

That bill was defeated that day. It broke my heart. I went to meet with them afterwards, and I said to them: Don't give up. Don't give up on me, because I am not giving up on you.

I got started on this battle 15 years ago—15 years ago—when I met a young Korean girl in Chicago who was brought here at the age of 2 and who was a musical prodigy. She had been accepted at the Juilliard School of music, the Manhattan conservatory of music, but she was afraid she couldn't go. She was undocumented. Her mom and dad brought her here to this country at the age of 2, and they never filed the papers.

She grew up in a very poor family, but she went into the Merit Music Program in Chicago and became an accomplished musician. It was because of her that I started and introduced the DREAM Act.

There is good news. She went on to the Manhattan conservatory of music. A generous family in Chicago paid for it because she couldn't get any assistance.

She married a young man, became an American citizen, and played in Carnegie Hall. She is now pursuing her Ph.D. in music. Is America better because of that? Yes, it is. I have no doubt that it is.

Those who don't see the promise in the eyes of these young people and don't see what they can bring to America have forgotten who we are. We are a nation of immigrants. We are a nation that has allowed young people such as these a chance to succeed.

One of them happened to be my mother. My mother was brought here at the age of 2 by a mother who didn't speak English. My mother grew up in this country and raised a family, and I was one of the kids. Here I stand on the floor of the Senate. That is my story. That is my family's story. It is America's story.

The people who show such loathing for these young people and what they mean to us have forgotten that. They have ignored that. Let's rekindle our faith in what makes America great—our diversity, the ambition of young people such as Yannick, and the determination of our generation to open a door to give them a chance to prove themselves to make us better. That is what we are called on to do.

All the petty politics aside, we are talking about human lives and about an opportunity for this young man and so many others to prove to us what they can do for the future of America.

EXPORT-IMPORT BANK REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, if you had to characterize the current Congress with one symbol, I would tell you what I think it should be: an extension cord—you know what I mean?—an extension cord you use at home if the plug doesn't quite reach the outlet.

Why would I pick an extension cord? Because this year, under the leadership

in Congress, all we have been doing is extending things a little bit—just a little bit—when we have to.

The Department of Homeland Security appropriation, one of the most important when it comes to the security and safety of the United States, had to be extended and extended and extended, sadly because many in the House wanted to fight the battle of immigration over that bill. Eventually, we prevailed and passed the appropriation after extension and after extension.

Then 2 weeks ago, here on the floor of the Senate, we extended the Federal highway trust fund. What is that? That is a fund where we collect gas taxes every time a gallon of gas is purchased and put it in a fund and then build highways and bridges. We count on that. It used to be a glorious program.

The inspiration for that program was President Dwight David Eisenhower. In the 1950s, President Eisenhower, who had come back from leading America to victory in World War II, remembered what he saw. He saw in Europe, particularly in Germany, an amazing highway system that did not exist in the United States. So President Eisenhower said: We need an interstate highway system in America. It was a bold idea—that the Federal Government would lead in creating an interstate highway system to link every corner of our Nation.

There is not a State that I know of, certainly not in my State, where the interstate highway system hasn't had a dramatic positive impact on the economy. So with the Federal highway trust fund, we built the interstate highway system, and now we are in the process of making bridges safer, making certain the highways are extended where they need to be to keep businesses thriving and to create new businesses and jobs in America.

But along comes a group in Congress, a conservative group, that says this is all wrong. Some of them question whether the Federal Government should even have a role in transportation. For them, I have three words: Dwight David Eisenhower, Republican President, who showed the way. Some say it is just impossible to figure out how to fund the building of highways. Well, we have done pretty well so far with the Federal gas tax that is collected. Clearly, we need to look to other forms of revenue. But do we need to give up on the Federal highway program?

Two weeks ago on the floor of the Senate we had the 33rd short-term extension of that program. What it means is we extended it this time for 60 days.

The Federal highway program used to be a 6-year program. Why was it 6 years? Think about the planning, the engineering, acquiring land and building a highway. You can't do it in 60 days, not 6 months, not even in a year. You have to have a commitment of

funds that are coming back to the States. In my State, in Illinois, about 75 percent of all the highway construction comes from Federal funds. So when we do short-term extensions, it really says to the States that they can't count on us.

This money will run out at the end of July. Maybe we will extend it again, maybe we won't. Is that any way to run a nation? Is that any way to run a transportation system—again, using the extension cord example, this time for 60 days?

Just a week or so ago, we had another effort on the floor of the Senate here to extend the PATRIOT Act—FISA—which keeps America safe and gives us the power to ferret out those who threaten us. The suggestion was made by the majority leader that we extend it for a few days—a few days. This has become a pattern, and it is a troubling pattern.

One aspect of this that is particularly troublesome is that at the end of June, unless there is a sincere bipartisan effort, we are going to lose the Export-Import Bank. I have heard a lot of speeches in the Senate about how the United States businesses, especially small businesses, are really the backbone of our economy. Oh, we all give those speeches. As these businesses grow and expand, they often look to foreign exports.

We know that every \$1 billion in new export sales supports at least 6,000 new jobs in this country. So every opportunity to export U.S. products helps communities and families. The primary Federal program that allows most of these very small businesses to export is about to expire. It is about to expire at the end of this month.

The Export-Import Bank provides financing insurance so that U.S. companies, many of them very small, can compete in the global economy. Here is how it works. The Export-Import Bank makes loans to firms exporting American-made goods. This allows businesses, including 3,340 small businesses across the United States, to sell their goods and services to businesses all over the world. They support about 164,000 jobs.

More than 100 of these companies are located in Illinois, and more than 80 of them are small. The Export-Import Bank supports \$27.4 billion in exports. And guess what. It doesn't cost the taxpayers a penny. It actually makes money—money that is returned to the U.S. Treasury for other purposes or to reduce our debt. Over the past two decades—20 years—the Export-Import Bank has returned \$7 billion to the U.S. Treasury. It is a moneymaker. It goes directly to deficit reduction.

One of the companies the Bank helped is the NOW Health Group in Bloomingdale, IL. It is a natural food and supplement manufacturer with 640 employees, 35 of whom work in exports. According to their chief operating officer, Jim Emme, "the flexibility in the payment terms we can offer through

our Export Import Bank policy has allowed us to grow our business in existing markets as well as open new ones.”

This company has grown its exports from 2 percent of its business to more than 10 percent. They could not have done it without the Export-Import Bank.

There are thousands of stories just like that all over the United States.

I am a cosponsor of Senator SHAHEEN's bill that would increase the lending cap for the Bank to \$160 billion and reauthorize it through 2021—not these short-term, 30-day, 60-day, 6-month extensions we have seen under this leadership in Congress.

In the past, reauthorizing the Ex-Im Bank was a bipartisan measure. Republicans used to support it as much as Democrats. But now there is a small group of Republicans, inspired by the Heritage Foundation, who have decided: Let's put an end to this Bank. Let's put an end to the opportunity for small businesses to hire Americans and export goods overseas.

Their hatred of government blinds them to the reality of this Bank and the thousands of jobs that will be lost if they have their way and eliminate the Ex-Im Bank.

They also refuse to recognize that by failing to reauthorize this Bank, U.S. businesses can't compete with businesses in other countries that will still have access to their own export financing agencies. Do you think China is going to put its export-import bank out of business? No. They just increased its size. Our major competitor has stepped up. In this case, many of the leaders in Congress are stepping back. So we are not only hurting ourselves if we can't find a way to go forward.

The Bank is set to expire at the end of the month, which is less than 4 weeks from now. I hope we can come to an agreement by then to pass a bill to reauthorize a program that is critically important to U.S. exports. I hope reasonable voices in the Republican Party will not allow a vocal minority to prevent us from reauthorizing this important program.

PATRIOT EMPLOYER TAX CREDIT ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, as the number of candidates grows for the office of President, we are hearing a lot of proposals for changes in the Tax Code. Many of them are interesting, and some of them are damaging when it comes to working for middle-income families.

Sadly, we are seeing a race to the bottom on who can propose the lowest corporate tax rate, giving huge breaks to the very companies that shift jobs overseas. Most Americans don't realize this. If you want to move your production from the United States to another country, you can deduct the moving expenses from the taxes you owe America. We are subsidizing your decision to

pick up and move jobs overseas. American workers—some of them are given the sad responsibility to train the supervisors at the new overseas companies while American workers are checking out their last paychecks.

I have a different idea. Instead of rewarding corporations with lower tax bills, we should reward those companies in America that maintain their commitment to this country and its workers and give fair wages and benefits to the American workers. We call it the Patriot Employer Tax Credit Act. It is very basic.

When you look at the Tax Code, it is a huge document full of incentives and disincentives for businesses. We will reward certain things; we won't reward other things. Well, this is something we should consider rewarding.

Senator SHERROD BROWN and I have introduced the Patriot Employer Tax Credit Act, which would provide a tax credit to American companies that treat American veterans and workers the best. It puts the Tax Code on the side of these companies. These patriot employers would be eligible for a tax credit equal to 10 percent of the first \$15,000 of qualified wages for American workers, which is about \$1,200 per worker.

In order to qualify for this tax credit, these companies would have to meet five criteria. See if you think, as I do, that these are good ideas.

First, the company has to invest in American jobs. Businesses must remain headquartered here in the United States if they have ever been headquartered here before. The company would also have to maintain or increase the number of workers in the United States compared to the number of workers overseas, and not decrease the number of workers through the use of contractors. The company can't pick up and leave, move to a foreign capital to avoid paying its fair share of U.S. taxes.

First, invest in American jobs located in America.

Second, pay fair wages. A patriot employer under our bill would have to pay at least 90 percent of its employees \$15 an hour. Why do we pick \$15 an hour? Do the math: \$15 an hour, 40 hours a week, about \$30,000 a year. Why? Because if you make that amount of money, you qualify for virtually no Federal subsidies, Federal programs. You are earning a paycheck and you are supporting your family. If you make less than that, you qualify for Federal Government assistance. So we are saying to employers: If you will pay at least \$15 an hour, we will give you this tax credit.

Third, provide quality health insurance for your employees consistent with the Affordable Care Act.

Fourth, help your employees prepare for retirement. We want to reward companies that offer at least 90 percent of their employees a defined benefit plan, such as a pension plan or a defined contribution plan with decent employer contributions.

Fifth, employ a diverse workforce. We want companies to have a plan in place to help veterans and people with disabilities. I don't think that is too much to ask. We grab our flags and march in parades as politicians and thank the veterans over and over. Why don't we thank them with a job? And let's reward the companies that do.

That is it, five conditions. And with these five conditions, these patriotic American companies would get a tax break. Wouldn't it be better for us to incentivize American companies to do the right thing rather than pay the moving expenses for those that want to leave the country? That is a choice. I think it is pretty simple.

I know it can be done because in Skokie, IL, there is a company doing it. It is called Block Steel. The company started 100 years ago and has grown to be the largest distributor of aluminized steel in the Nation. It is a family-run business. It has ensured that 77 employees are treated fairly. Each of their employees is paid more than \$15 an hour, has good health care, and a good retirement. Block Steel should be rewarded for its efforts. Under the Patriot Employer Tax Credit Act, Block Steel could qualify for a tax credit of up to \$100,000. That is money they can invest in their business and grow it, with even more people working.

As this debate about tax reform continues, I hope we focus on rewarding companies that really care about America. We shouldn't be blindly focused on a race to the bottom to the lowest wages. And, I might add, this is paid for. It is paid for by eliminating the deduction for moving businesses overseas that is currently part of the Tax Code.

So let's reform the Tax Code the right way, with an eye on helping the workers get a decent paycheck, decent benefits, and rewarding the companies that put American workers first.

I thank Senators SHERROD BROWN, ELIZABETH WARREN, JACK REED, TAMMY BALDWIN, and BERNIE SANDERS for lending their support to this important bill. I look forward to continuing our fight for working families here in the Senate.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.