

that in some appropriations bills for the last fiscal year. We are trying to spend a little bit more. Wisely invested, it will be a fraction of what they are actually spending on their own.

To the extent that those three countries can be more attractive to people who live there, that actually helps a whole lot in terms of the pressure on our own borders. Plus, it is the right thing to do. The other thing I would mention, as to our energy policy in this country, is that sometimes we have had an “all of the above” energy approach. It is not just coal, it is not just wind, it is not just solar, it is not just geothermal, it is not just nuclear, and it is not just natural gas. It is all of the above. It is conservation as well.

We need a similar approach to continuing to protect our borders, whether it is in the South or other places. But it should involve a variety of things. There are some places along the 2,000 miles where it will actually make some sense. There are a lot of places where a fence makes more sense. There are a lot of places where it makes more sense just to pave the roads alongside the border.

The Presiding Officer actually spent, as he said, his “misspent youth”—but I will say his youth—earlier in his life where he and other kayakers were in boats along the Rio Grande River. Part of border security is boats along that stretch of the river, that stretch of the border because it is literally hundreds of miles where the border is defined by a river. So in some places, boats make sense. In other places, boat ramps make sense.

Sometimes it makes sense to have drones up in the air that can surveil up to 100 miles into Mexico for folks coming our way. Sometimes it makes sense to put helicopters, sometimes fixed-wing aircraft. But you can't just send them up with binoculars. You need to put the right kind of surveillance equipment on there. We have that equipment. The key is to put it on the aircraft.

Sometimes stationary towers going up 200, 300 feet makes sense. Sometimes it makes sense to make those mobile. Sometimes we can put those surveillance systems 5,000 feet up in the air to look literally 100 miles into Mexico to see what is coming our way. If we have the right surveillance system, they could see not just during daylight, sunny skies, but they could see at night. They can see in fog and dense fog. So the key is all of the above—it is not any one thing—and to find out what works. The other thing is, maybe to continue to support and ask our Border Patrol: What do you guys and gals think? What do you think makes sense? And listen to them.

No, I am not smart enough to figure out how much money we put exactly in each one of those, but I think it makes sense, depending on what the needs are and on the advice of the folks who really are the experts on the ground, what

they suggest, and we can do an “all of the above” approach. But we also have to consider that the reason most of the illegals are coming to our country is that they live their lives in misery. If we don't do something to help them help themselves, we are going to be falling short of where we want to be.

I just wanted to share that before we recognize the next Senator.

I am looking forward to the inaugural address of the new Senator from Illinois.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I am honored to be on the floor for the maiden speech of my colleague Senator DUCKWORTH.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

OUR SHARED VALUES

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, I thank my friend and mentor, a great Illinoisan, Senator DURBIN for being here today. I wouldn't be here without his guidance and friendship over the years.

It is truly an honor to stand at this desk, which was once held by another great Illinoisan by the name of Barack Obama, delivering my maiden speech from the floor of the U.S. Senate to the people of Illinois, the same State that has been represented in Washington by other impressive leaders like Paul Simon and Abraham Lincoln. And it is an honor to address the people of the United States of America, the greatest Nation in the world.

Though we have occasionally made choices as a society that do not reflect our best selves, we are today the greatest Nation on Earth because of the founding ideals that have anchored our Nation and because of the shared values that have guided the development and strength of our economy and our people—values like treating each other equally, showing strength and resilience in the face of hardship, and embracing the diversity that makes us who we are. They are shared values that have helped us to strive toward that more perfect Union the Constitution's Framers envisioned, a more perfect Union that offers everyone a chance to reach his or her potential, a more perfect Union that will not give up on its people, and a more perfect Union whose people don't give up on themselves either.

We face a great deal of challenges and threats, threats I know well, but we cannot allow today's hardships to change who we are as a people, to tear down the pillars that make this Nation great. Falling victim to fear and demagoguery will only ensure a weaker America for our children, and that is simply not the future I want for my Abigail.

When we, as a society, think about the future we want for all of our children, I think it is important for us to remember how we got here. Our Nation wasn't founded as the dominant global economic and military force that it is

today. We were not founded as the leader of the free world; our people built that. Americans understood that when we invest in ourselves, the fabric that holds our country together only grows stronger. A scrappy gang of patriots in the American Revolution—my own family included—won us our liberty, which we used to push for greater civil and human rights and to make investments in agricultural and educational systems that sparked our economy, allowing us to strengthen our military into the greatest fighting force the world has ever seen.

Success, however, was never guaranteed. From our founding, the United States of America was forged through fierce debates and stark divisions. Slavery led to bloodshed across the country, including in the Senate Chamber, and culminated in brothers killing brothers during our Civil War. Yet our Union made it through our greatest challenges and emerged even stronger. We emerged a more perfect Union.

Our strength has been on display outside of our military as well: When heroes like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman risked everything to help bring an end to slavery; when Martin Luther King, Jr., had a dream; when the children of the Little Rock Nine braved harassment and abuse to bring an end to segregated schools and ensure educational opportunity for all; and when the backbreaking work of Asian and American laborers united our Nation from sea to shining sea with the completion of the transcontinental railroad.

America catalyzed the industrial revolution for the globe. We helped rescue the global community from fascism during World War II. We promoted civil and human rights around the globe. We explored space, launched the internet revolution, helped feed the world, built a world-class infrastructure network, developed a gold standard education system, and grew the strongest economy ever seen.

We were able to win World War II not because of the brave troops in our Armed Forces alone but also because our Nation's manufacturers and steel mills were able to produce the tanks and planes and firearms and other tools we needed to defeat the Nazis. We were able to build those weapons, launch the internet revolution, and send a man to the Moon only because we had a well-educated workforce made of people from all around the globe, all of whom had an opportunity to attend world-class colleges and universities right here in the United States, universities we spent generations strengthening.

Our economy was able to grow to its current strength not only because of that well-educated workforce and those who came from distant lands but also all who came and stayed to contribute to our society. It was also able to grow because we had invested heavily in infrastructure and built an interstate system and air and rail networks that enabled our farmers, ranchers, and

other producers to get their goods to market inside and outside our country's borders.

We were able to feed the world not only because of our strong agricultural sector and infrastructure alone but also because of the scientific advances supported by those educational institutions that helped increase farm production and yields.

Throughout our history, we pushed to expand human and civil rights from the abolitionists to the suffragettes, learning from people like the Tuskegee Airmen, the Selma marchers, and the LGBTQ leaders today that being inclusive and enabling people to reach their full potential only strengthens the American core. We did all of these things as a result of our shared values, and we have reaped their rewards for generations.

We have seen our Nation's strength in our prouder moments, as when America chose to go to the Moon—not because it was easy but, in President Kennedy's words, because it was hard.

We have seen our strength in tragedy, reuniting under a common cause in the rubble of the Pentagon and Ground Zero on 9/11.

We might get knocked down, but the America that I know, the America that I fought for and love, does not give up. That is not a Democratic principle or a Republican principle; it is simply the American way.

America's greatness has never depended on the strength of any individual person, but on all of us working together toward a common goal. When we have failed to stay true to our core values, when we deny another person our Nation's promise of opportunity, our Nation's strength suffers. When a child can't access the tools to succeed in school, when a woman can't afford basic healthcare, when refugees fleeing terror see the door slammed shut in their face, when we deny civil rights on the basis of skin color or sexual orientation or religion, and when a working family can't put food on the table, our whole Nation suffers. At the end of the day, America's greatness depends on each of us remaining true to the common values of our Nation.

But we have lost sight of those values. The Nation that built an interstate highway system, that was a refuge for immigrants who became the foundation of our economy, this Nation that pushed humanity to new heights, first with planes and helicopters and then into space, that same Nation seems to have forgotten how to invest in itself.

Our country that ushered in the era of aviation is now home to aging airports that struggle to compete with their global competitors. Our country that took on the Herculean task of reversing the flow of the Chicago River to protect the city's drinking water can no longer muster the resources to modernize public water systems to prevent our children from being poisoned by lead. Our country that built the

greatest military the world has ever seen, sending a signal that we will not cower in front of anyone, now finds itself with leaders who believe in the misguided notion that it is simply better to hide behind walls than to help lead with strength.

Make no mistake, America has not lost her greatness. Our Nation remains the dominant force on the global stage. But if we don't act, if we don't invest in ourselves, our adversaries are positioned to overtake us.

Though some may try to convince us the path forward is less engagement with the world, less acceptance of others, and less investment in ourselves, I know the path forward for our country cannot include—does not include—turning our backs on the shared values that built this Nation.

Perhaps more than any other State, Illinois knows this. We represent all the strengths of our Nation, from our dynamic cities to our strong rural and industrial communities and everything in between. We are the realization of the values that have created that robust American economy, bolstered by a strong agricultural community and manufacturing sector, both of which innovate and strengthen our Nation with the help of wise public policy and investments.

Those investments enabled Illinois steelworkers to help us develop our farmland, build our cities, and secure our military strength. American manufacturing built this Nation, but too many of the steel mills we relied on to win World War II have been idled or shuttered completely.

After years of illegal trade practices, like dumping of cheap foreign products and currency manipulation by our competitors, our manufacturing base has been weakened. That hurts not only American jobs but also our Nation's military strength as well as the resilience of our entire economy. We simply need to do a better job of keeping manufacturing jobs within our borders, and we need to make the investments necessary to ensure that we have a workforce trained for our 21st century jobs.

We can do better by Illinois' tens of thousands of farmers as well. These farmers, ranchers, and agricultural workers form the basis of our Nation. They all wake up with a purpose, each farm feeding nearly 170 people every year while supporting an industry that is developing cutting-edge biofuels and other technologies.

I have seen firsthand the painful price our Nation pays because of our overreliance on oil imported from our competitors. The simple fact is that American farmers are helping us improve our national security. They are helping to strengthen our Armed Forces and our entire country every day. They are already helping produce billions of gallons of clean fuel for our cars, our factories, and our military, and every single one of those gallons brings us closer to energy independence.

We cannot afford to leave our agricultural sector behind. We should be working to preserve policies like the Renewable Fuel Standard that support agricultural jobs and to open new markets, like Cuba, for their goods.

For generations, our manufacturers and agricultural sectors have relied on a strong infrastructure network, including roads, bridges, waterways, railways, and air transportation, to get their goods to market, both domestically and internationally. Illinois has often led the way. We built the Nation's first elevated electric rail line in the 1800s. But today, far too much of that infrastructure is crumbling. It is in dire need of the investments our society once understood the need for. The down payments previous generations made paid dividends to us all in the form of increased tourism, lower costs, more efficient shipments, easier travel, and so many other benefits.

If we fail to continue the investments past generations have made, we risk falling behind our global competitors, hurting not only our tourism industry but also our manufacturers and our hard-working ranchers, farmers, and producers who will find it harder and more expensive to get their products to market.

If we choose to disregard our infrastructure much longer, we simply will not be able to compete in the 21st century global economy. Improving our infrastructure isn't a partisan issue. It is common sense. It is an economic priority, a defense priority, and a national security imperative. This is something we can all work on together.

I am proud to say that the first bill I proposed after arriving here in the Senate passed unanimously with bipartisan support. It will cut redtape and help streamline efforts to modernize our infrastructure and allow our economy to continue growing for generations to come.

That is also true of supporting our schools, colleges, and universities. We have developed global gold standards for education that enable our manufacturers, agricultural workers, engineers, and brilliant Americans all across every sector to push our economy further.

There is a reason that wealthy elites across the globe—including world leaders from foreign lands—still send their children to be educated on our shores, in world class institutions like the University of Illinois and the University of Chicago. Our education system is widely recognized as the best in the world. Our teachers and institutions continue to produce some of the best trained and most skilled professionals in every field imaginable—both American and international students. That is a good thing.

But more and more Americans are no longer able to access those same educational opportunities. We have priced too many of our own children out of the market for those colleges and universities that we have developed to ensure our Nation's workforce remains

more skilled than our competitors, or we have saddled them with crippling debt. We are failing to make the necessary investments in K–12 public institutions that, regardless of ZIP Code, should be preparing every single one of our children to lead our country into the future.

Quality primary education should not be a privilege only for the wealthy, and it should not depend on rolling the dice on receiving a voucher. In the greatest and wealthiest Nation in the world, a quality education should be a right for every single American child. Our Nation's promise of opportunity should be a reality for every child in America, not just for those whose parents can afford it. We already have some of the world's greatest teachers, the brightest students, and the best facilities within our own borders. All we have to do is ensure they have the resources they need to succeed. That means our kids should not have to worry about going to school hungry or getting the help they need after school or being able to pay for college when they graduate high school.

That is why I focus on commonsense solutions to increase access to educational opportunity, whether by helping to lead the charge to make college more affordable or doing well to ensure the education we are providing people actually helps them find good-paying jobs when they graduate.

In that vein, I am also disheartened by the recent erosion of civil rights protections in our Nation. The calls for bigger walls and closed doors are not only bad, costly policies, they run counter to our society's shared value for inclusion over exclusion. Too many of us seem to forget the immigrant roots within our own families. If we lose sight of our Nation's founding principles, as some in Washington would like us to do, we will lose out on the innovations we have seen from immigrants and immigrant families.

If we had rejected immigrants years ago, Apple Computers might never have been founded by the son of a Syrian man. I worry that at a time when we still have so much work to do to make our Union more perfect and to provide truly equal rights for all, under the current administration we are at risk of backtracking on hard-fought progress made by civil rights leaders who bled and even died for the rights of all Americans, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, income or ZIP Code to have the right to vote, to have equal protection under the law, to have basic worker protections, and for the everyday rights and privileges so many of us take for granted. We still have so much progress left to make if we want the American dream to be accessible to all Americans—equal pay for equal work, a criminal justice system that truly provides justice for all, nationwide leave policies that enable anyone to take time to care for a sick family member or to start a family, a society that is

accessible for all disabled Americans and truly equal for all LGBTQ Americans.

I worry that we are at risk of going backward instead of forward. Failing to continue our Nation's inclusive nature weakens our global standing as well as the rest of the world begins to look elsewhere for moral leadership. That would be a failure for us and a weakening of our Nation that I will fight to prevent.

Of course, I also know how much our military has contributed to our Nation's greatness throughout our history. We must do a better job of recognizing these contributions, not just by purchasing equipment and technology, though what our skilled workforce has done is the envy of the world, but also by ensuring that we recognize and respect the sacrifices made by our troops, our military families, and our veterans. Servicemembers embody our values of shared sacrifice and perseverance, of loyalty and selfless service, and they each make great sacrifices to protect us.

They deserve from their leaders in Washington a clear sense of mission and strategy, and they deserve to know we fully support them. So, yes, when the drums of war are beating in the White House or in Congress, you can bet I am going to be right here on the floor of the Senate, asking tough questions and making sure our leaders in Washington, especially those who have never worn the uniform, truly consider the true costs of war—not just in dollars and cents but in human lives—in the commitments we are making on behalf of the Nation. I will also be here to remind my colleagues that we are all dishonored when any veteran is forced to lay their head down to sleep on the same streets they defended. We must end veterans homelessness. When our troops come home, I will be working to see that the veterans receive the care and support they earned for the sacrifices they have made.

Each of these components of our society contribute to what has made our country great—our military, our values, our infrastructure, our agriculture, our manufacturers, and our world-class educational system. If we fall prey to our fears, to our worst demons, and allow any of these pillars to fall, we will lose our opportunity to remain the leader of the world. We can rebuild the foundation of our Nation's strength and revamp it for the 21st century, but we can't simply rest on our past successes and act like our greatness is guaranteed forever. It isn't. It will take work.

This is deeply personal for me. I wouldn't be here today without the public education that enabled me to serve in our military for more than two decades and allowed me to give back to my Nation, both in and out of uniform.

Our Nation would not be as strong as it is today without the millions of individuals who sacrificed to build it. Our Nation's strength—what truly makes

America great—is rooted firmly in our shared sense of sacrifice. It comes from our single parents working multiple jobs just to make sure our kids don't go to school hungry; it comes from the farmer in Illinois waking long before dawn and working long after dusk to help power and feed our Nation; it comes from an immigrant family willing to put everything on the line to give their kids a chance at a better life than their own; it comes from the hard work and compassion, the sacrifice that Americans serving in our country in and out of the military demonstrate every single day.

We can all do a better job of remembering the shared values that have helped to build this Nation, but I want to make one thing clear: America is already great. We shouldn't let anyone tell us otherwise.

We know we still have a lot of work to do as a country, but let us not lose sight of the core values that make our improbable Union possible. We are still the greatest Nation on the face of the Earth, and if anyone has the capacity to overcome the challenges of today, it is this Nation. It is the American people.

I thank my colleagues for joining me today for my maiden speech.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

CONGRATULATING SENATOR DUCKWORTH

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise to thank my colleague for her first speech. The first speech given on the floor of the Senate is a memorable occasion for not only my colleague but for the staff, friends, and family who have followed this amazing story of TAMMY DUCKWORTH, a U.S. Senator from Illinois. She didn't disappoint with this first speech.

If there was ever an inspirational speech speaking to who we are as a nation and what we can be, she encapsulated it in her comments on the floor of the U.S. Senate. It was an aspirational speech, too—a challenge to all of us to do a better job for this Nation, to make it stronger and to represent more effectively the people who have sent us here to serve them.

She brings a special quality to the service that very few have been able to bring to the U.S. Senate. I first met MAJ TAMMY DUCKWORTH 12 years ago when she was my guest at the State of the Union Address just weeks after her helicopter had been shot down over Iraq. I was amazed by her tenacity, her courage, her good humor. I thought to myself, this woman has really made history. I think she can even make more history, and she has, being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives as well as the U.S. Senate, an opportunity that fewer than 2,000 Americans have had in our Nation's history.

I think back on what she brings to the Senate, and it is something that is special and extraordinary. To come to this Senate after her service in the military is to follow in the path of Senator Bob Dole, a disabled veteran from