

It is a reform bill that aims to transform bureaucratic waste into crucial investments for the men and women who give everything—everything—to protect us. It contains important quality-of-life programs for these servicemembers and for their families. It holds the promise of compassion for wounded warriors, and it extends a hand of understanding to heroes who struggle with mental health challenges. It also authorizes the pay raises our troops have surely earned.

It is a bill that contains input from both sides, and it is a bill that reflects priorities from both sides. That is why it sailed out of committee with huge bipartisan support, 22 to 4. That is why the House of Representatives passed a similar version with support from both parties.

That is why one would think it would be headed towards strong bipartisan passage here in the Senate as well. But some Democratic leaders now want to hold pay raises and important medical programs for our troops hostage as leverage for unrelated partisan gains.

It is all part of the filibuster summer they promised us. Democratic leaders have been quite open in detailing their strategy, which basically boils down to this: Deny our troops the benefits they have earned and even shut down the government if they can't extract more taxpayer dollars for bureaucracies such as the IRS.

The American people don't want any part of this senseless filibuster summer vacation. But Democratic leaders already packed up their dusty Winnebago and—with ‘Bigger IRS or bust’ scrawled on the back—are now barreling toward our troops and their families in a dangerous game of chicken.

I am asking these leaders to please stop—please stop. This isn't some game. Please think about what you are doing.

We live in exceedingly dangerous times. We are faced with the most “diverse and complex array of crises” in the postwar era, and that is Henry Kissinger saying that. Nearly every week seems to bring another new example of ISIL's brutality.

This is certainly not a moment to use our military as leverage in order to secure a few more bucks—a few more bucks—for bloated bureaucracies such as the IRS.

All of this must make some of our Democratic colleagues uneasy. Some of them must be cringing at this strategy.

I am asking every Democrat who is serious about supporting our troops and our national security to stand with the American people in rejecting these partisan games. Our all-volunteer force should be focused on training in combat and preparing for conflict, not worrying about the partisan delay of important policy authorizations. We all know how vital our troops are to both our country and our own local communities. I have come to the floor recently to talk about what the men and women of our military mean to Kentucky.

I noted how, at Fort Campbell, more than 30,000 Army personnel trained for important missions around the world, from repeated deployments to Afghanistan to providing humanitarian support in places such as Africa. I noted how the base enriches the surrounding region with an economic impact of \$5 billion each year. I noted how Fort Knox houses many different military commands in both a truly impressive array of training grounds and training facilities. I noted how the base makes an economic impact of more than \$2 billion in Hardin County and the surrounding community.

So today I wish to speak a little bit about Blue Grass Army Depot. The depot, located in Richmond, is integral to both the Army and our national security as a facilitation site for the storage, renovation, and disposal of conventional munitions. It also serves as a reminder of the many important tasks undertaken by the Department of Defense—and one more reason Kentuckians don't want to see the Department distracted or disrupted by partisan games here in Washington, because, after having personally implored the Department of Defense for several decades to meet our national commitment, the Department is now close to completing construction of a state-of-the-art chemical demilitarization facility at the depot. That would allow for the proper disposal of dangerous chemical weapons that are stored there.

This is important for our country, and it is critical to the health and safety of my constituents in central Kentucky.

But it has also become a good jobs story for the region too. There are more than 1,400 jobs at the Blue Grass Army Depot, and hiring will continue when operations at the new facility begin.

Kentuckians know that passing the Defense bill before us would authorize a new Special Forces facility at Fort Campbell. Kentuckians know it would authorize construction projects and an important new medical clinic at Fort Knox.

Kentuckians also know it would help the Department of Defense from becoming unnecessarily distracted or disrupted as it continues carrying out critical tasks such as the kind we see at the Blue Grass Army Depot, disposing of these dangerous chemical weapons.

I am asking every Senator to remember all the ways our troops and our military enrich our States and local communities. I am asking every Senator to consider the serious times we live in, too. And I am asking every Senator to keep those things in mind when casting votes on the Defense bill.

We may be Republicans, we may be Democrats, but in the end we should all be able to come together to support the people who support us. Let's stand together in rejecting partisan games in favor of a bipartisan bill that contains good ideas from both parties and gives

President Obama the exact funding level he asked for. This bill gives President Obama the exact funding level he asked for. Let's worry less about the demands of one party's political base and more about supporting the brave men and women who live on the base.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, I ask

unanimous consent that the order for

the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without

objection, it is so ordered.

#### CHILD ABUSE REPORTING LOOPHOLE ON MILITARY BASES

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, I rise today to enable my colleagues to become aware of the tragic circumstances that led to the untimely death of 5-year-old Talia Williams and an amendment I have submitted that seeks to close the loophole that allowed Talia to slip through our child abuse safety net.

In 2005, Talia Williams moved to Hawaii to live with her father, Naeem Williams, and his wife, Talia's stepmother, Delilah Williams. Mr. Williams was in the military, stationed at Schofield Barracks. Mr. Williams' defense attorney argued that Mr. Williams was ill-equipped to care for his daughter. That may be true, but what we know for a fact is that Talia Williams suffered 7 months of near constant abuse at the hands of her father and stepmother. This torture ended on July 16, 2005, when Mr. Williams hit Talia so hard it left his fist imprinted on her chest and killed her. Mr. Williams was convicted of murdering his daughter last year, and he was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole. Her stepmother, Delilah Williams, was given a reduced sentence of 20 years in prison for providing testimony against her husband.

Tarshia Williams, Talia's mother, sued the military in 2010 for the death of her daughter. Her case was settled earlier this year, with the Department of Defense agreeing to a \$2 million settlement for not doing enough to save Talia Williams.

In the course of those two proceedings, it became clear that Talia Williams could have been saved if one thing occurred—reporting the abuse to Hawaii's Child Welfare Services branch or CPS. Through a memorandum of understanding—MOU—with the State of Hawaii, the Department of Defense established a system in which Hawaii's Child Welfare Services would be “the agency primarily responsible for intake, investigation, and the provision of protective services as deemed necessary to abused children within the State of Hawaii,” including the children of military families both on and off base.

Under statute and reiterated in the MOU, only Hawaii's State agencies

have the authority—not the military—to take emergency custody and order foster care placement for children without the consent of a parent. But this could only happen if officials in Hawaii knew about the abuse.

In Talia's case, a number of people were aware of her maltreatment. Yet no report was received by the report point of contact, who was the person on base mandated to report to Hawaii's Child Protective Services. The court in Tarshia Williams' civil suit found that military law enforcement, the doctors who treated Talia, and at least one or two family counselors had reason to suspect that violence was occurring in the Williams home. At least one person on base directly reported to the family advocacy program her concerns for Talia's well-being. No action was taken. Talia remained in the home while time and again law enforcement personnel and others were called to investigate or received reports of abuse. Not enough was done to remove her from her home. This lack of action was and is unacceptable. No one followed up on Talia's case to the degree we all should expect. Information about the abuse she lived through never reached the Army provost, who, under the MOU with the State of Hawaii, was the single person required to alert Child Welfare Services. And Talia died.

This loophole, which puts us in a position of hoping and trusting that information of abuse makes it to the reporting point of contact, must be addressed. My amendment would fix this problem by establishing a legal requirement that any federally mandated reporter with credible evidence or suspicion of child abuse notify both the DOD's Family Advocacy Program and the appropriate State's child welfare department. This amendment would eliminate the bottleneck of having only one reporting point of contact. Instead, mandatory reporters—which include teachers, doctors, law enforcement, and others—must directly report such evidence or suspicion both up the chain of command and also over to the appropriate State authorities. I am hopeful that by requiring such dual reporting, no military-connected children will remain in abusive homes because information never made it to the right person.

There were many mistakes made in Talia's case. Some of those mistakes are of the type that no law might rectify—a reluctance of people to get involved in the affairs of others, the reluctance to implicate abuse, perhaps fear of repercussions or out of respect for a member's service and personal affability. However, in a case such as Talia's, more should have been done and could have been done if only the right people were made aware of the situation.

I hope we do not continue to ignore this one glaring reporting loophole, leaving in place a hole in our safety net wide enough to miss the torture and untimely death of a child like Talia.

I recognize that time on the Defense authorization is short. I am sure the Department of Defense shares my concerns on this issue. I look forward to working with the Department and my colleagues to close this reporting loophole.

### 3RD ANNIVERSARY OF DACA PROGRAM

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, I would like to take a few minutes to shift gears to another issue of great importance. This issue is more hopeful. On June 15, 2012, President Obama enacted DACA—or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals—granting deferred action to DREAMers all across the country. Three years later, almost 700,000 hard-working young people are proof that deferred action works.

DACA has changed the lives of countless students who were brought to our country as undocumented children through no fault of their own. The President's action has been truly transformative for many young people in Hawaii. Let me tell you about three such young people.

Gabriela emigrated from Brazil with her family at the age of 15. Despite a 3.8 GPA in high school, she found herself unable to go to college because she lacked required documentation. After receiving DACA, Gabriela enrolled in a community college, paying instate tuition, and is receiving her associate's degree in the spring of 2015 and transferring to the University of Hawaii to earn her bachelor's degree. Receiving DACA was a life-changing moment for Gabriela because it enabled her to do everyday things that she was never able to do before, such as getting a driver's license, opening a bank account, renting her own apartment. It also enabled her to get an education, start a career, and live up to her full potential.

Sam was born in Tonga and brought to Hawaii when he was only 4 years old. His parents petitioned for residency for the whole family. But as a result of a slow and ineffective immigration system, Sam was over 18 years old by the time their petition became current. As a result, 18-year-old Sam was put into deportation proceedings and came very close to being torn away from his family and deported to a country he no longer remembered. Thankfully, the President announced the DACA Program and Sam was granted a stay of deportation and allowed to remain with his family. Today, Sam works as a music director at his church and is currently saving money to return to school and seek his dream of higher education.

Shingai is a DREAMer from Zimbabwe, who immigrated to the United States when he was 12. He did not find out he was undocumented until he graduated from high school and decided to apply for college. Shingai was a star football athlete and won a full football scholarship to go to

college. Unfortunately, with stardom came immediate attention. Due to his undocumented status, he was forced to quit his dream and protect himself and his family from the public eye. Shingai knew the importance of education, so he pursued his degree a few classes at a time. This semester, he is finally set to graduate and earn a bachelor's in political science from Hawaii Pacific University. Receiving DACA has enabled Shingai to come out of the shadows and share his story in order to raise awareness and empower immigrant youth in Hawaii.

These DREAMers no longer have the fear of deportation and family separation hanging over their heads each and every day. DACA recipients are now free to live their lives, to seek an education and work as teachers, engineers, enter our armed services, become business owners.

DACA is life-changing for these young people, but it also has helped all Americans.

Forty-nine percent of DREAMers who were granted DACA were able to open their first bank account, 33 percent were able to obtain a credit card, 60 percent have been able to gain new jobs, contributing to our tax base and our economy. Experts estimate that all deferred action recipients will add \$230 billion to our gross domestic product in the next decade. Quite simply, DACA works.

The American public stands with our DREAMers and immigrant families and smart policies like DACA. Over 70 percent of Americans reject the mass deportation approach favored by some and instead support the President's Executive action. However, DACA is only a temporary solution to address one part of our broken immigration system. It is not a substitute for comprehensive immigration reform.

It has been roughly 2 years since the Senate passed an immigration reform bill with strong bipartisan support. After House Republicans refused to act on comprehensive immigration reform, President Obama built on the success of DACA to use his well-established Executive authority to expand the DACA Program and create a new program for the parents of children born as U.S. citizens. I strongly support the President's action.

Both of these programs could be up and running, helping families and individuals, millions of them, but for a lawsuit filed by some Republican Governors opposed to immigration reform. We must continue fighting to provide relief for millions of parents who should be signing up for DAPA right now, paying their fees and applying for work permits, additional young people who qualify for DACA as well as millions of other hard-working families facing deportation every single day in our country.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.