

his family to Greece from Turkey across the Aegean Sea, suddenly Syrian lives mattered.

WITH THE REFUGEES

I just returned from my last medical mission with my organization, the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS), to the Greek island of Lesbos. Tens of thousands of Syrian refugees are making the desperate boat trip from Turkey to Lesbos and other Greek islands. The unfortunate ones are drowning, while the lucky ones must carry on through another 1,200 miles of borders, humiliation, and misery to reach whoever opens the door to them. Germany and Sweden have been the most hospitable, while others are building walls and barbed wire fences along their borders. The Syrian refugees I met were fleeing the recent Russian bombings and Assad's barrel bombs, while some are fleeing the brutality of the Islamic State. I saw several women, some with toddlers Aylan's age, who lost their husbands to the war. One woman was crying as she described a public execution by IS that she was forced to witness with her five-year-old son. He has had nightmares since then.

I heard from a Syrian volunteer doctor about a boat with a capacity of 30 people that was stuffed with more than 80 refugees. Each refugee had to pay the smugglers 1,000 to 2,000 euros. It was a cold night when the boat crashed onto the rocky shores and split in half. Children got stuck underneath the boat. Many simply drowned. The Syrian doctor, himself a victim of Assad's torture and now a refugee in France, described to me how he performed CPR on two small children. One was dead, and one died later. The U.S. presidential candidates and governors who slammed the door in the faces of helpless Syrian refugees should hear these stories. These refugees deserve our sympathy and hospitality.

Since 1975, Americans have welcomed over 3 million refugees from all over the world. Refugees have built new lives, homes, and communities in towns and cities in all 50 states. Since the war began, however, only 2,034 Syrian refugees have been resettled in the entire United States. This is a shameful number, considering that there are 4.2 million Syrian refugees. The House of Representatives has passed a bill that would impose additional security measures on refugees from Syria, making it nearly impossible to accept more refugees from Iraq and Syria. A similar bill is awaiting a Senate vote.

Nancy Nora's father, surrounded by his large extended family at the dinner table on that Thanksgiving many years ago, explained to me how Irish Americans were demonized when they first arrived to the United States as refugees. They were maligned by politicians and by the public, and were perceived as a threat. During dark times in our history, the United States has treated newly arriving Jews, Italians, Japanese, and Latinos as a threat.

As I was leaving the Nora household after that memorable evening, her family wished me good luck with my studies and my new life in America. Suddenly, the cold Chicago night felt very warm. I felt at home.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I have several colleagues on the floor who wish to enter into a colloquy, and I yield the floor for that purpose, and then I will wait until they are finished to reclaim my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— H.R. 4188

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate

proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 4188, the Coast Guard reauthorization, which was received from the House; I further ask that the Thune substitute amendment be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, if I might, let me briefly explain the basis for my objection. I have had the opportunity to discuss this matter with my colleague from the State of Alaska.

The cruise industry foreign-flags its vessels and thus pays no U.S. income tax, yet it has asked for protections in this bill from remedies sought by seamen for failing to pay wage and overtime, for remedies for maintenance and cure, one of the oldest, internationally recognized remedies for seafarers. These two remedies would keep the U.S. Merchant Marine competitive. U.S.-flagged vessels are required to hire U.S. seamen, and only by ensuring that workers on U.S. vessels and foreign-flagged vessels, which sail in and out of U.S. ports carrying U.S. passengers, have the same remedies can U.S. jobs be protected.

I have had the opportunity to discuss this issue with the Senator from Alaska, and it is my hope that we can work diligently together to address and clear issues of concern to myself and a number of my colleagues. But until we have that opportunity to review the text and to appropriately resolve concerns that arise from the Jones Act and the longstanding workers compensation-type benefit I described called maintenance and cure, my objection will continue.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I want to talk about the broader issue here. I appreciate the willingness of my colleague from Delaware to work on this important issue. The Coast Guard reauthorization bill passed out of the commerce committee unanimously in April.

We talk a lot about national security here on the Senate floor. We talk about our men and women in uniform and how they are protecting us. But I have always liked to mention the men and women in the Coast Guard. Prior to 9/11, you can make a very strong argument that the Coast Guard was probably the only uniformed service whose members were risking their lives for Americans day in and day out every single day. I think a lot of their heroism goes unnoticed. Trust me, in Alaska we see it daily.

The Coast Guard admirably performs a variety of missions on a daily basis

throughout our great Nation with a team of fewer than 90,000 members comprised of Active-Duty, Reserve, civilian, and Volunteer forces and an annual budget of less than \$10 billion, with, let's face it, a fleet of aging vessels and aircraft.

The ranking member of the commerce committee, Senator NELSON from Florida, and I talk a lot about how heroic these men and women are and how they deserve our attention, just like other members of the military.

Last year the Coast Guard executed more than 17,500 search and rescue missions—these are incredibly dangerous, by the way—in rough waters off the coast of Alaska and Florida and Delaware and saved over 3,400 lives. Think about that—3,400 lives in 1 year. In addition, last year the Coast Guard law enforcement crews interdicted over 140 metric tons of narcotics, detained over 300 smugglers, and interdicted more than 3,500 migrants.

What we are talking about here is bipartisan legislation that needs to be passed that will do one very important thing for our country and the Coast Guard: It is going to improve the mission readiness and performance of the Coast Guard. It demonstrates that the Congress of the United States is paying attention to these brave young men and women.

I am disappointed because we have worked hard to move this legislation since April. We have worked hard. We stripped out provisions that the other side had problems with. Section 605 is gone now, to move this forward. So we have been working hard. I thought we were going to pass this legislation this morning.

The provision my colleague from Delaware was talking about is section 606 of the Coast Guard Authorization Act, and it is simply looking to create consistency and reduce forum shopping in lawsuits involving mariners.

While I understand that some special interests—trial lawyers in particular—are not always interested in judicial consistency or efficiency because it is not in the interest of their bottom line, I wish to remind this body that the provision we are talking about passed overwhelmingly in the House of Representatives in a bipartisan manner—not once, not twice, but three times in the past 2 years. Three times. It is not a controversial provision.

Section 606 is about forum shopping for foreign mariners. In fact, section 606 is not even about Americans; it is about forum shopping for foreign mariners in foreign waters on foreign-flagged ships. That is the issue which is holding up the reauthorization of the Coast Guard bill for our brave men and women who serve in the Coast Guard. Why that provision should be holding us up is beyond me.

But I did have a good discussion with my colleague from Delaware. We are more than willing to continue to work with our colleagues to reach consensus.

But I certainly hope we can get there today and not let one small provision that is very focused on one special interest group hold up a bipartisan bill which everybody on the commerce committee voted for and which is going to do something very important: recognize the men and women in the Coast Guard who risk their lives—just like everybody else in the military—on a daily basis to protect Americans.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

TRIBUTE TO ARNE DUNCAN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this week in Washington, President Barack Obama's favorite pickup basketball pal from Chicago is leaving town. He is heading back home to Chicago. His name is Arne Duncan. He is Secretary of Education. He was one of the first choices of this President to serve in his Cabinet. He was an obvious choice.

Arne Duncan has given his life to teaching and education. It starts with his parents—his father, who was a professor at the University of Chicago, and his mother, who ran a mentoring and tutoring center in the Hyde Park area of Chicago. As a young boy in school, Arne used to come out of class and go to his mother's mentoring center to help other young kids learn to read and do their homework. It was built into him. His dedication to teaching, to schools, and to improving the lives of students across America has been well documented.

As Arne grew up, he grew tall. As he grew tall, he played basketball, and he was very good at it. He ended up going to Harvard University and playing on their varsity basketball team. He then went on to play in the professional ranks in Australia. It was there that he met his wife. They have two children together. She is waiting for him in Chicago, and he is anxious, I am sure, to return and live full time in that city with his family.

When he came back from his stint in basketball, he went back to mentoring kids in the Hyde Park section and other parts of Chicago. He was chosen to head up the Chicago public schools by former mayor Richard Daley. He was the right choice. Arne Duncan truly had the interest of those public school students at heart, and it showed. That is when I met him for the first time and came to know him. He was an extraordinary and dedicated person, trying to manage one of the most challenging school districts in America.

Two things come to mind immediately. They used to have weekends where people would volunteer to go work at schools. My wife and I volunteered several weekends, and we would always run into Arne and his wife and family, who were giving their Saturdays building playgrounds, painting the interiors of schools, doing the basic things but doing things that many peo-

ple in his lofty status of superintendent might not have considered.

I used to visit—still do—a lot of Chicago's public schools, drawing my own impressions. I remember visiting a school once and coming out of it and saying to my staff: That school is out of control. It was so loud in the corridors—not between classes but during classes—I couldn't imagine students were learning. It didn't appear there was any supervision.

I called Arne and I said: You know, I have never called you about a school, but please take a look at this school. Something is wrong there. It doesn't feel right.

He said: I will do it.

He called me back 2 weeks later, and he said: You were right. That principal was an experiment to see if he could do it. He can't. We replaced him.

That is how Arne reacted. It wasn't a matter of sending it to a committee and waiting for months and evaluating at the end of the school year; he made the decision—he is decisive—because he knew it was in the best interest of the students.

Arne Duncan inherited a Department of Education that was in controversy when President Obama took the office of Presidency. It was in controversy because there was a Federal law—No Child Left Behind—promulgated by a previous Republican President, George W. Bush, and supported on a bipartisan basis by Congress, that was extremely controversial. Teachers were unhappy with it. Many administrators were unhappy with it. Governors were unhappy with it. There was too much testing, too many strict rules, and too much pronouncement of failure when it wasn't really warranted. That is what he inherited.

Over the years, Arne has made a significant impact when it comes to education in America. U.S. graduation rates are at an alltime high, with the biggest improvements from minorities and the poor. Under Arne's leadership, dropout rates are at an alltime low. Test scores are slightly up, with some of the biggest gains in States that embrace the administration's approach to reform.

We had a stimulus package, which the President supported when he was first elected, to try to help our country out of a recession, and Arne Duncan spoke up to the President and said that we ought to include in there some provisions to help school districts, provisions for money if they will compete for it. They instituted a program known as Race to the Top. They invited States, if they wished, to apply for these Federal funds. Over 20 States applied. They weren't required to. The \$10 billion tied to reform was held out—it included \$4.35 billion, I should say, for Race to the Top; \$10 billion overall—it was held out to the States, and within a year 40 States not only competed but changed their laws to improve their prospects to win money from Race to the Top. Forty-five

States embraced college and career-ready standards like common core.

It is interesting to note that one of the States that was successful was Tennessee, which is, of course, the home State of Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER, the chairman of our committee in the Senate that is drafting education legislation. Tennessee impressed Arne Duncan and the Department of Education and became one of the recipients, and Tennessee made some honest declarations about the state of education in their State when they made this application. It was a State that took seriously making dramatic change, and a relationship was struck between Arne Duncan and LAMAR ALEXANDER and many other Members of Congress.

Time has passed. During the last several years, there has been a change of thinking in Congress, in the country, and in the Department of Education about the course to follow.

A week or two ago in the White House, President Obama signed the new Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which was promulgated on a bipartisan basis and had the active support of not only Republican Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER but his Democratic counterpart, Senator PATTY MURRAY of the State of Washington. This bipartisan legislation received I think over 80 votes on the floor of the Senate. Arne Duncan was there at the signing. He had worked with the leadership to arrive at this new stage in the evolution of the relationship of the Federal Government to the States and to the local school districts.

I could go through a long list of things Arne Duncan worked on, including his concern about student debt, but I want to close by pointing to one that has a personal interest to me, and that is for-profit colleges and universities. I have given so many speeches on the floor about this industry—the most heavily subsidized private business in America today, for-profit colleges and universities. I have recounted the miserable statistics about this sector of the economy. With 10 percent of high school graduate students, they receive 20 percent of the Federal aid to education. They account for more than 40 percent of all student loan defaults.

I appealed to Arne Duncan and the Department of Education to do their best to make sure the worst for-profit colleges and universities were held accountable. Arne Duncan showed real leadership. It wasn't easy. He ran into political resistance on Capitol Hill from both political parties. And while I was probably pushing harder than I should have, he stepped forward and started demanding accountability. The net result was that one of the largest for-profit colleges and universities, Corinthian Schools, went out of business. It turns out they had been defrauding the Federal Government for years when it came to the results of job-seeking by their students.

Arne Duncan showed extraordinary public service and political leadership