

He said: We would go over to Canada under, actually, the guidance of our military for 1 night.

He said he got to stay in a nice hotel. Then he came back, and he was a legal citizen. I have not looked into how they did this, but that is how they did it. That was, simply, back then.

Then what did Joseph Medina do? He went and served our country. He served under General MacArthur in the Pacific. That is what he did. When he came back after bravely serving our country, he got married, and he had a boy. I met that guy. That guy served in the Vietnam war.

So we have a dad who served our country in World War II, and we have a son who served our country in Vietnam, all because at that time there were people who said: Do you know what? You were not brought over with any knowledge that you were even being brought over. You were only 5 years old.

They did not deport him when he wanted to serve in our military; they made him a citizen.

Joseph Medina came out here to Washington, DC, at the age of 99 to see the World War II Memorial for the first time. I stood there with him as he looked proudly as that memorial, along with two Dreamers, who were high school students, who actually wanted to sign up and serve in the Air Force, but they were barred from doing that under the way our laws worked at the time.

I am proud of Joe's service, but I even want more. Joe's spirit and his devotion to our country can continue on and be passed on to other generations. That is what this Dream Act is really all about. It is about other kids who were brought into this country without their knowledge and without their even understanding what was happening and allowing them to be part of that American dream.

America is a country created by immigrants. Immigrants have been part of our Nation's greatest achievements. We need to fix our broken immigration system. Of course we do. That is why I supported comprehensive reform so that we would have had money for order at the border, which would have created a very, very long glidepath to citizenship, but there also was a moral compass to that bill. It has been 4 years since we passed that bill, and as we all know, despite the bipartisan support in the Senate, the House failed to act.

By the way, despite reform being good for our economy, I always like to point out to people that of the Fortune 500 companies, 70 of them in America are headed up by immigrants. Of our U.S. Nobel laureates, 25 percent of them were born in other countries. We literally cut off talent when we cut off immigration.

In my own case, my great-grandparents on my dad's side came over from Slovenia to work in the iron ore mines. When he was in about the sixth

grade, my grandpa had to quit school to go work to help raise his eight or nine brothers and sisters, but he always had this immigrant spirit. He never even graduated from high school, but he saved money in a coffee can so he could send my dad to college.

On my other side, my mother's parents—my grandparents—came over from Switzerland. My grandma came over when she was very young—I think at 3 years old. My grandpa came over when he was about 18. He was detained at Ellis Island because they had reached their quota of Swiss immigrants, so he put on his form that he was going to Canada. He did go to Canada, but he did not stay in Canada. He somehow got through to Wisconsin and was there as an undocumented alien, and he lived that way for 20 years. He married my grandma, had my mom and her brother.

When World War II came along, they required those aliens to register, so he had to register. That is when they found out how he had come in, and they still said that it was OK, that he could register. Then he was kind of emboldened, so he decided to sign up for citizenship. That was when they really looked into it, so he had to have a hearing. He made his case that he had lived here forever and had been there, had had two kids, worked his entire time at a pie shop, and they gave him citizenship. I still have that picture of his shining face with that bow tie. I wonder what would happen to him today if he were to come forward. I am not sure he would be made a citizen despite the long time he had spent in our country.

Now it has happened on both sides of my immigrant family.

My dad ended up being a newspaperman and got to interview everyone from Ginger Rogers, to Ronald Reagan, to Mike Ditka. My mom became a teacher and taught second grade until she was 70 years old. And I stand before you as the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate from the State of Minnesota.

That is the immigrant story. That is a story of a family who came in, not in an easy way, with my grandpa in an uncertain status, clearly, when he came into the United States. So you ask me why I support these Dreamers? Because I had Dreamers in my own family.

I am pleased that so many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle have spoken out in support of DACA, and it is essential that we now pass this legislation to protect these Dreamers. I stand ready to work with my Republican colleagues. I thank Senator DURBIN and Senator GRAHAM for their leadership. Let's get this done.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASSIDY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE NATIONAL DEBT

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, we have had a lot of action today in the Senate, which is unusual here, and I wish to address it.

I would like to address this to the people in Texas, Louisiana, and to all of those who just experienced the devastating results and the impact of Hurricane Harvey. Obviously, our hearts go out to those people, and, of course, we are going to do the right thing and help the people of Texas, which is just what we voted on today. But there is a bigger issue I want to speak to today. I relate to this personally because, just last year—almost exactly to the day—our family was evacuated from our home in South Georgia. As I speak today, we were just notified today that my wife and mother-in-law, who are there today, will be evacuating this weekend from the south coast of Georgia, trying to get out of the way of the next hurricane—Hurricane Irma—which looks to be a very dangerous storm as well, coming into Florida over the next day or so.

But this crisis that we just saw in Texas and that we might see in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina with the next hurricane—Hurricane Irma—reminds us of a bigger issue. It reminds us that because of our inability to get our financial house in order and as a result of the debt crisis we have today, we are losing the right to do the right thing. Whether it is medical research, whether it is infrastructure, or whether it is education, whether it is funding our military, which we will deal with next week, we are losing the right to do the right thing. By that I mean our own financial intransigence over the last 16 years, primarily, but, I would say, ever since 1965, when we had the Great Society and the great War on Poverty, which has failed miserably. That was another great, sweeping, progressive, liberal program that failed to make any dent in our poverty rate in the United States. The poverty rate today is fundamentally the same as it was in the days when that bill was signed into law.

Because of our intransigence, our ability to appropriate money to deal with disasters like Hurricane Harvey and potentially Hurricane Irma and others is in danger. Moving forward, we just simply will not be able to continue to deal with these emergencies and crises if we don't have a functioning Federal Government that actually pays its bills and has its financial house in order.

The national debt is actually what pulled me into the political process. It is the reason I am in the Senate today.

The people of Georgia understand that this is an underlying crisis that we have been digging here for the last two decades and it simply has to be dealt with.

Today we have \$20 trillion in debt. I call that a crisis because we do not have a plan to reduce that back to some reasonable percentage of our GDP. This is greater in size than the size of our entire economy. What is worse than that and what is more concerning is that over the next 30 years, we have over \$130 trillion, by most estimates, of future unfunded liabilities coming at us like a freight train. That is Social Security, Medicare, pension benefits for Federal employees, and the interest on the debt, primarily.

Here we are dealing with this debt ceiling just today, and I would argue that the debt ceiling has been the most ineffective thing that I have seen in the Senate. Over 100 times it has been extended or increased, and it has not slowed down deficit spending in the Congress. It has not kept us from having a \$20 trillion debt today.

Washington knew this was coming, by the way. We have raised or suspended this debt over 100 times to no avail. It hasn't slowed down the debt spending that we have been doing, particularly over the last two decades.

Two months ago in June, a group of Senators and I listed the debt ceiling as one of the key reasons why we thought we ought to stay here during the month of August, instead of going home and having our work period there, because we felt that this needed to be debated and that we needed to get to a long-term solution.

Exactly 3 months ago today, I stood right here in the Senate and laid out what I thought the real consequences of the debt would be. At that time I said:

Congress is the only enterprise I can find anywhere in the world that funds its operations the way we fund this government. The problem is we have a system that is absolutely, totally broken. It is a fraud that is being perpetrated on the American people.

I stand by that today. The American people know that this is a fraud perpetrated on them, and that is why I think we have seen change in leadership in the White House. Just three months later, we see our debt limit today being dealt with in a way that puts in jeopardy our ability to deal with these national disasters, such as hurricanes and fires. We heard just a few minutes ago about the devastating fires in the Northwest.

Let's be clear. The United States cannot and will not default on our debts. It will not default on our obligations, but this debt ceiling issue should have already been resolved months before now. We actually hit this debt ceiling—just so everybody remembers—in March of this year. The Secretary of the Treasury has been using unusual measures—extraordinary measures, they call them—to keep the government funded during this period

of uncertainty. In fact, we hit this debt ceiling at a time when we should have been dealing with the budget. But still today—as I stand here today—we do not have a budget for fiscal year 2018, and we have 15 days until the end of this fiscal year, or the end of September of this year—September 30.

Raising the debt ceiling now just until December 15 isn't what puts our country at risk. The debt ceiling is not the issue here. It is not the problem. It is the unbridled spending that both parties have succumbed to over the last two decades under two Presidents—one Republican and one Democrat. Our government has grown from \$2.4 trillion to \$3.9 trillion. That is constant dollars. Neither party can point fingers at the other in terms of the explosion and the size of the Federal Government.

What is worse, as I just said, is that over the next 30 years, our mandatory expenses—it is not our discretionary spending. Discretionary spending in the last 9 years has come down, largely because of the Budget Control Act and because of sequestration. Our discretionary spending has come down from about \$1.5 trillion to just over \$1 trillion last year. That \$400 billion reduction, though, came on the back, primarily and largely, of our military.

The debt ceiling has to be dealt with, but it is not the driver of our problems. The budget process is the underlying release valve that causes this problem, and it allows both parties, particularly in the last 20 years, to spend money we don't have.

The budget process, as I have said before on this floor, has only worked four times in 43 years. We have to appropriate 12 bills a year to fund the Federal Government. The average over that 43-year period is only 2½. That is the fraud that is being perpetrated on the American people. No other body—no other entity that I can find anywhere in the world—can get away with that. Yet here we are, kicking the can down the road again for another 3 months.

Fixing the budget process alone will not solve the debt crisis, but we will not solve the debt crisis unless and until we fix this broken budget process. We cannot ignore this any longer. We must stop piling up this debt on the backs of our kids and our grandkids.

The fix is readily available. This debt crisis is not something we can't solve. People say: Well, you can't touch Social Security and you can't touch Medicare. Wait a minute. If we don't touch them, they are going to be broke in 14 short years. In 14 years, the trust funds of both Social Security and Medicare go to zero—zero. People will not be up here changing Members of this body at the rate they are now. It will be much accelerated.

The fix can be done. There are five areas that need attention, and any of these areas can have bipartisan solutions. I will not go into detail today. I will just highlight the five areas, but

we have to deal with each one of these on their own merits. The budget process is broken and can be fixed. I believe we have right now, behind the scenes, Democrats and Republicans working together to find a bipartisan, politically neutral platform to present our arguments on both sides of the budget process and to create a budget that actually funds the Federal Government appropriately, without all of this drama and without a release valve of extra spending.

The second thing is redundant spending. We know that the GAO, or the General Accountability Office, and the Congressional Budget Office both agree that we have several hundred billion dollars in redundant agencies and redundant programs.

The third is to grow the economy. This is job one by this President. This President has said that job one of this administration this year is to do the things necessary with the regulatory environment and the tax environment to grow the economy.

The fourth area is to save Social Security—not to cut it but to save Social Security and save Medicare. That can be done, and I believe there are bipartisan alternatives that we should be debating right now. In 2½ years, that has not come before this body, and I don't see it happening in the balance of this year.

The fifth area is that, while we debated healthcare most of this year, we debated the insurance side of healthcare for the individual market and Medicaid but what we never talked about—and we haven't under President Obama, President Bush, and, now, even under President Trump—in this Congress is that we have not dealt with the spiraling drivers of healthcare costs themselves—healthcare delivery, pharmaceuticals, and the fact that the neediest among us are getting the most expensive care in emergency rooms today unnecessarily.

Don't be misled. We are well into this debt crisis. This is not something that can be solved with a 10-year planning horizon. This is a situation where we need to tell the bond market and the world that we are committed to a 20-year or 30-year period in order to fix this debt crisis.

Ideas are coming from both sides of the aisle. One idea comes from the Democratic side that says: Let's pick a time in the future, put a stake in the ground about what target percentage of GDP our debt should be, and then develop a roadmap between today and that point in time in the future to commit ourselves to get there. I applaud that idea. I think that is a genuinely brilliant idea. It is something that other countries have done before and it is something that works.

I hope my colleagues will please remember that, today, every dollar we spend in our country's defense, which is about \$600 billion directionally correct in our military and between \$150 billion and \$200 billion for our veterans,

and all domestic discretionary spending, or about \$1.1 trillion—every dime of that—is borrowed money. Let me say that again. Every dollar we are spending on our defense, every dollar we spend on our veterans, and every dollar we spend on our discretionary domestic programs, like what we are doing here today, is borrowed money.

This simply cannot continue. I can't think of any taller order. Between now and the end of the year, as we debate the tax changes that we want to make to our Tax Code so that we can become competitive with the rest of the world, let's remember why we are debating that tax issue.

We are debating the tax issue to become competitive with the rest of the world, to grow the economy. That is one of five areas which need to be dealt with. Our regulatory work is the other area in that attempt to grow the economy. But we will not dig out of this debt crisis unless and until we fix our budget process, stop this redundant spending, save Social Security and Medicare, and fix the spiraling nature of our healthcare costs.

I can think of nothing—nothing—in our future the rest of this year that is more important than addressing this budget process as we look at tax and dealing with this long-term debt crisis that we have.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

STOP ENABLING SEX TRAFFICKERS ACT

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, it is a tragedy that in the Presiding Officer's home State of Louisiana, in my State of Ohio, and around this country, girls and women, children and adults, are being trafficked online. Sex trafficking is really a stain on our country.

We have taken some actions in the U.S. Senate to deal with this. We passed four or five bills to increase prosecution of those who engage in this, to ensure that women who are victims are treated as such and not as criminals. We have talked about how to help find missing children. I have been involved in those efforts. We have a caucus here on trafficking which has gotten involved in these issues.

Here is the reality, as I see it. Unbelievably, in the 21st century, this practice of selling people is increasing, and it is increasing primarily because it has moved online, where it is, tragically, efficient.

We have learned, through an extensive investigation over the last couple of years, that there is one website online which handles most of the com-

mmercial sex business and most of the trafficking, and that is a website called backpage.com.

What we have done in the U.S. Senate by focusing on this issue is we tried to determine how do you turn the tide, begin to get to the point where, instead of hearing more and more stories about women and girls and sometimes boys being trafficked online, in fact, we are beginning to get to a situation where we can find ways to get those people into treatment and recovery, deal with their trauma, and begin to stop this horrendous practice. It is really taking away the God-given potential of those engaged in it. There is nothing more horrible than meeting a young girl who has been trafficked and hearing the horrendous stories.

I was recently back in Ohio and had the opportunity to visit with some victims. I remember one young woman in particular told me she was trafficked at age 9—starting at age 9—by her father. He would take her to Super Bowls out of town, and he would traffic her online in their hometown. Imagine the trauma and the heartbreak.

Typically, now it is connected also with heroin or fentanyl or prescription drugs or other opioids. In other words, these girls or women are often made dependent, in part, from their addiction, and the traffickers cruelly use that addiction to force them to do things they would never otherwise envision.

So we know that. We know this is happening. We know it is increasing. We know it is online. What do we do about it?

Unfortunately, as we have learned in our investigation, these websites online that engage in this are largely protected. They are immune from prosecution. They are immune from victims being able to get justice. They are denied justice because of a Federal law which protects these evil people who knowingly are engaged directly in sex trafficking. That is pretty amazing; isn't it? But that is what is happening.

Victims were denied justice just 2 weeks ago, when a judge in Sacramento, CA, dismissed pending charges against backpage.com—this group I talked about—because of what they cited, which is a broad immunity granted by a 1996 law called the Communications Decency Act.

As the court saw it—and other courts have seen it—this law gives third-party website providers or publishers immunity from these kinds of heinous crimes, even if the website is participating in sex trafficking.

The court opinion made it clear, it is up to Congress to remedy this injustice, suggesting: "If and until Congress sees fit to amend the immunity law, the broad reach of section 230 of the Communications Decency Act even applies to those alleged to support the exploitation of others by human trafficking."

In other words, what the courts have said is, Congress, this is up to you. You

passed legislation—I believe inadvertently—inadvertently—which provides this immunity and protection for these people who continue to engage and participate in—knowingly participate in trafficking, including of underaged girls.

This is just the most recent ruling in a string of judicial decisions that have defended backpage and the other sites from legal challenges, despite their clear involvement in this criminal activity.

In 2016, last year, the First Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of backpage in a case brought by three girls who were sold for sex on the site, but the court opinion noted that in order to fix the problem, "the remedy is through legislation, not litigation." They called the practice what it is, immoral, but then they said the solution is not more litigation, it is legislation; in other words, Congress, get your act together—get your act together.

These court rulings underscore the need for us to get our act together and to do so with urgency because every day that goes by, more girls, more women are trafficked online, and this must stop.

Having met with dozens of sex trafficking victims, I asked them the question, of course: How did it get to this point? Were you trafficked by someone? How did you find yourself here?

Most of these victims—most of these victims—tell me the same story, which is backpage.com. Their trafficker has them, as they say, off the street corner onto the smart phone—and, again, tragically efficient, in the sense that they may be sold 10, 15, in one case, 20 times during a single evening. They deserve to know we will not passively let this injustice continue. They deserve to know Congress will step up and correct this Federal legislation which we passed in Congress 20-some years ago to deal with this issue.

In August, I visited the Oasis House in Dayton, OH. Oasis is a wonderful place. They welcome up to 11 women at a time to live in a faith-based community which provides them incredible support. It helps deal with the trauma we talked about earlier, helps them to be moving from that trauma to independence. They are getting recovery and support there. So many of these women have had a transformation, and it is wonderful to see them back with their families or back at work.

Speaking with these victims, backpage came up—as it often does. It is just heartbreaking to hear what they had to say—but mostly they can't get justice; that the website that facilitated these crimes against them is off limits.

That is why, in July, after an 18-month investigation into online trafficking, I introduced—along with a number of my colleagues—legislation called Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act. Currently, we have 27 cosponsors in the Senate. We have only had this introduced while we have been in session for 2 weeks because we introduced