

I conclude by urging the administration to set a real cost savings target with a number and a date, and then let's get to work to give the American families the health care system they deserve. Instead of waste and inefficiency and being a disgraceful outlier from all the rest of the world on quality and cost, let's make for America the health care system that is the envy of the world. That should be our goal and that could be our destiny.

I thank the Presiding Officer, and I yield the floor.

I express my appreciation to the distinguished Senator from Alabama for his patience during my remarks.

The ACTING PRESIDENT *pro tempore*. The Senator from Alabama.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I know there is a group of Senators who announced today that they have ideas, a plan, an outline, and a framework for a new comprehensive immigration bill. Indeed, the fact that our current immigration system is not working effectively and is failing on a daily basis cannot be denied. It certainly needs to be fixed. It is a challenge for us to do so and it will not be easy. I want to warn my colleagues that a framework is not a bill.

In 2006 and 2007, with the full support of the Republican President of the United States, a bipartisan group announced with great confidence that they had a plan that was going to fix our immigration system and we were all going to just line up and vote for it. The masters of the universe had decided, met in secret, had all the special interest groups gathered and worked out a plan that was going to change our immigration system for the better, and we should all be most grateful.

It came up in 2006, and it did not pass. It came back again in 2007 with even more emphasis, and it failed colossally. It failed because it did not do what they said it would do. It did not end the illegality, it did not set forth a proper principle of immigration for America, and it did not sufficiently alter the nature of our immigration system to advance the national interest of the United States. It did not, and that is why it didn't pass. They had all the powerful forces, including the TV and newspaper guys, the Wall Street guys, the agriculture guys, the civil rights group, La Raza, and the politicians. But the American people said no. It was a challenge, and there was a long debate, but it didn't pass. I thought the lesson learned from that was there needs to be a demonstration that the law is being enforced, end the illegality, and then we can wrestle with how to compassionately treat people who have been in America a long time. I thought that was kind of what we had decided.

Now my colleagues say: Don't worry, this is going to be a better piece of legislation that can work for us. I hope

that is true. We do need to fix the immigration system. There are things we can do on a bipartisan, nonpartisan basis which would make our country's immigration policy better and more effective, and I hope that is what will result from this.

But no one should expect that Members of the Senate are just going to rubberstamp what a group of Members have decided. We are not going to just rubberstamp what the President of the United States has just decided because we need to analyze it. Each one of us, every Member of this Senate has a responsibility, a firm duty to evaluate this proposal to ensure that it enhances our ability as a nation to do the right thing.

We are a nation of immigrants, and we are going to continue to be a nation of immigrants. We admit over 1 million people into our country every single year legally. But now we are told that after 1986, when they had that immigration bill, that amnesty bill, that we have allowed 11 million more people, give or take a few million, into the country illegally. They have entered the country illegally. In 1986 Congress promised the American people that if they would give amnesty to the people who were here and who entered illegally, they would stop illegal immigration in the future and we wouldn't face this challenge again. In fact, our colleagues basically said that in their piece they put out promoting the bill: We are never going to have to worry about immigration again if Members pass our legislation. That was the promise made in 1986 when the bill did pass, but it did not fulfill its promise.

So once again I think we are in a situation where the promise will be made that people will be given immediate regularized status and they won't be given full rights of citizenship until certain laws are enforced, and don't worry about it—it is all going to work out sometime off in the distant future. But questions do need to be asked, and we will ask those questions, and it will be important for us to do the right thing.

I know there are people who like low wages. I know there are people who believe that it is hard to get Americans to do certain jobs and that we can use immigrants and they will do those jobs at less pay and ask fewer questions and demand fewer benefits. I know that is out there. We have talked about that in the past. I am hoping this legislation is not designed for the special interests but designed to advance American interests.

What are some of the principles I think need to be in this system? I like Canada's system of immigration. It seems to work very well. They ask a number of questions. They give points when one applies to come into Canada, and a person gets more points for meeting the goals they have. One of the goals they have is that the potential immigrant speak the language. In Canada, they have two—French and

English. If a person speaks French or English, they get more points or maybe they don't even get in if they don't have some grasp of the language before they come in on a permanent basis. Then they give more points, more preference to people with education, skills they need in Canada.

This proposal suggests it does that. It should do that. It should be a major part of any immigration reform that focuses on trying to get people who will be most successful in America, the ones we know are going to be able to do better here.

The plan should not admit a person who is likely to be a public charge. However, that is already the current law. A person is not supposed to be admitted to America if they are likely to be a public charge; that is, they will need government aid to take care of themselves. Some people will be turned down because of this. We should take the ones who are not going to be a public charge.

We discovered in looking at the numbers recently that less than one-tenth of 1 percent of applicants that come to the United States are turned down on the basis that they might be a public charge. So, in effect, that is not being enforced. Basically, it is just not being enforced.

So how can we be sure of that? My friend Stephen Moore was on the TV today. He is at the Wall Street Journal. He said: You don't have to worry about people coming in and being a public charge. There is a law against that.

Well, Mr. Moore, there may be a law against it, but it is not being enforced. We need to know it is going to be enforced in the future.

Younger people in Canada get a priority. Pretty soon, people will be on Social Security and Medicare when they reach those ages. Shouldn't we as a rational nation look to give priority to younger people who will work a little longer and pay more into the system before they draw these benefits?

They give preferences to investors, those who create jobs and bring factories and manufacturing to their country. Those are the kinds of things I think we ought to be talking about.

This proposal makes reference to guest workers. It is a very delicate issue. Let me tell my colleagues what was in the bill in 2007 and the reason. In my mind, it was one of the greater errors in the legislation. People would come into the country for 3 years. They could bring their families. If they were still working at the place at which they came in to work, they could extend for another 3 years and then another 3 years. So I would ask, somebody who had been in the country 8, 9, 10 years, could we just easily ask them to leave? Not likely. What if they have had two children and the children are automatic citizens?

This is a very impractical system. So we need to examine how a guest worker

plan will actually be carried out. In my view, a guest worker should come without family for less than a year at a time to do seasonal—to do particular work and then return to their country. Otherwise, we create an entirely new system, and it will be very difficult to enforce.

We need to know pretty much what the Nation can rightly absorb in terms of the number of people who come each year, and as a result of that, we need to make sure any legislation has a limit that would make common sense in the world in which we live.

Finally, I would say that we face a particular hurdle this time. We faced this hurdle last time, but I believe it is even more serious this time. That is, if the chief law enforcement officer of the country—then President Bush, now President Obama—President Obama has particularly acted to undermine the ability of the law enforcement community to actually enforce existing laws—

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The time of the Senator has expired.

Mr. SESSIONS. I ask unanimous consent for an additional 2 minutes.

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

Mr. SESSIONS. The Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers have voted unanimously “no confidence” in Mr. John Morton, the Director of ICE, because of his failure to lead and his, in fact, undermining of their ability to do their jobs, and they sued him for interfering with their ability to do their jobs in enforcing the laws of this country. Actually, a federal court just recently upheld the lawsuit and allowed it to proceed. What a terrible thing it is that law enforcement officers have to sue their leadership to be able to do their jobs.

So we need to be sure we have in the President someone who is committed to enforcing the law if it is passed. If that had been so, we would be in a lot better position today.

I see my colleague from Louisiana, and I believe he is to be recognized next. He has been such a good student of this issue. He is a fabulous lawyer, editor of the *Tulane Law Review*, and he understands this, and I am really glad he could be here today.

There is one more thing I would note. In addition to the fact that we have a President less willing to enforce the law, the labor participation rate in 2007 when the last comprehensive reform bill that included amnesty was defeated was 66 percent. Today, labor participation has dropped to 63.6 percent. Unemployment in 2007, when the last proposal failed, was 4.5 percent. It is now 7.9 percent.

So I think we need to ask serious questions about any proposal, and maybe we can move forward with some legislation that would serve the national interests. Maybe we can do it on a bipartisan basis, but it is going to

take real attention to details. The details are what make the difference, and that is what I am concerned about.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 8 minutes, and I ask the Chair to alert me when 6 minutes has elapsed.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, and I will not object, but I ask unanimous consent to follow the Senator from Louisiana to speak.

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

Mr. VITTER. Thank you, Mr. President. Through the Chair, I wish to thank Senator DURBIN for his courtesy in light of another engagement I have.

I rise to join my colleague from Alabama and to join many others to express real concern on this topic of illegal immigration and the desperate need to fix this problem, to solve this problem.

I believe we all want to cherish and hold up and continue the proud tradition of this country which is founded on immigration. One of the many things that make America unique is that we are a nation of—all of us—immigrants. None of us somehow has some blood oath or blood tie to this land that goes back from time immemorial. We all came here relatively recently in the grand scheme of things from other lands, all of our families. We are a nation of immigrants and immigration, and we cherish and celebrate that.

But, of course, historically, that has been a system of legal immigration. It is so worrisome to me and so many others that over the last 30 years in particular, it has really evolved into a wide open, relatively little enforcement system of illegal immigration that flourishes and abounds and grows as our traditional legal immigration system gets less and less workable for the folks trying to follow the rules. That is my concern as I look at many of these immigration reform proposals, particularly proposals for so-called comprehensive reform such as the one outlined today.

I think the test is pretty simple: How do we uphold our tradition of immigration and fix the problem, solve the problem, and not allow it to continue or, worse yet, grow and mushroom? To me, that is the bottom line. Will any proposal we make be debated—will the proposal outlined by some of my colleagues today fix the problem or will it perpetuate the problem or, God forbid, even grow the problem dramatically?

What heightens my concern is that we have history as a guide, and history suggests that brand of so-called comprehensive immigration reform—this promise of enforcement as long as we have an amnesty—all of those things put together are a recipe for failure. Of

course, the most notable case of this was in 1986 under President Reagan. There was a so-called comprehensive immigration reform proposal passed into law. The promise, the model was very simple: We are going to get serious about enforcement—we really, really are—and we are going to have a one-time leniency or amnesty. It will fix the problem once and for all. We will never have to look back, and that will be done.

As we know from bitter experience since then, it didn't quite turn out that way. The promised enforcement never fully materialized. In fact, in my opinion, it never materialized to any significant extent. However, the leniency, the amnesty happened immediately. It happened the second that bill was signed into law.

So did it fix the problem estimated at about 3 million illegal aliens then? No. It not only perpetuated the problem, it grew the problem to 12 million-plus—some people think as high as 15 million to 20 million illegal aliens now. So it grew the problem enormously because we had promised enforcement which never adequately materialized but an amnesty which happened immediately. That is the fundamental concern. That is the deadly scenario I am concerned about with regard to virtually all of these so-called “comprehensive” solutions.

There is one thing—at least one thing—that has changed since 1986. It is this: Compared to 1986, we have a President and an administration in power which has proved time and time again that they have no will, no focus on real enforcement. Why do I say that?

Well, this is the administration that sued States attempting to enforce immigration laws and get control of the border. It did not support those States, did not try to find a Federal fix. It did one thing: sued States such as Arizona trying to deal with a flow across the border and all of the violence and crime that is an aspect of that.

This is the administration that ended the 32 287(g) local law enforcement programs that were fairly effective, at least in focused limited ways, with regard to enforcement. They scuttled that program, completely threw it out the window. This is the administration, of course, that propagated the Fast and Furious gun-walking scandal and still has not answered questions about that adequately, in my opinion.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator has consumed 6 minutes.

Mr. VITTER. Thank you, Mr. President.

This is the administration that unconstitutionally put into effect the DREAM Act by administrative fiat. Congress would not pass that. A Democratic House and a Democratic Senate failed to pass it. President Obama at the time said he did not have adequate powers to put it into law administratively, and yet when it came time to

run for election, he did it by administrative fiat, in my opinion—in many people's opinion—well beyond his legal authority.

So that is the main thing that is different from 1986. We have a President and an administration that has proved to be completely opposed to aggressive and real enforcement. So I hope, as we continue this debate with my distinguished colleague from Illinois and many others, we focus on that central question: Will this solve the problem?

In my opinion, we have seen this movie before. We have tried this so-called comprehensive approach before—this marriage of promises of enforcement with leniency or amnesty. History suggests that does not work. The enforcement never adequately shows up. The amnesty immediately does. In this proposal, although it might not be immediate citizenship, it is immediate legal protection and many benefits that flow from that.

Mr. President, I look forward to continuing this discussion.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The assistant majority leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it was July of 1911. A boat arrived in Baltimore. It came over from Germany. And among the passengers getting off that boat were a small number of people from Lithuania. They included my grandmother, my aunt, my uncle, and my mom. My mother was 2 years old in 1911, and she was brought to America along with her family as an immigrant.

I wish I had asked the questions before everyone passed on about how much anyone remembered from that experience because I have always wondered about it. I always wondered how this family who spoke no English got off that boat and got to East St. Louis, IL, which is where I grew up, and where a lot of Lithuanian immigrants went to work in the packinghouses, in the steel mills, and coal mines nearby. But that is the story of the Durbin family, at least my mother's side of it. It is not a unique story. It is a story of America.

My mother came to this country 2 years of age, with a mother who did not speak English, and today her son serves in the U.S. Senate. It is a great story about this great country. It also tells the story of how many millions such as her came to these shores looking for something that was important in their lives—first and foremost, to feed their children, to get a job. That is always the No. 1 reason.

But up in my office here, just a few steps away from the Senate floor, in a desk drawer I have one thing that was carried in the luggage by my grandmother when she came over from Lithuania. It is a prayer book. It is a Catholic prayer book. We are Roman Catholics. They were leaving Lithuania where the Russian czar had come in and said to the Roman Catholics: If you are not Russian Orthodox, you are going to have to play by different rules. And one of the rules is, you can't have any of your prayer books written

in Lithuanian. They must be written in Russian.

Well, my grandmother, whom I never knew, must have been a defiant and risk-taking woman because she had one of these contraband prayer books and brought it with her to America because she knew she could use it here without a problem because of the freedoms in this country.

That again is a little family story from my life experience, my family experience, but one that could be replicated in many different ways.

We just had a press conference upstairs, and you may see some coverage a little later on. There were five of us representing six Senators who had been sitting together and working on this immigration issue—three Democrats and three Republicans. On the Democratic side, I have been honored to join CHUCK SCHUMER of New York and BOB MENENDEZ of New Jersey. On the Republican side is JOHN MCCAIN of Arizona, LINDSEY GRAHAM of South Carolina, and MARCO RUBIO of Florida. It is a pretty interesting group, right? It is a pretty interesting political spectrum represented by these six Senators.

For the last few months, we have been sitting down and working out a statement of principles about immigration reform. And today we unveiled those principles. We have a lot of work to do. We still have to write the law, and we still have to bring it to the Senate to be debated and to be passed.

I do not assume for a minute that we are going to have the support of every Senator on both sides of the aisle. That would be too much to consider or to ask. But I know from listening to the speeches that were given by Senator SESSIONS of Alabama and Senator VITTER of Louisiana, they have many questions they want to ask about how we approach immigration reform. So let me try, if I can, to speak to some of the basics that are included in our effort.

First, when I listened to the Senator from Louisiana, he said that President Obama had done little to enforce immigration laws. I think you will find, for the record, that this President has deported more people in his tenure than predecessors, particularly those who have been associated with criminal activity. In fact, he has received some criticism saying he is going too far. So to argue that he is not enforcing the law is not supported by the facts and the statistics.

The Senator from Louisiana also said that President Obama was the author of the Fast and Furious program, which was a border effort to try to stop the flow of guns that blew up in the face of those who engineered it, and ended up in the tragic death of one of our own. I would say for the record that program began under President Bush, not under President Obama. So there are some facts that we need to put on the record. But I wish to also speak to a couple elements here that have been raised about this effort on immigration reform.

Let's get down to basics. Immigration is part of who we are in America. It is the reason we are such a diverse Nation. My family story, as I said, could be repeated over and over. Every generation has faced a new wave of immigration coming into this country.

I think it is healthy. I think there is something in the DNA of those people who get up and come here who are determined to improve their lives. These people turn out to be the entrepreneurs and the teachers and the leaders of our Nation because they were not content staying in someplace where they did not achieve their goals. They wanted to come to America.

So immigration is part of who we are, and the debate over immigration is part of who we are. It has been going on forever. I think as soon as the first boat to America landed with immigrants, they started questioning whether we needed another boatload of immigrants. That debate has gone on throughout our history. There have been some terrible things done in the name of immigration reform and some good things as well.

Secondly, immigration and the demand for immigration says a great deal about America. People want to come here. It says a lot about it, doesn't it? Here we are in a democracy with the freedoms we enjoy and an economy that offers such wonderful opportunities, and people from all over the world, given a choice, would come here for their future. That is a positive.

But the third thing is, our immigration system is broken. I got elected about 16 years ago to the Senate. One of the first phone calls came from Senator Ted Kennedy, chair of the Immigration Subcommittee in the Judiciary. He said: Welcome to the Judiciary Committee. Please come on my Immigration Subcommittee. I said: Well, thank you. I am honored you would ask. He said: We are about to rewrite the immigration laws. We have not done it for 10 years. The last time was under President Reagan. Now we are going to do it again, and we need you to be part of it.

Oh, I signed up in a hurry. It did not happen and 16 years have passed.

So for 25 years-plus, we have not looked at this immigration law. It is broken. It is broken badly. It is broken when we have 11 or 12 million people living here who are undocumented. Many of them came here on a legal visa and overstayed their visa. Some did sneak across the border to come into the United States. There are a variety of explanations, but they are here. I have come to know them. For many people who are not in this business, maybe you do not know them. But I will tell you they are.

They happen to be the person who just took the plates off your table at the restaurant. They are the ones who are unloading the food at the dock behind the restaurant. They will be making the beds in the hotel rooms across America tonight. A lot of them are in

the day-care centers every day with our children and grandchildren, whom we dearly love. Some are tending to our parents and grandparents who are in nursing homes. And some of them have sat down next to you in church on a regular basis. They are undocumented. They do not talk about it. They do not wear it on their sleeves. Many of them are afraid to say anything. And they do not live in a house full of undocumented people. By and large, you are going to find families split up. You may find dad, who has been here the longest, who qualified under the Reagan amnesty in 1986. He is a legal citizen. Mom is not. All three children born here are. There is a family that is literally split by our immigration system.

That is the reality of what we see in America today. The question is, how did we reach this point? What can we do about it? We now are sitting down on a bipartisan basis to address it.

First, we need to make sure we are doing everything we reasonably can do at the border to keep illegal immigration down, to reduce it as low as possible. I know, as I said earlier, there are people from all over the world who want to come here.

But for those who suggest we are not doing enough at the border, I wish to call their attention to a recent press release from the Migration Policy Institute. This press release is from January 7 of this year. It says: "The U.S. government spends more on federal immigration enforcement than on all other principal federal criminal law enforcement agencies combined, with the nearly \$18 billion spent in fiscal 2012 approximately 24 percent higher than collective spending for the FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, Secret Service, U.S. Marshals Service and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. . . ."

So to argue that this President is not enforcing the law, when we have so many deportations, and to argue that he is not taking it seriously, when we are spending record-breaking amounts on the borders is not backed up by the facts. But still we need to make sure we are doing everything we can to keep the borders safe and to reduce illegal immigration. That is the first thing.

The second thing is to say that those who are here, if they want to be legal, have to earn their way to legal status. How do they earn it? First they go through a criminal background check. We do not want anyone here who is a threat to our Nation or to the people who live here. They will be asked to leave. In fact, they will be forced to leave.

But for those who pass the criminal background check, they will need to pay a fine, they have to pay their taxes, and then they can stay and work in a probationary legal status while we make the borders safe. Ultimately, they have to be able to speak English, learn our history and civics, and then go through a lengthy process before

they are granted—even possibly granted—citizenship.

We also say at the same time that we are going to build into this system enforcement for the workplace. What brings most people to America? Jobs. It is all about a job. If in the workplace we have real enforcement, where we have an identification card from those who are seeking a job, and an obligation on the part of the employer to make sure they are registered in this country, then we can start to have a system of enforceability.

We also need—and Senator RUBIO of Florida has been pushing this—we also need to make sure that when it comes to visas in the United States, when we allow people to travel here to be tourists or students or for business purposes, and they have an expiring visa, they leave when they are supposed to. Our system now is not as good as it should be. We want to strengthen that system. That is part of what we need to do.

I think immigration reform is long overdue. This immigration system we have is badly broken and needs to be fixed.

We need to take the leadership in Washington. This bipartisan group of Senators has started an effort in that direction. We have a long way to go. We have to write the bill. We hope to have it done by March. We hope to bring it through the committee process for regular hearings, for the amendment process and everything that entails. That, to me, will make sense in the long run. In the meantime, I want to say a word about the DREAM Act.

I introduced that bill 12 years ago. It was referred to on the Senate floor. It is worth a minute or two to recount why I introduced the bill.

We received a phone call in our office from a program in Chicago known as the Merit Music Program. It is a wonderful program. A lady left some money for it and said to use the money to buy musical instruments for kids in poor schools and to give them music lessons.

What an amazing transformation it has created in their lives. One hundred percent of the graduates of the Merit Music Program go to college, all of them. It is an amazing thing what a musical experience will do for a young person.

Well, there was a young Korean girl named Tereza Lee who came from an extremely poor family. She became part of the Merit Music Program and turned out to be an accomplished pianist. She was encouraged to apply to go to Julliard School of Music and Manhattan Conservatory of Music she was so good.

As she started to fill out the application, she stopped and turned to the person at the program and said: I don't know why I am doing this. I am undocumented. I have never told anybody that. But I do not know why I am wasting my time with this—at which point they called our office and said: What can we do for Tereza?

Well, it turned out the law was very clear. She had to leave the United States for 10 years, go back to Brazil, which was the last country she was in, and then apply to come to the United States. That seemed unfair. She was brought here when she was 2 years old. She did not vote on that. Her parents picked her up and brought her here.

I started thinking: I bet there are others just like her. It turns out there are—hundreds of thousands. So I introduced the DREAM Act.

Here is what it said: If you were brought to the United States before the age of 16, you finish high school, you have no serious criminal issues, and you are prepared to either enlist in our military or finish at least 2 years of college, we will give you a chance to become a citizen. I introduced it 12 years ago.

I have called it up on the Senate floor over and over. The Senator from Louisiana is correct; the Senate did not pass it. We could not get 60 votes to break the Republican filibuster on the DREAM Act. We had a majority, we just did not have 60. That was several years ago.

So President Barrack Obama, who was my colleague in the Senate before he was elected President and was a co-sponsor of the DREAM Act, said: I am going to suspend the deportation of those young people who would be eligible under the DREAM Act. He did. It went into effect last August.

Congressman LUIS GUTIERREZ of Chicago is a great leader on immigration reform. He and I held a workshop in August at Navy Pier, which is a big gathering place in Chicago, for those who would be eligible for this deferral of deportation under the DREAM Act. We never dreamed they would start lining up at midnight the night before. They would stay out there all night long with their families waiting for a chance to sign up. It was such a heartwarming experience to know how much this meant not only to the young persons but many times to their undocumented parents who thought: At least my child will get this chance.

So some criticized the President for making this decision. But two-thirds of the American people, Democrats and Republicans alike, think it was the right decision. I do too. I have met those Dreamers. I have talked about them on the floor of the Senate over and over. I will continue. But these young people will make this a better country. They deserve a chance to do just that.

So those who are critical of the DREAM Act are basically saying these young people are not needed in this country. I think they are. They have spent their whole life being educated here. They have gotten up every morning and in school put their hands on their hearts and pledged allegiance to that great flag, believing this is their country too. They deserve a chance to make it such.

MARCO RUBIO of Florida and I have worked on this DREAM Act issue. He

said something I remember and would like to recount. He said: This is not an immigration issue; this is an issue of compassion, humanitarianism. These people were kids when they were brought here. They deserve this chance. So I know this will be included in any immigration reform. I certainly hope we will pass it and pass it soon.

We spoke to the President last night. Senator SCHUMER and I had a conversation with him. Tomorrow he will be making a statement in Nevada about immigration. He is committed to immigration reform. He is committed to fixing this system. He told us what we are setting out to do is generally consistent with what he wants to see done. But he did tell us: Get it done. Do not let this drag out again. Seize the moment and move forward with it.

Well, we have that chance. We have to do it. We have to do it because this Nation of immigrants, this Nation that will still attract immigrants, needs a legal system that works for those who are here and for those who want to come here. We have to make sure we are sensitive to the fact that Americans should receive the first preference for jobs, and that will be included in our bill, but also beyond that jobs that some Americans do not want. In agriculture, for example, and in other areas, we need some people coming in to help. They can be part of this immigration reform as well.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The clerk will call the roll. The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll:

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

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

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, I want to speak on one of the topics of the day. A group of bipartisan Senators has had a press conference today announcing their support for a comprehensive immigration reform piece of legislation. This is a significant step. Perhaps the biggest step was—on the way to immigration reform—the result of the November 6 election. As a matter of fact, it has been chronicled in all of the newspapers that the Hispanic community in every State voted overwhelmingly for the candidate that was perceived to be fair on the immigration issue.

I think that has propelled political motivation to address this issue and to address it fairly. I want to commend that bipartisan group of Senators for doing this. There are a number of key elements that as we get into the specifics of the legislation are going to be important. Notice they want to lay everything on the predicate that there is going to be the essence of a real border security effort done.

It is hard to patrol a border of thousands and thousands of miles like we have, particularly where there is no

geographical barrier and people can merely walk across the border. But it has to be done in the context of overall immigration reform. Another interesting part that has been very thorny in the business community is the fact of verification by employers.

When this Senator was a young congressman and voting on immigration back in the 1980s, as a matter of fact there was supposed to be verification by employers of those they were hiring that they were here in a documented status. Well, that never happened. As a result, you see all of these head fakes in implementing the law about whether somebody was here in a documented status. Then when they were found not to be, everybody was pointing like this: Well, it is the other guy's fault.

There has to be a verification system put in place. Some have suggested electronic verification. That needs to be explored. They are going to have to be a lot of new things being explored in order to make sure, if we are going to have comprehensive immigration reform, those who are being employed here, in fact, are in a documented status. But the big question in the past politically has been, What about the 11 million who are estimated to be in this country working and in an undocumented status?

I think the principles laid out by the group earlier today are very good: They must play by the rules; they must not have a criminal record; they must pay back taxes; They must pay a fine; and then go to the end of the line. Even though they would be allowed a legal status to stay here and to continue working—and that is another one of the elements—they must have a job and demonstrate they have had a job in the past. It would not be fair for all of them to suddenly get at the head of the line when others have been waiting patiently in the legal process to get a green card. Thus, we would not have this economic upheaval as some here have approached this issue in the past year.

We have not heard a lot about this since the election, but previous to that we heard a lot about, for example, sending them all home, self-deportation, deporting all of the illegals. Well, first of all, there would be an economic collapse of part of the economy of this country if we suddenly eliminated all of those workers upon whom the economy certainly is dependent. It, also, in many cases would not be fair.

There is another part of this that needs to be added. This is the fairness question for the children who came here through no fault of their own. They have grown up thinking they are only an American, and then the current law is they have to be deported. Well, this Senator has intervened in a number of cases for children who wanted to go into the military after high school, wanted to go on to college. They were at the point of being deported.

As a matter of fact, we had a Bahamian child who came when he was 6

months old. He only knew he was American. He served two tours in Iraq in the U.S. Army, came back, went into the Navy Reserve, had a top secret clearance and was a photographer for the Navy at Guantanamo prison. When he came back, the authorities put him in jail—a veteran, someone who was still Active-Duty U.S. Navy Reserve.

A U.S. Federal judge of Cuban-American descent made a very harsh statement in Miami toward the prosecutors for them putting a child, now an adult, now a veteran, having served both the Army and the Navy, with a top secret clearance, putting that Bahamian, now adult, in jail.

This is how ridiculous the system has gotten. This Senator had to intervene in this case, and once we raised enough Cain, finally people came to their senses and said: What is the common-sense thing to do?

The commonsense thing now for us to do is all to pass a comprehensive immigration reform law and, hopefully, that is going to occur.

The question is, though, what is going to happen at the other end of the hall, down there in the House of Representatives? Because there are a lot of people in the other party down there who haven't changed their attitude since the election. They still are expressing that they don't want anything but deportation. I think we are just going to have to use common sense and moderation and try to explain why this is the fair thing to do.

As a young Congressman, I favored this comprehensive approach decades ago. I voted for it as a Senator. I will gladly, once they knit together the legislation, be one of the cosponsors of this legislation.

I wish to thank the bipartisan group of Senators who got together, which includes my colleague from Florida, Mr. RUBIO, for their willingness to take the initiative and to start plowing new ground of legislation that ought to be able to be passed this year.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MAKING SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2013

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 152, which the clerk will report by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 152) making supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2013, to improve and streamline disaster assistance.