

I was now able to apply to medical internship programs, take the medical school intern exam, and apply to medical school, all because of my DACA status. DACA has defined my path. DACA has relit a fire within to succeed and continue to pursue my dreams.

Isn't that an amazing story—that a young girl would come here, realize she was undocumented, fight her way through for a bachelor's degree in these challenging subjects, continuing to keep alive the dream that maybe, just maybe something would happen to give her a chance to become a doctor? Then the President signs this Executive order, and now she is in medical school.

Because this medical school is in Chicago, my State is going to benefit when she becomes a doctor because she will go to one of my down-State communities that is begging for a doctor. She will go to one of the inner-city neighborhoods in Chicago and serve people who are struggling to get basic medical care.

What an amazing story—an amazing story that will come to a bitter end if the Republicans have their way on this bill.

The Republican answer to Johana is: After all of your life's work, after all of your dreams are fulfilled, leave—leave America. They are prepared to deport her and 600,000 others just like her. They think America will be a better nation if we get rid of someone like Johana. What are they thinking?

They are challenging the very funding of the Department of Homeland Security with this strategy of deporting the DREAMers. It doesn't make any sense. Whether you are conservative or liberal, this makes no sense—to spend \$9,000 to deport her instead of finding \$9,000 to help her finish medical school and be part of America's future.

We are a nation of immigrants. My mother was an immigrant to this country, and I stand on the floor of the Senate proudly representing the State of Illinois. That is my story. That is my family's story. That is America's story.

Those who have devised a strategy—what I consider to be a divisive, negative, hateful strategy—toward young people such as her are not thinking clearly about who we are as Americans. We are a nation of immigrants. People from all across this world have had the courage to pick up and come to America, to work some of the toughest, dirtiest, hardest jobs so their kids, such as Johana, would have a chance for a better future. That story has been repeated over and over millions of times. Republicans, with their strategy, their anti-immigration strategy, would kill that dream, kill that story.

I hope we have the good sense to fund the Department of Homeland Security. If there is going to be a debate about the DREAMers and their future, count me in. I want to be part of it. I want to come to the floor and tell these stories about real lives affected by these political decisions, and I trust in the outcome in the Senate. But don't stop the funding for the Department of Home-

land Security in the meantime. Let us make sure we are committed to our heritage as a nation of immigrants and to our future where young people like Johana can be a bright part of tomorrow for so many needy people across America.

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

[From the Wall Street Journal, Feb. 9, 2015]

CAN THE GOP CHANGE?

Republicans in Congress are off to a less than flying start after a month in power, dividing their own conference more than Democrats. Take the response to President Obama's immigration order, which seems headed for failure if not a more spectacular crack-up.

That decree last November awarded work permits and de facto legal status to millions of undocumented aliens and dismayed members of both parties, whatever their immigration views. A Congressional resolution to vindicate the rule of law and the Constitution's limits on executive power was defensible, and even necessary, but this message has long ago been lost in translation.

The Republican leadership funded the rest of the government in December's budget deal but isolated the Department of Homeland Security that enforces immigration law. DHS funding runs out this month, and the GOP has now marched itself into another box canyon.

The specific White House abuse was claiming prosecutorial discretion to exempt whole classes of aliens from deportation, dumping the historical norm of case-by-case scrutiny. A GOP sniper shot at this legal overreach would have forced Democrats to go on record, picked up a few supporters, and perhaps even imposed some accountability on Mr. Obama.

But that wasn't enough for immigration restrictionists, who wanted a larger brawl, and they browbeat GOP leaders into adding needless policy amendments. The House reached back to rescind Mr. Obama's enforcement memos from 2011 that instructed Homeland Security to prioritize deportations of illegals with criminal backgrounds. That is legitimate prosecutorial discretion, and in opposing it Republicans are undermining their crime-fighting credentials.

The House even adopted a provision to roll back Mr. Obama's 2012 order deferring deportation for young adults brought to the U.S. illegally as children by their parents—the so-called dreamers. The GOP lost 26 of its own Members on that one, passing it with only 218 votes.

The overall \$40 billion DHS spending bill passed with these riders, 236-191, but with 10 Republicans joining all but two Democrats in opposition. This lack of GOP unity reduced the chances that Senate Democrats would feel any political pressure to go along.

And, lo, on Thursday the House bill failed for the third time to gain the 60 votes needed to overcome the third Democratic filibuster in three days. Swing-state Democrats like Indiana's Joe Donnelly and North Dakota's Heidi Heitkamp aren't worried because they have more than enough material to portray Republicans as the immigration extremists.

Whatever their view of Mr. Obama's order, why would Democrats vote to deport people who were brought here as kids through no fault of their own? Mr. Obama issued a veto threat to legislation that will never get to his desk, and he must be delighted that Republicans are fighting with each other rather than with him.

Restrictionists like Sens. Ted Cruz and Jeff Sessions are offering their familiar ad-

vice to fight harder and hold firm against "executive amnesty," but as usual their strategy for victory is nowhere to be found. So Republicans are now heading toward the same cul de sac that they did on the ObamaCare government shutdown.

If Homeland Security funding lapses on Feb. 27, the agency will be pushed into a partial shutdown even as the terrorist threat is at the forefront of public attention with the Charlie Hebdo and Islamic State murders. Imagine if the Transportation Security Administration, a unit of DHS, fails to intercept an Islamic State agent en route to Detroit.

So Republicans are facing what is likely to be another embarrassing political retreat and more intra-party recriminations. The GOP's restrictionist wing will blame the leadership for a failure they share responsibility for, and the rest of America will wonder anew about the gang that couldn't shoot straight.

The restrictionist caucus can protest all it wants, but it can't change 54 Senate votes into 60 without persuading some Democrats. It's time to find another strategy. Our advice on immigration is to promote discrete bills that solve specific problems such as green cards for math-science-tech graduates, more H-1B visas, a guest-worker program for agriculture, targeted enforcement and legal status for the dreamers. Democrats would be hard-pressed to oppose them and it would put the onus back on Mr. Obama. But if that's too much for the GOP, then move on from immigration to something else.

It's not too soon to say that the fate of the GOP majority is on the line. Precious weeks are wasting, and the combination of weak House leadership and a rump minority unwilling to compromise is playing into Democratic hands. This is no way to run a Congressional majority, and the only winners of GOP dysfunction will be Mr. Obama, Nancy Pelosi and Hillary Clinton.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, we continue to debate the Affordable Care Act. The Affordable Care Act, of course, is the effort we passed in the Senate to try to make America a better place for those who need health insurance.

Our goal was accessibility, to make sure more and more people would have access to affordable health care. Our goals tried to transform health care into something that was more preventive, something that reduced the likelihood that someone would be hospitalized or have a serious disease. Our goal was to try to make certain we created incentives within the practice of medicine—for quality care, not the most expensive care. And we have achieved many of those goals in the first year.

Some 10 million Americans now have access to health insurance through the Affordable Care Program, and yet the Republicans in the House, as late as last week, for the 56th time voted to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

Now we might ask ourselves: What do they want to replace it with? They surely wouldn't just walk away from it. And the answer is: They don't have a replacement. They are so determined to kill this program. I will say to their credit that two Republican Senators have stepped up and said: Here is what

we would suggest as an alternative. I will acknowledge they are the first, I believe, after all these years, to actually step up with a proposal. But it is important for us to take a close look at this proposal.

This new plan which the Republicans offered does not offer the same protection when it comes to insuring people with preexisting conditions. Does anyone know a person in their family or a friend with a preexisting medical condition? Everybody's hand ought to go up because we all do. Everybody has somebody in their family with some history—a history that, in the old days, would disqualify them from health insurance or end up with premiums they couldn't afford. The new Republican approach to replace the current protection of people with preexisting conditions doesn't give the same opportunity for health insurance for those people. That, to me, is a fatal flaw.

Secondly, we decided we would make prescription drugs under Medicare for seniors more affordable. We used to have something called the doughnut hole. It cost seniors over \$1,000 a year to pay for their prescription drugs. We started closing that doughnut hole, and it saves on average in Illinois, for every senior citizen, \$780 a year. So that is \$780 for these seniors to have in their savings, in their checkbook. The new Republican approach, the Hatch-Burr program, eliminates that and we go back to the doughnut hole. We go back to this debt.

Sadly, it doesn't provide the Medicaid coverage which people in low-income categories need. Take a close look at Medicaid. The vast majority of people receiving Medicaid benefits in America are children and pregnant moms. When we cut back on Medicaid, as this Hatch-Burr proposal does, we do it at their expense. But the largest number in terms of dollars spent who receive these benefits are those in nursing homes who are broke.

Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, keep them alive. When we cut back on Medicaid, cut back on reimbursements to the nursing home, the obvious question is: What is going to happen to grandma? What is going to happen to mom?

So when they start cutting back on Medicaid, look long and hard. The people whom we are protecting on Medicaid Programs are some of the most vulnerable in America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I was listening to what the Senator from Illinois was saying. I could not say it as well as he did, but I agree with every single word he said and I suspect that Vermonters, Republicans and Democrats alike, agree with what he said.

LYNCH NOMINATION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, almost 2 weeks ago the Attorney General nomi-

nee, Loretta Lynch, came before the Senate Judiciary Committee and testified for nearly 8 hours. As one who has heard Attorneys General nominees testify for the past 40 years, I cannot think of anybody who did a better job. She was clear and concise. She is a prosecutor's prosecutor. She has also responded to more than 600 written questions. Many of them have absolutely nothing to do with whether she is qualified for the job or not. But people felt they had to send in these questions for whatever reason—and she responded to them all, whether they were relevant or not. And when she is confirmed, she will be the first African-American woman to serve as the Attorney General of the United States in our Nation's history. A majority of members of the committee, both Republican and Democratic, have said they intend to support her confirmation. I am confident she has the votes to be confirmed by the full Senate.

But as of today it has been 94 days since the President announced the nomination of Ms. Lynch. Her nomination has been pending longer than any modern Attorney General nominee. We should all be able to agree that confirming the top law enforcement position should be an urgent priority of the Senate. At a time when we face all kinds of threats from terrorists—both outside our borders and within our borders—we should all be united in confirming an Attorney General nominee like Loretta Lynch. She has the experience of successfully prosecuting numerous terrorists, people who others said we should be afraid to prosecute and that we should lock them up in Guantanamo in case they are not convicted. Ms. Lynch has obtained those convictions and those terrorist are locked away in Federal prisons right now.

This Thursday, the Senate Judiciary Committee has the opportunity to vote on her nomination. I have heard that even though she has already waited longer than any other modern Attorney General nominee to be confirmed, some Republicans are considering delaying the important vote for her for two more weeks. Under our committee rule, they have the right to do so. But I urge them not to do so.

Loretta Lynch's qualifications are beyond reproach. She has been confirmed by the Senate twice before to serve as the top federal prosecutor based in Brooklyn, NY, one of the most significant prosecutors' offices in this country. Incidentally, she was confirmed both times unanimously. Under her leadership, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York has brought terrorists to justice, obtained convictions against both Republicans and Democrats in public corruption cases, and fought tirelessly against violent crime and financial fraud. It would be hard to find any prosecutor in this country in any administration who has a better record than she does, and her record shows

that as Attorney General, Ms. Lynch will effectively, fairly, and independently enforce the law.

Now, thinking back to 2007 when Michael Mukasey was nominated by President Bush to serve as Attorney General. Now, President Bush was in the end of his term as President. The Democrats had taken over the majority in the Senate that year. I served as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. President Bush talked to me and said: we need, of course, an Attorney General. I agreed. And I knew that like Ms. Lynch, Mr. Mukasey had been confirmed before by the Senate, and I also knew that this was coming toward the end of the Bush Presidency. Now, ultimately I voted against Mr. Mukasey because of his responses relating to questions on torture. But even though I was going to vote against him, I proceeded with his nomination in a very prompt manner.

It took just 53 days from the announcement of Mr. Mukasey's nomination to his confirmation. It has been 94 days for Ms. Lynch. Her nomination is needlessly on track to take more than twice the amount of time it took a Democratic-led Senate to confirm President Bush's nominee. After Mr. Mukasey's hearing, Senate Democrats could have held his nomination over in committee, but we did not. In fact, I had to hold a special markup to report his nomination out of committee as soon as possible. And he was confirmed 2 days later. Republicans should extend the same courtesy to expedite Ms. Lynch's nomination, as we did to Mr. Mukasey's.

Last week the Secretary of Defense nominee testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee—last week—and his nomination will be reported to the floor today. His nomination is expected to be confirmed by the end of the week. Now, I agree the Defense Secretary is a critically important position to fill, and I will vote for him. But so is the Nation's top law enforcement officer. I urge Senate Republicans to allow a vote on Ms. Lynch's nomination before we adjourn for a week-long recess. Please, don't treat her differently than we treated Mr. Mukasey. We were able to give him an expedited procedure. She has already waited much longer than he did. Don't make her wait even longer.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNIZING DARN TOUGH SOCKS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, in Vermont, small businesses are the foundation of our State's economy.