

way she can break the cycle of poverty. She met with counselors at Granite State College and developed an educational plan. Although she is being careful in borrowing, the debt she is going to graduate with is more than she has ever earned in her working years in 1 year. While her education is going to prepare her for the job market, she knows the payoff isn't immediate. She will continue to struggle to make the payments on those student loans and to care for her family.

With a budget such as she is dealing with, any additional cost of those student loans is going to impact this woman and her family.

Similar to so many of us I have been moved by these students who have worked so hard to achieve their education goals and the jobs of their dreams. They recognize education is an investment and higher education is the path to middle-class success and economic opportunity.

I think higher education is one of the best investments we can make in our country. It is important not just to those young people who are getting those degrees to give them the jobs that make them prosperous in the future that they are going to be able to support families on, but it is critical for America to compete in the global economy. We should be doing everything we can to make America a magnet for jobs, to ensure our workers have the skills they need to compete, and to help Americans get ahead.

We have to do everything we can to make sure we keep higher education affordable for our young people. We must address those costs and not try to balance the costs of higher education on the backs of our students.

I am hopeful we will continue to work on how we address the student loan interest rate, that we will be able to come to some agreement on how to do that in a way that is not going to cost our young people their futures, is not going to cost America its future, and is not going to price families out of the cost of higher education.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BENNET. 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.

Mr. BENNET. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

THANKING SENATOR COWAN

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I first wish to say how wonderful it has been to serve with you in the Senate. As you take your leave to go back to the real world in Massachusetts, we all wish you well and we thank you for everything you have done while you have been here, especially the good cheer you brought to our caucus. Thank you very much.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

Mr. BENNET. In the vein of thank-yous, I wanted to come down after this historic day, passing this historic bill, to say some thank-yous. I have already thanked my colleagues in the Gang of 8 and the other Senators who worked so hard on this bill, and there will be a time to do that on another occasion.

Sometimes people have asked me during the course of my checkered career: How did you get to do this? Why did they let you do this? How did somebody with no apparent skill or aptitude for public education, for example, get to run the Denver Public Schools, one of the most cherished things I have ever done.

My answer has always been the same, which is the key is to find a bunch of people who are better at doing their job than you would ever be at doing their job. Assemble them, organize them around a project, a challenge or an obstacle and let them do their thing.

The Presiding Officer spoke eloquently about this yesterday when he thanked his personal staff and the Senate staff on his way back to Massachusetts.

I ask unanimous consent to submit the list of staff for the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

Staff Thank Yous:
 Senator McCain: Mark Delich;
 Senator Durbin: Joe Zogby, and Mara Silver;
 Senator Graham: Matt Rimkunas;
 Senator Menendez: Kerri Talbot, and Molly Groom;
 Senator Flake: Chandler Morse

Mr. BENNET. Of all the staff in the Senators' offices who worked on this bill, I will take further time tonight to mention a few names. First, I thank people on my staff, Rachel Velasquez and Stefanie Aarthun, who did amazing work, both of them, over many months on this bill and not only here. Also, we worked on the Colorado Compact in the State of Colorado. This was what enabled us to be part of this conversation.

I have thought throughout this process how important the work was that we did in Colorado in preparation for this moment, to get to this moment. It simply would have been impossible to succeed at producing what we call the Colorado Compact, composed of six principles. They were so bipartisan that when we had the press conference, the person who came to read the first of these principles was actually my Republican opponent in the 2010 Senate race, Ken Buck. I want to thank him for that and the others who were part of the compact.

I especially thank my deputy chief of staff, Sarah Hughes, who did an amazing job of pulling everybody together. She has been with me longer than anybody on my staff. Nothing I could have accomplished in the jobs I have had before and certainly not in this instance could I have done without Sarah Hughes.

The same goes for Jon Davidson, who is my chief of staff and who is a model for what a chief of staff in the Senate should be—or anywhere else, for that matter, but particularly here, where the pressures can be so extraordinary. His ability to attract an incredibly talented team of people who work on all kinds of issues, from immigration, to health care, to education, is incredibly important in the constituent service we do both here and in Colorado. Simply none of it would have happened if somehow I hadn't been lucky enough to hire Jonathan Davidson, who has been around this place, actually, as a young person, for a very long time, having been, among other things, Paul Sarbanes' chief of staff when he was the chair of the Banking Committee.

By my side both before I came to the Senate and in the Senate on this issue has been Sergio Gonzales, who has worked tirelessly. "Tirelessly" doesn't even capture it—24 hours a day, 7 days a week, it has felt like. He certainly looks that way. He won't appreciate my saying that, but it is true, and people who know Sergio will know what I am talking about. He has done an amazing job with a sense of humor and has served not just me during this but the entire Gang of 8, and we will be forever grateful.

There were many times during this process that I have thought about Sergio's grandfather and his grandmother. His grandfather, Corky Gonzales—Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales—played such an important role in Colorado's history and the history of the West, and a library was just named for him last week. I have wondered what he would think about knowing we live in a country where his grandson has helped to shepherd across the line the most important immigration reform in this country's history. So I thank Sergio Gonzales for his leadership as well.

None of this would have been possible without CHUCK SCHUMER, whom I talked about earlier. None of it would have been possible without his incredible staff: Leon Fresco, Stephanie Martz, Mike Lynch, his chief of staff—all of whom did an extraordinary job of keeping us on track and keeping Chuck on track, and I deeply appreciate that.

The others I wanted to mention while on the floor today are the staffs of the people with whom we negotiated the agriculture provisions of this bill. DIANNE FEINSTEIN did a great job leading that effort, with Chris Thompson, Neil Quinter, and Kim Alton, who all work for her. I deeply appreciate their work.

From ORRIN HATCH's office, Matt Sandgren did an excellent job all the way through.

I particularly want to say thank you to MARCO RUBIO's staff and their efforts to bring Democrats and Republicans together on this issue. This is the first time we have had an immigration bill where the agriculture provisions in the bill are endorsed by both the growers and the farm workers union. That has

never happened before. I thank all of them for doing that. We would not have accomplished that without some very late night meetings, and Enrique Gonzalez was always there along with John Baseline. He will never forgive me for that, and Enrique will never let me forget it, but they did extraordinary work on that part of the bill and other parts of the bill as well.

I thank the leader's staff—Serena Hoy—the Judiciary Committee staff, and the floor staff.

As I say, I have submitted names for the RECORD, but there are names here that are too often not mentioned on the floor of the Senate, so I want to read these names. These are the schedulers for the eight Senators who worked on this bill so hard for so many months.

The day I knew we were actually going to get this done was the day JOHN MCCAIN said in his office some months ago that unless we begin to meet three times a week, we are never going to get this done. As the Presiding Officer knows, that is an enormous commitment of time, to meet three times a week, and we did it week in and week out. Sometimes we weren't even in Washington but back home on the telephone, but we carved out the time to do it, and that could not have happened without the schedulers in our offices—from my perspective, certainly not without Kristin Mollet, who is my extraordinary scheduler. I told her at our first meeting—I don't know if I was interviewing her or she was interviewing me; it was probably a little bit of both—that the scheduler is the heart of the operation. If the schedule doesn't work, the wheels come off and nothing else works. Kristin Mollet has done an extraordinary job getting us through this process.

In no particular order, let me please say thank you to Alice James, with Senator GRAHAM; Megan Runyan, with Senator FLAKE; Rob Kelly, with Senator MENENDEZ; Claire Reuschel, with Senator DURBIN; Jessica Bonfiglio, in Senator RUBIO's office; and a very special thanks to Alex Victor, with Senator SCHUMER, and Ellen Cahill in Senator MCCAIN's office. We could not have done this without them.

In the story I told before about when I was a superintendent and working in business, not in politics—I had never run for office before when I took this job—I mentioned that the key is finding people a lot better at doing their job than you would ever be at doing their job. Well, that has never been more true than it has been in the Senate, where the quality of the work we do depends entirely on the quality of the staff we have. So I want to say thank you to all the Senate staff for their efforts.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT ANNIVERSARY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this Independence Day will mark the 47th anni-

versary of the enactment of the Freedom of Information Act, FOIA. For more than four decades, FOIA has translated our great American values of openness and accountability into practice, by guaranteeing access to government information. In so doing, this premier open government law has helped to guarantee the public's "right to know" for generations of Americans.

The anniversary of the enactment of FOIA is a timely opportunity to take stock of the progress we have made in improving transparency in government, as well as the challenges that remain when citizens seek information from the Federal Government. Today, we are witnessing an erosion of the public's trust in the institutions of government. According to a recent study by the Pew Research Center, trust in the Federal Government is at an historic low. In addition, a majority of Americans believe that the Federal Government threatens their personal rights and freedoms, according to the study.

To be sure, there are many reasons for the decline in the public's trust in the Federal Government. But more importantly, there is a time-proven cure for this troubling trend—an increase in government transparency.

To accomplish this, our Federal agencies must commit to the spirit, as well as the letter, of the President's pledge to keep the Federal Government open and accessible to the American people. While the Obama administration has made significant progress in improving the FOIA process, too many of our Federal agencies are not keeping up with the FOIA reforms that Congress enacted in the OPEN Government Act. A recent audit conducted by the National Security Archive found that more than half of all Federal agencies have not updated their Freedom of Information Act regulations to comply with this law.

Our Federal Government must also do a better job of balancing the need to protect sensitive government information with the equally important need to ensure public confidence in our national security policies. According to the Associated Press, during the past year, the Obama administration withheld more information for national security reasons in response to FOIA requests than at any other time since the President took office. Of course no one would quibble with the notion that some government information must be kept confidential. But as we have seen in the unfolding events surrounding the unauthorized disclosure of information about the NSA's secret electronic surveillance programs, excessive government secrecy can harm both the public's trust and our own national interests. That is why I have proposed and cosponsored legislation that will provide for greater openness and public reporting with regard to these broad surveillance authorities, as well as the legal opinions that interpret those statutes.

As we mark another FOIA anniversary, I join Americans from across the political spectrum in celebrating all that this law has come to symbolize about our vibrant democracy. After four decades, we have much to celebrate about this open government law. We in Congress also have much more work to do to help ensure that FOIA's values of openness and accountability remain in place for future generations of Americans.

AFRICA VISIT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise to discuss President Obama's trip to Africa that began yesterday. There is no shortage of important issues to address on the continent, from continued instability in eastern Congo, Mali, and Somalia, to autocratic government in Zimbabwe, Sudan, and the Gambia.

Yet there is also another story to tell in Africa—that of a growing and more prosperous middle class. In fact, in the past 10 years, 6 of the world's fastest growing economies were located in Sub-Saharan Africa and in the next decade, 7 of the top 10 will also be in Africa. A growing middle class is important not only for political stability and economic well-being, but also for American businesses that export—or want to export—to Africa.

It is an issue I have been trying to draw attention to for some time and one I am glad that the President has on his trip agenda, including by having U.S. Export Import Bank President Fred Hochberg along on his trip.

You see, every time I visit Africa I am struck by the presence of China—Chinese companies, Chinese products, Chinese workers, Chinese roads and bridges. It is not a coincidence.

China has a ravenous appetite for natural resources and also sees the great potential to sell Chinese goods to the burgeoning African market. And China has a strategy. It is aggressively investing resources and energy on the continent. It is offering low interest loans that cannot be refused.

I can remember a meeting a few years ago with the late Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles. Our meeting was almost over and then I asked about China. Meles went on for at least another 30 minutes. He told me what so many others have told me. Africa wants American products and investment—and the business, labor, and environmental standards that come with them—but America doesn't seem to have a plan. China, India and others do. The loss is ours in American jobs and influence in Africa. And the African people lose by not having access to high quality American goods and services.

I can also tell you American companies are eager to get into the African market, but often face a private finance system that is stuck thinking about Africa through the prism of its past—wars, famine, strongmen dictators. I have met with them—American companies big and small—and