in this northwestern region at a time when temperatures are 20 below for days and days on end. It was critical to us, and the Coast Guard did a remarkable job.

Again, I wish to recognize these men and women who gave up their Christmas holiday, who gave up their New Year's holiday to assist Alaskans, and they were nothing short of remarkable. I had the opportunity to go on board the Healy when I was in Nome last week, as the Renda was beginning to lay the hose from the fuel barge to the shore. I also spoke with the men and women and they were exceptionally proud of their mission. But I said to them: You will go back home and your world will be changed because you will be able to stand and say: Yes, I was on the Healy when we broke ice to get the Renda to northwest Alaska.

Let me give an update. Renda, the tanker, was able to get close to Nome after weeks of transit made difficult by the winter conditions of the thick ice and the currents and the winds. There were days when they actually went backward. The Coast Guard Cutter Healy would break the ice, loosen it, but it was so cold and things were happening so fast, the ice would refreeze the distance between the cutter and the Renda.

In addition to some pretty tough environmental conditions, we had some language issues going on between the Coast Guard cutter and the Russian tanker. They had to translate the mission. We had some cultural differences going on. But what they were able to facilitate, again, was pretty remarkable. I am giving laudatory praise to our Coast Guard, but I think it is also important to recognize the good work the crew of the Renda did in assisting as well.

Using NOAA's satellites to determine where the best mapping could be, where to cut through that, they were able to break through and get within about a half mile of the shore of Nome. It was close enough so that when I got off the Healy, I was able to take a snow machine to shore. It was about a 3-minute snow machine ride. That is how close they were able to get in safely to the shore. The Renda laid hose across the ice to connect to the tankers onshore.

It was about a 6-day process to transfer the fuel to the community, but the parties involved did it safely, without any incident whatsoever. They were able to then close that operation and, last Friday, they took off from Nome to go back—the Renda to Russia and the Coast Guard Cutter Healy to Seattle.

I asked for a progress report just this afternoon. And as of today, the Healy and the Renda were approximately 240 nautical miles southwest of Nome, 275 nautical miles from the ice edge. So they still have a long way to go getting through the ice.

One might ask the question: Why don't they just go back the way they came in? Because, obviously, they cut the trail. But it doesn't work that way. It is cold up there. In fact, they are continuing to rely on the NOAA satellites to help them map out a perhaps more efficient way, but it has been tough. They have very challenging ice conditions and very steady strong winds. The weather is giving them winds in excess of 25 to 30 knots. Hopefully, they are going to be diminishing to 15 knots on Friday. But they are working with NOAA and other folks to find the safest, the most expedient route out of the ice. But the ice forecast continues to see ice edge expanding to the south. So all the progress they are making going south, the ice is just coming at them in the other direction.

So it is challenging, but, again, these are extraordinary professionals across agencies. I have mentioned NOAA, and I mentioned what we needed to do in order to facilitate the Jones Act waiver through the Departments of Energy, Homeland Security, Transportation, and Defense, but we also had the State Department involved, we had the EPA involved, and the native corporation Sitnasuak to put this whole thing together. We had incredible local leadership coming out of the community of Nome. We had the University of Alaska researchers who helped with the UAVs to determine, again, how we best lay everything from the tanker in the safest place across the ice. An incredible act of collaboration.

I see my friend from Illinois is on the floor, and I know I have gone over my time, but I have about 3 more minutes to wrap up if that works for my colleague. Senator DURBIN comes from a State that appreciates snow, and so I think my colleague would like to hear the rest of my story because I am not done acknowledging the fine men and women of the Alaska National Guard who played a role in helping to dig out the community of Cordova after record snowfall.

We have had some pretty tough snows. Cordova is a coastal community in south central Alaska, and they got hammered. They got about 176 inches of snow. Last week, when we checked in, they had 16 feet of snow on the ground, which is pretty unusual. Not quite Valdez's record, which is sitting at 27 feet right now, but it was enough that roofs were caving in and there were public safety concerns. What the community did was come together, as small communities do, to try to shovel out, and 50 or 60 Alaska National Guardsmen were there to help. The Coast Guard was there too helping to shovel—it was quite a lovely community story.

Again, it is one of those stories that reminds us that whether Mother Nature hits us with winds and storms and cold in the north, or hurricanes in the south, we come together as a people. We come together as communities to

help, and sometimes we have some real heroes that emerge. Some of those heroes for us in Alaska these past few weeks have been our U.S. Coast Guard and our Alaska National Guardsmen and women.

As I started my comments, I said we do things bigger in Alaska, perhaps a little bolder. There is a new movie coming out that you may have heard about. It is called "Big Miracle." It is about the rescue of the whales back in the late 1980s. Some of you may remember the whales were trapped in the ice off Point Barrow. It is a wonderful story about how we, as Alaskans, came together with the Russians, state and federal agencies, environmental and other groups that would normally not be allies, and regular folks for a common purpose. That movie, "Big Miracle," reminded me that in Alaska we have a few more big miracles we can brag about, and they begin with people who truly make the health, safety, and well-being of others their top priority, even when they do not know any of those people.

I know the people of Nome and Cordova and the people of Valdez all give thanks to those who stepped up during these tough winter months to help us out and were there at our side. I thank the Chair for the extra time, and I thank my colleague from Illinois for his patience and again extend my heartfelt thanks to our U.S. Coast Guard men and women, as well as the fine men and women of the Alaska National Guard.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MANCHIN). The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I wish to thank my colleague from Alaska and tell her that this week on National Public Radio there was a feature about Cordova and all the snow they have had to deal with there. I am sure this is perhaps commonplace in her great State, but as we listened to it from Chicago, we felt blessed we haven't been hit too hard yet this winter. But our hearts go out to the men and women in the Coast Guard and the National Guard in Alaska and the people who are struggling in Alaska's communities to survive these natural disasters.

THE DREAM ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, each of us takes on an agenda in Congress, things that are important to us personally, and sometimes one or two of those issues become very personal and very important to us. The one that has become very personal to me relates to the DREAM Act.

The DREAM Act is a bill I introduced 10 years ago—10 years ago. To serve in the Senate, one has to be a patient person because nothing happens quickly. But 10 years is long enough, and I am urging my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to take a close look at this legislation today.

First, let me explain what it is all about. It is a bill that would allow students to literally earn their legal status in America. These are students who came to the United States as children. They have been here for a long period of time. They have good moral character. They must graduate from high school, speak English and complete at least 2 years of service to our country in the military or at least 2 years of college, and that can include vocational training, which I think can be equally valuable to many young people. And I have talked to the Presiding Officer about this. I certainly believe that should be part of this conversation.

The DREAM Act would make us a better and stronger country. These young people are waiting for the opportunity to contribute to America. I have come to the floor dozens of times now to tell their stories. There was a time when they were afraid to speak out and to identify themselves. But thank God that has changed. They now speak out because they understand when people see who they are, what they have done, and what their dreams are, they can appreciate the fact these are good young people who, when given a chance, will make us a safer and stronger nation.

That is why this proposal has been supported by the Department of Defense. They want these young people—these high school graduates of good character—to come into our military and make it better. Of course, many others see this as a valuable addition to our economy—tomorrow's engineers and scientists and teachers and doctors and lawyers and entrepreneurs. These young people can make America a better place.

I contacted the Obama administration last year, along with 21 of my colleagues, and asked that they take a look at these young people when it comes to deportation. Understand we estimate there are 11 million undocumented people in America. There are some who just say: Oh, send them all back.

That is not even in the realm of reality. So I have asked the Obama administration, along with 20 of my colleagues, to focus on those who are any danger to the United States and send them back—deport them. In fact, the Obama administration has done just that. I have asked them as well, since we have limited resources, to please try to identify those who might fall into the qualification of the DREAM Act and do not deport them.

There are some who argue: Oh, wait a minute. They should all go. But we know we have limited resources for enforcement. If a person is a State trooper, parked on the side of a highway in Illinois or West Virginia, with a speed limit of 55 miles an hour, and one car comes by at 65 miles an hour and the next one comes hurtling by at 110 miles an hour and they can go after only one car, which one will they go after? We

know the answer. They go after the car that is traveling so fast it is a danger to its occupants and everyone else. The same is true when it comes to questions of deportation. Use good sound prosecutorial judgment, with limited resources, to deport only those people who could be a threat or a danger to these United States. That is the first priority.

Earlier today, Senator GRASSLEY, who is the ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, came to the Senate floor and claimed that the Obama administration is using this discretionary authority to implement the DREAM Act because it failed to pass Congress. I respectfully disagree with my friend from Iowa.

The DREAM Act would give these young people the chance to earn legal status. That is not the case when it comes to deportation. Even if they are not deported, they are still not in a legal or permanent legal situation in the United States. Their future is still in doubt and in question. So there is no parallel as far as that is concerned.

I have come to the floor many times to introduce those who follow this debate to these young people to get to know who they are and why I think this cause is important and their lives are important to us. Let me introduce today two of them.

This is Alaa Mukahhal. Alaa is of Palestinian descent, was brought to the United States by her parents 19 years ago when she was 7 years old. She is 26, and she grew up in the suburbs of Chicago, my home State. She was an honor student in high school and graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign—a great university—with a bachelor's degree in architecture. She sent me a letter, and here is what she said:

Being undocumented and with no pathway to the citizenship means I actually can't use my architectural degree. It means I can't get a job and move forward with my life. This year, once again, we wait for Congress to do the right thing and give undocumented young people all across America a chance to better serve our communities and our country. I am an asset to this country, a resource, with a desire to make good use of my degree. I want to be able to work and design affordable housing for low-income communities.

In the finest American tradition, Alaa has become an activist. She has stepped out to introduce herself to America so we know who these DREAM Act students are and what they could mean to the future of our Nation.

Let me also introduce to you this lovely young lady, Maria Luna. Maria has a heartbreaking but inspiring story.

Her mother lives in the United States. But just before she was to be born in the United States, her mother fled the country and gave birth to her on the Mexican side of the border. Maria's mother abandoned her in Mexico at that point—left her when she was only 3 days old. Luckily, her