

million for funding VA-State extended care facilities. It provides \$20 million in rural health care funding specifically for construction grants, meeting the needs of State extended care homes in rural areas. We are demonstrating here how the VA can partner with States to flexibly and efficiently deliver long-term care to an aging population—like other segments of our population, the VA beneficiaries are aging—sparing them the time and expense of constructing and operating new VA facilities.

I have also filed important amendments to improve the provision of health care and research at the VA, ensuring that the VA is providing gender-specific prostheses, for example—particularly important as we see more and more women serve in combat zones—as well as ensuring that VA research dollars are spent in areas of toxic exposures. These priorities ought to be at the top of the list for all. They are for me.

VA continues to have a significant need for resources and personnel. Secretary McDonald indicated just last Friday that the agency continues to need about 4,300 more physicians and 10,000 nurses. I am working with the VA on legislation to meet this need. I look forward to working with my colleague, the Presiding Officer, as well as the Appropriations Committee to address these priorities and others that are so critically important to final passage of this important bill.

CONDEMNING PALESTINIAN TERROR ATTACKS AGAINST ISRAEL

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, since the beginning of October, Palestinians armed with knives, meat cleavers, guns, and cars have carried out approximately 77 attacks, leaving 159 Israelis wounded and 12 dead. Two Americans have been killed in these gruesome attacks, including Richard Lakin, who was a Glastonbury, CT, elementary school principal and civil rights activist before he moved to Israel in 1984. Connecticut grieves for our dear friend and colleague to our educators there, who perished while seeking peace. That was his goal. That was his mission.

The Palestinian Authority must be held accountable for incitement, and it must work to stem this tide of visceral violence. Repeated, reprehensible attacks on innocent Israeli civilians follow President Abbas' dangerous disavowal of commitments made during the peace process. He has disavowed those commitments, and he has renounced them. These attacks must be stopped with leadership from the Palestinian Authority.

That is why I have introduced bipartisan legislation with Senator AYOTTE, and more than half the Senate has now joined with us to stand with Israel, to condemn these Palestinian terror attacks, and to reaffirm Israel's commitment to the continued maintenance of

the status quo on the Temple Mount. I look forward to returning to the floor to have this resolution passed. It is time the Senate spoke out over this violence that has engulfed Israel and threatens everyday Israelis trying to live their normal lives in peace. It is time for America to speak out, as it is doing now, day in and day out.

I have visited Jerusalem, Israel's capital, and seen how remarkable a place it is, both in terms of being home to three monotheistic faiths and in the remarkable way that Israel has maintained respect and proper access for all religions and for their practices.

Israel stands alone as a nation committed to tolerance and respect for all faiths. This resolution serves as an expression of our support and our solidarity with Israel in bringing this violence to an end and as our resolve to help stabilize security for both Palestinians and Israelis.

I have said before—and I feel more passionately and deeply now than ever before—that Palestinian political goals will never be achieved through violence. As efforts to deescalate this situation move forward—and I support them—this resolution calls on all parties to return to the negotiating table immediately and without preconditions. Israel is already committed to peace negotiations without preconditions. I continue to support a two-state solution that is acceptable to all parties, involving direct negotiations with the active and sustained support of the United States and the international community.

My hope also is that the United States will continue to support Israel by reaffirming our unshakeable commitment to Israel's security. Today, President Obama met with Prime Minister Netanyahu. I hope that meeting will serve to bolster the bonds between our two great countries. I understand it went well. I certainly hope it did.

I joined Senator BENNET, along with 14 other Senators, in writing to the President and urging him to prioritize discussing with Mr. Netanyahu the historic renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding on U.S. Military Assistance to help Israel prepare for, respond to, and defend against threats that are more pressing and dangerous than ever, and to ensure its qualitative military edge.

I note that my wonderful friend and colleague from Illinois is waiting to speak, so I will end here and say that the current MOU provides \$30 billion in assistance to Israel through fiscal year 2018.

As threats in the region continue to evolve, including Iran's potentially malign influence, the administration must engage at the highest level to continue to develop a shared understanding of threats confronting Israel by strengthening the MOU that serves as the foundation of our bilateral security efforts.

I will always fight to uphold Israel's security, and I am committed to oppos-

ing efforts to delegitimize Israel. We can stand together on a bipartisan basis, and this cause must always be bipartisan, must always be above politics. I will continue to work toward ensuring that the partnership in this body and the partnership between the United States and Israel is strengthened and enduring.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, first, let me thank my colleague from Connecticut, Senator BLUMENTHAL. I join him in condemning the violence that is taking place in the streets of the Middle East and Jerusalem and other places. I also join him in calling for a two-state solution so that we can have both the Palestinian people and the people of Israel living safely and securely without fear of any kind of military action from one against the other. That should be our ultimate goal, and we should renew that goal regularly. I join him in what he had to say.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on another topic, you can't serve in the Senate without some level of patience. It takes forever to get things done around here—that is, the big things.

Fifteen years ago, I introduced a bill called the DREAM Act. That was 15 years ago, the year 2000. What were we going to do with these young people who came to the United States—brought here as babies, infants, toddlers, children—when they finished high school and were looking to the future? The DREAM Act said that if they have no serious criminal issues, if they have finished school, we will give them a chance—a chance to work their way toward legal status and citizenship.

I introduced that bill 15 years ago. It has had its ups and downs. At times it has passed in the House; other times it has passed in the Senate. We have never been able to align those two bodies to pass the bill at the same time.

It was June 27, 2013—almost 2½ years ago—when it last passed in the Senate. It was part of comprehensive immigration reform. Sixty-eight Senators voted for that bill—14 Republicans and 54 Democrats. It was a bipartisan bill, comprehensive immigration reform.

We took the bill and sent it to the Republican-controlled House of Representatives, and they refused to call the bill or even debate it on the floor of the House of Representatives. It was frustrating. A group of us had worked for months to put that bill together. The House would not even consider it, wouldn't even debate it, didn't offer an alternative. They were silent. Virtually all of them were silent but not every one of them.

This was a historic meeting in the city of Chicago. These two gentlemen are my friends, one my colleague from Illinois, Congressman LUIS GUTIÉRREZ, and the other the new Speaker of the

House of Representatives, Congressman PAUL RYAN from Janesville, WI. They appeared at a famous setting in Chicago, the City Club, and talked about immigration. Let me read what Congressman PAUL RYAN said as a visitor joining Congressman GUTIÉRREZ in 2013:

We all must acknowledge that we have an immigration system that's broken. It is not serving our interest as a nation. Our broken immigration system does not serve our national security interests. Our broken immigration system does not serve our economic security interests. Our broken immigration system does not serve our family interests.

Congressman RYAN went on to say:

And so, when Republicans and Democrats look at this situation and see something that's broken, we need to fix it. We have to offer people a path to earned legalization. We have to invite people to come out of the shadows.

That was an extraordinary statement. It was heralded not just in Chicago but around the country as a statement that a leader would make trying to lead his party into a positive view toward immigration reform. It was a statement made by Congressman PAUL RYAN in the year 2013. I applauded it, praised it. Many of us did.

But now we have another statement by the new Speaker of the House, PAUL RYAN. He has basically said that the Republicans are going to do nothing—nothing on immigration. He says he can't trust the President, and as long as he can't trust the President, he is going to do nothing as the new Republican leader of the House. So he is going to consider absolutely no legislation to fix our broken immigration system.

Why did President Obama take the actions that he did, creating a program known as the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA? It was the President's response to the failure of Republican leaders in the House to even consider the issue of immigration.

What is DACA? DACA is a program created by Executive order that gives to these young people who qualified as DREAMers temporary status in the United States so they cannot be deported. They have to come forward, submit themselves for a criminal background check, pay a fee, and be monitored. If they should get in trouble, commit a crime, they are gone, they are deported. So far, 700,000 of these young people have come forward as part of the DACA Program.

The House Republicans have tried to stop the program, eliminate the program. I assume that, like some candidates for President, they want to deport all these young people. That is unfortunate because many of these young people who now have at least temporary protection by DACA are doing some absolutely extraordinary things. I would like to talk about one of them this evening.

This young lady's name is Maricela Aguilar. She is from Speaker RYAN's home State of Wisconsin. In 1995, when Maricela was 3 years old, her mother

brought her to the United States to give her a better life. Maricela's family settled in Milwaukee, WI. She worked hard and excelled in school. During high school, Maricela was on the honor roll, was a member of the National Honor Society, and was captain of the cross-country team. At the same time, she was active in her community; she was a volunteer at a homeless shelter.

When it came time to apply for colleges, she wanted to stay close to her family. She wanted to stay in Speaker RYAN's home State of Wisconsin. She applied to a lot of schools. She was offered a full tuition scholarship to Marquette University in Milwaukee. That is an extraordinary school. My son went there, so I am partial, but it is an extraordinary school because it gave her a chance.

Keep in mind that this young lady, because she is undocumented, doesn't qualify for any government assistance—none. Sacrifices had to be made by her family and others to help her go to Marquette. She went there. She was on the dean's list, double major—political science and English literature. She worked part time as a waitress to make ends meet to pay for her college expenses. She became involved in advocating for immigration reform.

In 2010 Maricela was here in the Senate Gallery along with hundreds of other DREAMers when the Senate failed to pass the DREAM Act due to a Republican filibuster. We got a majority of votes; we couldn't get 60.

I met with Maricela in 2011 when she came to Washington to talk about her concerns about DREAMers just like herself who faced deportation.

In 2012 Maricela graduated with honors, in the top 10 percent of her graduating class at Marquette in Milwaukee, WI.

Later that year President Obama created the deferred action plan that gave her and hundreds of thousands of others a chance to stay and not be deported. She was able to apply and go to graduate school at Brandeis University in Boston. She continues to work on immigration reform and is a leader of the Student Immigration Movement of Massachusetts.

She is going to return to Milwaukee when she graduates, she promises. She wants to become a public school teacher so she can use her education to help young people in the city where she grew up. She is a loyal Wisconsinite, a loyal member of the Milwaukee community.

I would say to Speaker RYAN: She wants to be a part of your State for the rest of her life.

Maricela and other DREAMers have so much to give America. Can we use more public school teachers with her talent? Of course we can. But Speaker RYAN and other Republican leaders in Congress have made their agenda clear: They want to shut down this program and tell Maricela she can't stay to continue her education. They want to deport her to her country, which she

hasn't been to since she was 3 years old and has no memory of it. She would be deported to Mexico, a place she may have experienced as a toddler but can't even remember.

Will America be a stronger country, will Wisconsin be a better State, will Milwaukee be a better city if Maricela is now told to leave after she has obtained her bachelor's degree and is working on her graduate degree? I think the answer is clear: If she stays, we will all be better for it and she will be better for it.

Instead of deporting DREAMers like Maricela, Speaker PAUL RYAN should support DACA and work with the Democrats to pass comprehensive immigration reform to fix our broken immigration system.

VETERANS DAY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this Wednesday, Americans all across the country will gather to honor all those who have fought for freedom and thank them for a debt we can never fully repay. Whenever freedom is threatened, our brave men and women of America have answered the call.

In honor of Veterans Day on Wednesday, I will take a moment to recognize an amazing Illinois veteran, part of what we call the 'greatest generation.'

It was December 7, 1941—as FDR said just a few steps away from us in the House Chamber, a day which will live in infamy. The Imperial Japanese forces launched a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. That also happened to be the 22nd birthday of Tony Gargano, and it was the day he decided he would enlist in the U.S. Navy. Tony was assigned to a ship disguised as a merchant marine vessel. He and his shipmates didn't wear Navy uniforms or carry IDs, and their ship had no guns.

In November of 1942, a German ship—also disguised as a merchant vessel—sank the ship Tony was on. Tony survived and was taken as a prisoner aboard the German ship. Then he was turned over to the Japanese, where he spent the next 3 years as a prisoner working in a coal mine. Every day he would come out of the mine covered head to toe with coal dust. In those 3 years, Tony never had a chance to take a shower, never could wash his hands—3 years. He worked more than 10 hours a day on less than 8 ounces of water and 6 ounces of spoiled rice.

Here is how he described his experience:

They torture you. They beat the hell out of us. You'd try to get up and they'd beat you back to the ground. You prayed to God they would kill you.

By the time the war was over and the Red Cross arrived, Tony couldn't believe he was still alive. After he arrived in the United States, they quarantined him for weeks. He couldn't even call his family to tell them he was alive. But he made it, and he came home.

Now fast-forward 70 years. Tony is 95 years old. He marvels at his good fortune. After the war, he came home and