

stay without fear of a knock on the door.

The Department of Homeland Security has only enough funding to deport a small fraction of the undocumented immigrants in our country each year. President Obama has said he wants to focus those resources on those who should not be in the United States, those who could do us harm. That is just common sense. At the same time, the President said we shouldn't waste our resources on deporting young immigrant students who grew up in the United States and are making contributions to our future.

During the campaign, President-Elect Trump pledged to rescind and end DACA. I believe that after his administration studies the issue, there is a chance he will reconsider when he comes to know these "terrific people."

I have come to the floor of the Senate now for over 10 years, telling the stories of these DREAMers. There was a time when they were afraid to come out publicly and tell America who they were. They had been warned by their parents since they were little kids to be careful. If you talk to the wrong person, if you do the wrong thing, if the police knock on the door, you may be deported along with the rest of your family, so be careful.

As kids will, these young people across America have decided they are not going to hide who they are. They want to tell America their story, and I have tried to help them. When they have sent us their biographies, along with photographs, I have come to the floor on about a hundred different occasions to tell the stories of these DREAMers. Each one, in my estimation, is more amazing than the next, and today is no exception.

This is Rey Pineda. In 1990, when Rey was 2 years old, his family came to the United States from Mexico. Rey grew up in Atlanta, GA. He worked hard and was an honor roll student in high school. He became the first member of his family to attend college. In 2010, he graduated with a major in philosophy from Southern Catholic College in Dawsonville, GA.

Rey is a devout Catholic, and he decided to attend Mundelein Seminary in my home State of Illinois. Rey felt that God was calling him to be a priest, but his spiritual path was blocked. Rey is undocumented. Rey is a DREAMer.

Then, in 2012, everything changed. President Obama's Executive action established DACA. In March of 2013, Rey was approved, filed his fee, went through the background check, and did everything he was asked to do. He received his DACA status, and he knew that at least for 2 years he would not be subject to deportation. That allowed him to become a deacon in the Catholic Church 2 months later, in May of 2013.

In 2014, Rey entered the priesthood after he graduated magna cum laude from Mundelein Seminary in Illinois. He has a master of divinity degree. Today, Father Rey Pineda is a priest at

the Cathedral of Christ the King in Atlanta, GA. He wrote me a letter, and here is what he said about DACA:

Like many Dreamers, the U.S. is really the only country I know. DACA was an answer to many years of prayers. Without DACA I would not have been able to serve as a priest in my community. I believe my faith in God has brought me to this point in my life; but my faith in America's promise has pushed me to keep fighting for peace, justice, and opportunity in this great country I proudly call home.

If DACA is eliminated—and that threat has been made—Father Rey Pineda will lose his legal status and be subject to deportation, being sent back to a country that he hasn't lived in since he was 2 years old. That would be a tragedy for Father Rey Pineda and his congregation and the hundreds of people who count on him as their priest.

Consider this: There is a chronic shortage of Catholic priests in America. Since 1975, the number of priests has declined by 33 percent while the number of American Catholics has grown by 43 percent. Hundreds of parishes have been forced to close or consolidate. Nearly one out of five Catholic parishes in America have no priest.

This shortage of priests is not limited to the Catholic Church. The problem is so serious that Congress has established a religious worker visa to allow people from overseas to come in on a visa and serve as priests in communities. It is happening all across my State of Illinois, and I bet it is happening in Iowa. If you go to parishes in rural areas, there will be priests from all over the world. I recently met one in Rome who was in Southern Illinois at Pinckneyville, and he was from Nigeria.

At a time when the United States is actively importing ministers and priests from foreign countries, why do we want to deport Father Rey Pineda? This makes no sense. Listen to what Father Rey told me about his role as a priest who is an undocumented immigrant:

I believe my entire journey has prepared me to be compassionate with the sufferings of many people I encounter. I look at my ministry as a calling to build bridges between people from all walks of life. Diversity sometimes brings challenges between people and I want to help heal those differences.

After the most divisive election in recent memory, I believe that Father Rey Pineda and other DREAMers like him have an important role to play in healing the differences that divide America. I am hoping that President-Elect Trump will see this and will continue the DACA program.

Let me be clear. If there is an attempt to shut down DACA, I will do everything in my power as a U.S. Senator to protect the DREAMers who have stepped forward and contributed their talents to our great country.

Many of those DREAMers and their parents spoke to me that day at Navy Pier and ever since. They said: Senator, are you sure? Are you sure that

we should sign up with this government? We have spent a lifetime trying to stay out of trouble, stay out of the view of people, not cause any problems, go about our business, raise our families, do our jobs, go to our church. If our children register with this government, will that come back at a future time and be used against us?

At the time, I said—and I believe it now—that America would stand behind these young people. We will not allow them to be deported after what they have been through. We will not tell them that by complying with the requirements of our government, you have penalized yourself in the future. We want to give them a chance. Now is the time for America, this Nation of immigrants, to heal the wounds that divided us during this election. Let's start with the DREAMers, let's start with DACA, let's start with the young people who will make America better and stronger in the years to come. They are the best in this country. Let's make them the best for America's future. I hope and pray the President-elect's words and actions in the coming weeks and months will, in fact, bring us together.

I yield the floor.

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. WARREN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

21ST CENTURY CURES BILL

Ms. WARREN. Madam President, 3 weeks ago Americans went to the polls. Voters were deeply divided on whether Democrats or Republicans should be in charge. Donald Trump is the President-elect, missing the popular vote by more than 2 million people. But there is one thing Americans are not divided on, one issue on which they sent out a message loud and clear. According to exit polls, 70 percent of voters said that they think the American economy and the lawmakers who oversee it are owned—owned—by big companies and special interests. That is 70 percent of everyone—Republicans, Democrats, and Independents.

In the closing days of this Congress, Big Pharma has its hand out for a bunch of special giveaways and favors that are packed together in something called the 21st Century Cures bill. It is on track to get a vote in the House this week and then get rammed through the Senate. I have been taking a look at the details, and when the American voters say that Congress is owned by big companies, this bill is exactly what they are talking about.

Now we face a choice: Will this Congress say "Yes, we are bought and paid for" or will we stand up and work for the American people?

For more than 2 years, Congress has been working on legislation to help advance medical innovation in the United States. Medical innovation is powerfully important, and I have spent as much time working on this issue as anything I have worked on since I joined the U.S. Senate. From the beginning, I have emphasized one obvious fact: Medical breakthroughs come from increasing investments in basic research. Right now, Congress is choking off investments in the NIH. Adjusted for inflation, Federal spending on medical research over the past dozen years has been cut by 20 percent. Those cuts take the legs out from under future medical innovations in America.

We can name a piece of legislation the "Cures" bill, but if it doesn't include significant, meaningful funding for the National Institutes of Health and the Food and Drug Administration, it won't cure anything. That is why months ago Senate Democrats said any so-called Cures legislation must have significant investment in medical research, and that is why Senate Republicans publicly committed to do exactly that. But now they have reneged on their promise and let Big Pharma hijack the Cures bill.

This final deal has only a tiny fig leaf of funding for NIH and for the opioid crisis, and most of that fig leaf isn't even real. Most of the money won't be there unless future Congresses pass future bills in future years to fund those dollars.

So why bother with a fig leaf in the Cures bill? Why pretend to give money to NIH or opioids? This funding is political cover for huge giveaways to giant drug companies. There are more examples than I can count in this bill. But I am going to talk about three.

First giveaway: Legalize fraud. You know, it is against the law for drug companies to market drugs for uses not approved by the FDA. Now, some drug companies find this rule annoying. After all, they can make a lot more money selling a headache pill as a cure for everything from hair loss to cancer. But pushing treatments without scientific evidence that they work is fraud—fraud that can hurt people. It also undercuts the development of real cures.

That is why some of the largest law enforcement actions against big drug companies over the past 15 years have involved off-label marketing. Drug companies have paid billions of dollars in penalties. Now, one solution would be for those companies to follow the law. But they prefer plan B: Cozy up to enough people in Congress to pass this Cures bill that would shoot holes in the anti-fraud law. In other words, make it easier for drug companies to get away with fraud.

Second giveaway: Cover up bribery. Right now the law requires drug companies to disclose the buckets of money they shower on doctors and hospitals to encourage them to prescribe certain drugs. It is, by the way, all published

on a government Web site. You can go look up your doctor and your hospital right now online, if you want to do that.

Now, the drug companies could have responded by ending kickbacks to doctors. But instead, they have chosen plan B again: Cozy up to enough people in Congress to pass this Cures bill, which would let drug companies keep secret any splashy junkets or gifts associated with so-called medical education and make it harder for enforcement agencies to be able to trace those bribes. Senator GRASSLEY, a Republican from Iowa, says he is outraged by this provision. I have to say that I am with Senator GRASSLEY on this one.

Third giveaway: Hand out dangerous special deals to Republican campaign contributors. According to news reports, a major Republican donor stands to benefit financially from selling cellular and regenerative medical therapies. If this guy had it his way, he would be able to sell them to desperate people without a final FDA determination that those therapies were either safe or effective.

Of course, that would be against the law right now. So this megadonor has poured millions of dollars into MITCH MCCONNELL's personal campaign coffers, and into his Republican super PAC, and now he wants his reward. The Cures Act offers to sell government favors. It delivers a special deal so that people can sell these treatments without meeting the FDA gold standards for protecting patient safety and making sure that these drugs actually do some good.

Keep in mind that people could die from using unproven treatments. In fact, people have already died during carefully controlled research experiments on these types of treatments. Congress should not be in the business of selling FDA favors to the highest bidders, risking people's lives to enrich political donors. Let's be clear. What the Republicans are proposing is corrupt, and it is very, very dangerous.

There is more. Republicans decided to hand out gifts for other special interests. The Cures Act, a bill that is supposed to be about medical innovation, has a giveaway to the gun lobby. The bill cuts Medicare funding. It raids money from the Affordable Care Act. It takes health care dollars that should have gone to Puerto Rico. It makes it harder for people with disabilities to get Medicaid services. There is a lot of bad stuff in this bill—a lot of bad stuff.

But not everything in the bill is bad. Republican leaders are playing a crafty game here, trying to buy off Democratic votes, one by one, by tacking on good, bipartisan proposals that Senators in both parties have worked on in good faith for years.

There is a bipartisan mental health bill. There are bipartisan provisions protecting the genetic privacy of patients and bipartisan provisions to give some very limited funding for important priorities, such as the national

opioid crisis. There is the Vice President's Cancer Moonshot. There is a proposal in here to improve foster care.

I support most of these proposals. I have worked on many of them for years. I even wrote some of them myself. If this bill becomes law, there is no question it will contain some real legislative accomplishments. But I cannot vote for this bill. I will fight it because I know the differences between compromise and extortion. Compromise is putting together common-sense health proposals supported by Democrats, by Republicans, and by most of the American people, and passing them into law.

Extortion is holding those exact same proposals hostage unless everyone agrees to special favors for campaign donors and giveaways to the richest drug companies in the world. Compromise is when Senators—Democrats and Republicans—find a way forward on issues that matter to their constituents. Extortion is telling those same Senators to forget what their constituents want. We will do nothing with the skyrocketing costs of prescription drugs and nothing to increase medical research.

Instead, every important common-sense bipartisan bill on mental health, genetic privacy, opioid addiction, foster care, and anything else will die today unless Democrats agree to make it easier for drug companies to commit fraud, to give out kickbacks, and to put patients' lives at risk. This demand is enough to make me gag.

Scientists who invent new cures should be celebrated, along with the companies that support them. But let me be perfectly clear. While the drug industry may get a seat at the table, they do not own the table. I do not care how many armies of lawyers and lobbyists they send out. I do not care how many campaign contributions they dump into congressional pockets. I do not care how painful they can make life for politicians who oppose them.

I will not be their lackey. I will work for the hundreds of thousands of scientists and doctors who are committed to saving lives and who are waiting for Congress to fund their work. I will work for the millions of families that have been touched by Alzheimer's, diabetes, cancer, and other deadly diseases who are counting on this research.

I will work for the 70 percent of voters who are sick of a Congress that is owned by big donors and giant corporations. Republicans are taking over Congress. They are taking over the White House. But Republicans do not have majority support in this country. The majority of voters supported Democratic Senate candidates over Republican ones. The majority supported a Democratic Presidential candidate over a Republican one.

The American people did not give Democrats majority support so we can come back to Washington and play dead. They did not send us here to whimper, whine, or grovel. They sent

us here to say no to efforts to sell Congress to the highest bidder. They sent us here to stand up for what is right. Now they are watching, waiting, and hoping—hoping that we will show some spine and start fighting back when Congress ignores the message of the American people and returns to the old ways of doing business.

Republicans will control this government, but they cannot hand that control over to big corporations unless Democrats roll over and allow them to do so. It is time for Democrats—Democrats and Republicans, who should be ashamed by this kind of corruption—to make it clear exactly who they work for. Does the Senate work for Big Pharma, which hires lobbyists and people who make giant campaign contributions, or does the Senate work for the American people who actually sent us here?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COATS). The Senator from Texas.

COMMENTS OF THE SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I confess that I came to the floor to talk about some of the nominations that we are going to see coming from the administration, particularly regarding one of our colleagues, Senator SESSIONS, the Senator from Alabama, to be the next Attorney General.

I am somewhat taken aback by the nature of the comments that I hear coming from the Senator from Massachusetts. I had to refresh my memory of the Senate Standing Rules, which I thought prohibited this sort of ad hominem attack—the claims of corruption, selling legislation for campaign contributions. I thought the rules of decorum of the Senate prohibited that sort of demagoguery.

But I am not sure you can write a rule that would prohibit somebody who is actually determined to defy the very voters they claim to be representing. If our Democratic colleagues like the result of the election that just occurred on November 8, I would say: Keep on keeping on. Keep on with this same sort of ad hominem attacks and attacking the motivation of people, rather than talking about policy.

I thought that is what the Senate was supposed to be all about—not where we come in here and call each other names. It is no wonder that the American people are turned off by what they see as politics as usual. I think what they told us on November 8 is that they actually would like to see us accomplish some things—first of all, starting with listening to them, not telling them what is good for them and saying: Well, if you don't like it, you are going to have to take it because the people in power, the people working in Washington, the elites in America know better than you do what is good for you.

So when I hear the Senator from Massachusetts come in and give essen-

tially a political speech, such as she did, not talking about the merits or the policy but rather making personal attacks against Senators and people who support the policy, I just think this is beneath the dignity of the Senate.

I would hope we would rise to the occasion, in the wake of this historic election and say: You know what, we can do better. The American people deserve better than what they have been getting coming out of Washington. The only way we are going to be able to turn this country around is by, first of all, listening to what the American people are telling us. We know what they said is this: We are not happy with the direction of the country, and we are not happy with what is happening in Washington.

To come in and make the kind of speeches that I just heard a moment ago is disturbing. It is disappointing. We can do better than that. We must do better than that if we are going to regain the confidence of the American people that we are actually worthy of their support as we try to guide this ship of state and try to pass laws that actually will improve the quality of their lives by growing the economy, by making it possible for people to find work who want work so they can provide for their families, to try to make sure that the American people are safe and secure, and to provide for our common defense.

Those are the sorts of things we ought to be focused on. So it is a little distressing to walk into this Chamber, in what used to be known as the world's greatest deliberative body, and to hear the sort of diatribe and the personal attacks and the name calling that we just heard from the Senator from Massachusetts.

ATTORNEY GENERAL NOMINATION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, the reason I came to the floor is to make note of the fact, as I alluded to a moment ago, that President-Elect Donald Trump announced his intention to nominate one of our own, a Member of the Senate, to be the Nation's top law enforcement officer.

Our friend, the junior Senator from Alabama, Mr. SESSIONS, is undoubtedly qualified and prepared for this role as Attorney General because of the long career he spent protecting and defending our Constitution and the rule of law.

If there is one thing we can do in the U.S. Government to help restore the public's confidence, it will be to re-embrace the concept of equal justice under the law and ensure there is not a double standard by which people are judged—the powerful, the well-connected, and then the rules that apply to everybody else—but, rather, that the same rules apply to all of us. The same laws apply to all of us.

In fact, that is the bulwark of our constitutional democracy. Frankly, I

think the American people have seen, in the last two Attorneys General—the current one and her predecessor, Mr. Holder—is essentially an office of the Department of Justice that was not worthy of the name “Justice.” It should have been called an extension of the White House political operation because so much of the way they conducted themselves was governed not by the rule of law but by political considerations.

Our friend, the Senator from Alabama, understands firsthand the importance of hard work as well. He is the son of a country store owner from Hybart, AL. He received his law degree from the University of Alabama. He served in the U.S. Army Reserves.

As we know, his service didn't stop there. Guided by a sense of duty for the last five decades, JEFF SESSIONS has dedicated his life to the State of Alabama and to the United States itself, first as a Federal prosecutor—including 12 years as U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Alabama, then as the State's attorney general, and now in the Senate where he has served with distinction for the last decade-plus.

Above all, JEFF SESSIONS has worked for the people of his State and this country with one purpose in mind; that is, to uphold the rule of law.

His career in the Senate reflects this earnest commitment to do what is right, not what is popular, not what is politically convenient but to do what is right, guided by the Constitution, the laws, and inspired by the people he was elected to serve. He has been a defender of our military families and played a leading role in ensuring that rural communities have the health care they need.

I understand the long knives are already starting to come out against President-Elect Trump's nominees and that Senator SESSIONS—our colleague from Alabama—is not going to be spared some of those attacks, but I would ask some of these critics who don't know his entire record to consider the fact that a few years ago he teamed up with the senior Senator from Illinois to reform sentencing charges on crack cocaine, sentencing charges that disproportionately discriminate against African-American communities.

It was a bipartisan solution that in JEFF's words, “achieve fairness without impeding our ability to combat drug violence.”

I would also ask these critics to consider the bill he introduced with Senator Ted Kennedy, the now-departed “liberal lion of the Senate,” to use grant funding to reduce sexual assaults in prison. The legislation requires the Department of Justice to keep track of these assaults, and it was signed into law by President George W. Bush.

Taken legislatively, these are not the sorts of actions that fit this distorted picture that some of the critics are already starting to draw about Senator SESSIONS and his record in the Senate or his character as a man.