

They have gone to our schools. All they are asking for is a chance.

When we introduced the Dream Act a week or so ago, Senator GRAHAM said that the young people who have received DACA should be treated fairly and not have the rug pulled out from under them. LINDSEY GRAHAM is right.

Over the years, I have come to the floor nearly 100 times to tell the stories of these Dreamers and to make it personal so that we come to know who they are and why I have taken the time to make this a major part of my service in the Senate. These stories put a human face on the DACA Program and on the Dream Act. They show what immigration actually means to our country in real terms.

This is Juan Martinez. When he was less than 2 years old, Juan was brought to America from Mexico. He grew up in Dallas, TX, with his parents and brothers. He was an honor student in high school. He graduated and was valedictorian of his class with a 3.9 GPA, a member of the National Honor Society, an active member of the debate team, and in student government.

He was an accomplished student, but he was also a very active community volunteer. Juan helped organize food drives at the local food banks, he cared for children at recreation centers while their parents worked, and he volunteered in soup kitchens.

In his senior year of high school, he applied to his dream school—once my dream school—Georgetown University, and he was accepted. As a college student, Juan has studied international politics, concentrating on security, minoring in the Arabic language. In his first year of college, Juan was elected as a student senator.

In his spare time here in Washington, he mentors disadvantaged high school students so that they can apply successfully for college. His dream one day is to work for our government, to help our country—the country that he calls home—and to make the world a safer place.

Juan sent me a letter, and this is what he said:

Thanks to DACA I can focus on my studies without worrying that it may all be taken away from me any second. I have always thought of myself as an American, but it is thanks to DACA that I can begin to truly feel like one, too. And that feeling is something I am thankful for every single day.

Juan and other Dreamers have so much to contribute to this country. But without DACA, without a similar protection, Juan could be deported back to Mexico, a country where he hasn't been since he was 2 years old.

Would we be a stronger nation if we lost Juan Martinez—if he were deported? I don't think so. I think the answer is clearly no.

When we introduced the Dream Act last week, Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM said: “The moment of reckoning is coming.”

I would say to the President first: Again, thank you. Thank you for al-

lowing DACA to continue under your administration. Thank you for keeping your word to me and so many others when you said that these young people don't have to worry. But we are reaching a moment, Mr. President, when we have to come together and do something. We need you and you need us so that we can pass important legislation and you can sign it—legislation that will give these young people the protection they deserve, the opportunity they seek, the chance to make America a greater nation.

I know the reality of this issue. I know it from both political sides. I witnessed it for over a decade. I know it is not popular, Mr. President, that you have taken this position, to stand behind the Dreamers and those protected by DACA, but you told me that you thought it was the right thing to do, and I am sure you still feel that way.

Your new Chief of Staff, General Kelly, and I have had many conversations about this, and I believe that he, too, thinks that legislation is necessary to protect these young people. I hope we can come together. I stand ready. Senator GRAHAM stands ready. We have a bipartisan coalition prepared to work with you.

Let's not let this decision be made in a courtroom somewhere far from Washington. Let's take on our responsibility, yours as President and ours in the Senate, to address this critical issue that really cries out for justice. This is the time to do it. The concern, anxiety, and stress is higher than ever among these populations of people affected by DACA and the Dream Act and, of course, their families as well. I hope you will join us in creating a legal option that will defend the DACA Program and will work with us in Congress to make the Dream Act the law of the land so that we can say to young people like Juan Martinez and hundreds of thousands of others: Yes, we will give you your chance—give you your chance to prove that you can become a valuable part of America's future, give you a chance to make America a stronger nation. That is all they have asked for, and that is something we, on a bipartisan basis with the President, should give them.

I yield the floor.

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

HEALTHCARE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I note in this morning's news that insurance companies that provide health insurance policies on the ObamaCare exchanges are projecting that insurance premiums will go up about 30 percent next year.

Since 2013, we have seen the nationwide average of premiums go up 105 percent. That was before this latest announcement. We know that in 2017, the national average increase in premiums was 25 percent, and in Arizona, for example, it was 145 percent.

So why did all of the Senate Democrats vote against making progress on

a solution toward these runaway premiums I have talked about ad nauseam on the Senate floor?

We have almost become numb to the pain people across this country are experiencing because of the skyrocketing rate of their insurance premiums, and we know that 28 million, roughly, have dropped out and are uninsured. In my State alone, because of the individual mandate, which is the penalty the government imposes for one's failing to buy a government-approved health insurance plan—as the Presiding Officer knows because I got the figures from him—more than 400,000 Texans who earn less than \$25,000 a year paid the penalty because they could not afford to buy the insurance. All in all, about a million Texans paid the penalty because of the individual mandate.

When we tried to do something about that last week, in working with our House colleagues, what was the response from the other side? It was crickets—silence. Unfortunately, the people who were hurt by ObamaCare are still being hurt by ObamaCare.

Now, here is the narrative. I have already seen it on social media and have read about it in the paper and elsewhere. Some people are saying: Well, the reason insurance companies are saying that premiums are going to go up 30 percent next year is that President Trump will not commit to the subsidies for insurance companies, the so-called CSRs.

That is utterly false. How do they explain the 105-percent increase from 2013 to currently? How do they explain last year's increase in insurance premiums, 25 percent, on average, and 145 percent in places like Arizona before President Trump even took office? It is a demonstrably false narrative, and I cannot tell you how disappointed I am that we were not able to make some progress toward a solution on behalf of the people whom I represent in my State but also on behalf of the people whom we all represent across the United States.

I dare say, as we search for a path forward, we ought to get our facts straight, and the idea that premiums are going to go up 30 percent next year, unless something changes, is a product of the failure of ObamaCare. It is nothing that this administration has done or will do that has caused that. So let's get our facts straight because starting with the correct facts is absolutely essential to coming up with real solutions.

WORK BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. President, we sometimes are our own worst enemy in the U.S. Senate. We do something really important, really good, and really bipartisan, and then we do not tell anybody about it. We leave it to them to discover it for themselves. Last night, for example, we passed major, bipartisan, bicameral legislation to continue the Veterans Choice Program. At a time when so much is polarized here in Washington and people are hungry for bipartisanship and solution-oriented leadership,

when they get it on something like the Veterans Choice Program, we do not talk about it. This is really important to our veterans—people to whom, I believe, we have a solemn commitment as a result of their service to our country.

Over the last few years, we have heard how the Veterans Health Administration has been plagued by inefficiency, unaccountability, and poor quality of care. The VA has been hindered too long by unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles, which have been incredibly frustrating and deadly. I am afraid, in some cases, for our veterans. We have heard stories about veterans having to travel hours to get medical care, sometimes causing them to accept lower quality care or to forgo that care entirely. Sadly, in some cases, veterans turn to coping mechanisms, self-destructive activity—self-medicating—with drugs or alcohol because they simply cannot get access to genuinely helpful medical care.

The Veterans Choice Program was designed to help address that by ensuring that veterans could receive timely appointments close to where they live. If they had to drive too far or if they had to wait too long for an appointment at a veterans facility, we said: You could show up at your local healthcare provider's, and we will pay for it through the Veterans Choice Program.

The VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017 continues that important program and guarantees veterans that they will have access to care without interruption.

This bill also strengthens the VA's ability to recruit, train, and retain its valuable workforce, which will help the VA continue to improve veterans' care. I am glad we were able to pass this legislation last night to ensure that this program can continue serving veterans. In moving forward, both Chambers should continue to work with the VA to get the agency back on track and right the years of poor quality of care and of service to our veterans for whom, I believe, we have a sacred obligation, a solemn commitment, based on their service to our country.

Next, we will focus on another important piece of legislation. This is authorizing the Food and Drug Administration's user fee program.

This is how the Food and Drug Administration actually considers and approves new drugs that can save lives and improve the quality of lives. These partnerships between the public and private sectors ensure that patients will have access to safe and effective drugs and medical devices while also maintaining America's position as a global leader in medical innovation. Faster approvals mean treatments and cures reach patients sooner. Increased competition leads to lower costs, and that, in turn, means more lives saved. This is another example of what, I believe, will be a bipartisan accomplishment of the current Senate and current Congress.

I heard one of our colleagues last week stand in front of the Nation and say nothing ever gets done. Well, we are doing some important things. The Veterans Choice Program and the FDA reauthorization bill are important, lifesaving bills that are being passed on a bipartisan basis.

Then, of course, there is the backlog of the President's nominees.

I have never seen anything quite like it. We had an election on November 8, but for many of our colleagues, the election remains undecided. They do not accept the verdict of the American people and the electoral college that President Trump won the election and that Hillary Clinton lost. That is how they, somehow, justify their consistent foot-dragging and obstruction when it comes to the President's nominees for important offices, including his Cabinet.

It is the President's prerogative to nominate whom he wants to serve in the executive branch, but it is our duty, our responsibility, to carefully consider their qualifications before coming together to confirm them. Now, we have had people who had been waiting months for their nominations to be confirmed and who were confirmed by almost unanimous votes of the Senate, which tells me we were delaying those votes unnecessarily. If they were truly controversial, I think it would be reflected in the votes for their confirmations, but they are not.

Let me just name one—our former colleague, Kay Bailey Hutchison, who has been nominated to serve as the Ambassador to NATO. I cannot think of a more qualified person than my good friend, the former Senator from Texas. Our country needs leadership in Brussels, at NATO, to help counter Russian aggression and threats and intimidation against our allies in the region, but that is just one example.

Last night, the Senate confirmed the FBI Director—I am grateful for that—but they also confirmed—again, in the dead of night when nobody was paying attention—eight other Department of Defense nominees. Now, if our Democratic colleagues had good reason to delay those confirmations because they felt like they were controversial, that is their right, but evidently they were willing to let those people who had been nominated to the Department of Defense be confirmed, basically, by consent after months and months of delay.

We have a lot of other nominations that are backlogged due to the unfortunate obstruction and foot-dragging of our Democratic colleagues, and I, for one, do not think we ought to leave in August—this month—without a big, robust package of the confirmations of these noncontroversial nominees.

It is time to get over the election. That was on November 8. We used to see a difference between elections and the responsibility of governing. Regardless of who wins the election, we still have the responsibility to govern.

Some people seem to have forgotten that.

Again, I hope we have a big, robust package of noncontroversial nominations approved before we leave for the rest of the month of August. I think it is too important to leave town without that. We need our President to succeed so the country can succeed. This is what every American who voted for President Trump hoped for, and they trusted him to choose men and women for his Cabinet to lead and guide our country. I have to say, he has done a remarkably good job in the people whom he has chosen for his Cabinet so let's come together and confirm these appointees so the administration can better serve our Nation and all Americans.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, thank you.

I come to the floor today to urge my colleagues to vote no on the nomination that we will vote on shortly.

On the campaign trail, President Trump promised to put workers first. Instead, President Trump's administration has rolled back worker protections and prioritized corporate interests at the expense of workers.

It is critical, now more than ever, that the NLRB remain independent and committed to advocating for workers and their right to organize, but I am deeply concerned that President Trump's nominee, Mr. Kaplan, does not have a record of supporting the rights of workers and unions.

At his nomination hearing, Mr. Kaplan confused basic labor issues and decisions, further proving he lacks the knowledge and experience to serve on this important board. NLRB members should be committed to standing up for workers, and it is clear Mr. Kaplan does not make the cut.

I urge my colleagues to join me in doing what President Trump has failed to do, and that is to put workers first. Vote against this nomination.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Marvin Kaplan, of Kansas, to be a Member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of five years expiring August 27, 2020.

Mitch McConnell, Chuck Grassley, Marco Rubio, Deb Fischer, John Cornyn, Susan M. Collins, Lamar Alexander, Roy Blunt, Luther Strange, Pat Roberts, James Lankford, Bob Corker, Richard C. Shelby, John Barrasso, Joni Ernst, Orrin G. Hatch.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.