

case, the capital gains rate of taxation was reduced. Then, suddenly, in the late 1990s, about \$100 billion of revenue that nobody expected showed up in the coffers. That is how we got to a so-called balanced budget a few years early because tax revenues were greater than expected.

I believe this will happen again. I believe that when you look at this proposal, it is conservative in the sense that it says: Yes, let's provide needed middle-class tax relief. Let's also do these things to grow the economy. Let's assume that because of all this, we are going to be able to improve the economic performance that is projected.

It is a pretty disappointing projection. Let's face it, 1.9 percent growth isn't great for any of us. It isn't great to deal with the issues of poverty. It isn't great to deal with the issues of entrepreneurship and innovation. It isn't going to help us to afford the entitlements that are growing. We need better growth than that, we want more growth, and I think tax relief is the single-most important thing we can do right now.

Yes, we should have more regulatory relief. Yes, we should do better in terms of getting the cost of healthcare under control. People are concerned about costs rising so fast, and we haven't been able to grapple with that issue. Yes, we should do more on worker training. We have a skills gap in this country. We have jobs available, and yet we don't have the skilled workforce to take those jobs. Yes, we can do more in terms of helping grow the economy through education and other things, but the one policy area that is crying out for reform is our tax system. It is antiquated. It is out of date. It is driving jobs overseas. It makes no sense. It can be simplified, and this simplifies the Tax Code. It can be made more fair, and this makes it more fair by helping the middle class more. It can encourage economic growth, and it does so through small business relief and relief for our multinational companies. It can help bring back trillions of dollars stuck overseas. That is what this does. That is the whole idea here.

I am excited about this opportunity. The House of Representatives is working on their legislation now in committee. Next week, that will shift to the Senate and the Senate Committee on Finance. We will have the opportunity for an open process. As I noted, we have already had 70 hearings in the Finance Committee just over the past 7 years since I have been in this Chamber. We have had working groups, including the bipartisan one I mentioned earlier, the five bipartisan working groups of that committee.

We will have the opportunity at our hearing next week to have an open process—anybody can offer an amendment—and open discussion. We will have an interesting debate. It will be spirited. As we saw here today, we have some differences of opinion, but let's

stick to the facts. Let's not make this partisan. Let's stick to the merits. Let's try to help the American people and our economy.

Then we will come to the floor of the U.S. Senate, and the same thing will happen—an open process. Every desk you see in here represents a Senator who will have the opportunity, should he or she wish, to offer an amendment, to have a debate, to discuss the issue. It will be spirited at times, but, again, I hope it will lead to a result that actually helps do the things we were elected to do: to give our constituents—the people we represent—the chance to have a better life; to give middle-class families a little relief as they are facing this middle-class squeeze; to help grow this economy from the middle out, from the bottom up, from everywhere; to give us the ability to say, once again, that America is that shining example, that beacon of hope and opportunity for the rest of the world. That is what this is about.

Let's not blow this opportunity. Let's get it done, let's get it to the President's desk for his signature before the end of this year, and let's make good on the commitments we have made to our constituents to help create a better economy and a better future.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, at 4:30 p.m. today, Tuesday, November 7, there be 30 minutes of post-cloture time remaining on the Engel nomination, equally divided between the leaders or their designees; that following the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote on the confirmation of the Engel nomination; and that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; further, that there be 2 minutes, equally divided, prior to the cloture vote on the Robb nomination.

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

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

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

#### GUN VIOLENCE

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to call attention to the tragedies that have been caused by gun violence across our country, including the most recent attack, which left at least 26 dead after a lone gunman opened fire at a church in Texas on Sunday. I join my colleagues in mourning for the victims and their families. Our thoughts are with them and all those affected by what happened in Texas.

At the same time, we remember that these heartbreaking events came just 35 days after the deadliest mass shooting in our Nation's history, when 58 were killed and hundreds were wounded in Las Vegas last month. But as we look ahead, we cannot escape the fact that we can, and must, do more to keep our communities safer. While no one policy will prevent every tragedy, we need to come together on commonsense proposals that would save lives.

I appreciate the words of my colleagues about mental illness and funding for mental illness. I think that is very important. I come from Minnesota, where Paul Wellstone was one of the leaders in making sure that mental illnesses got covered by insurance, and I think we need to do that and more.

Another area where we have found some consensus in this Chamber is improving background checks. My colleagues Senator MANCHIN and Senator TOOMEY have made that clear, and I supported their background check legislation in 2013. But the fact remains that we didn't pass that bill in the Senate. We fell short, and it was a disheartening day.

I remember having the parents of some of the Sandy Hook victims in my office that morning. Yet what happened that day—you have to contrast it with where the American people are. Consistently, whether it is with public opinion polls or whether it is when you talk to people you meet when you are at home, we have seen that Americans from across the political spectrum support commonsense proposals to require background checks, such as requiring background checks at gun shows. And they support that by wide margins.

By the way, I look at this from a State that has a lot of households that have guns. We are a proud hunting State. And with every proposal I look at, I always think of my Uncle Dick and how he used to love hunting and sitting in his deer stand. I think: Does this hurt my Uncle Dick and his deer stand? And I don't think that the Manchin-Toomey bill would in any way. When I look at these things, I have to evaluate them that way because I know how many proud and law-abiding gun owners we have in our State. But I don't see that closing this gun show loophole by doing something more about background checks would hurt that hunting tradition in any way.

When I talk to law enforcement around Minnesota, they stress the importance of having effective background checks to stop felons, domestic abusers, and people who are prohibited from having easy access to guns from having that access. If you remember, part of the Manchin-Toomey proposal was to do more on sharing data and getting the data out there. These efforts should not and do not have to infringe on Americans' rights to own guns.

Another sensible measure that came out of the tragedy in Las Vegas, which

we should take action on, is Senator FEINSTEIN's legislation to close a loophole that allows bump stock devices to convert semiautomatic firearms into weapons that work like fully automatic guns. Law enforcement recovered 12 of these devices from the hotel room of the shooter in Las Vegas last month.

I hope we can find some common ground. Some of our colleagues across the aisle have voiced some interest in this, and I hope we can do something when we know that would have been helpful in that shooting.

Another area where we can find common ground is in taking action to protect those who are at risk of gun violence from domestic abusers. We were reminded of how important this is again this week, as reports have revealed that the gunman in the Texas shooting had a history of domestic violence, having been court-martialed for assaulting his wife and child in 2012. He was sentenced to 12 months of confinement and received a bad-conduct discharge from the Air Force. There are also reports of ex-girlfriends and others who reported similar conduct.

I am sure the facts will be unveiled, but what I do know, regardless of what the facts show right now, is that this connection between domestic violence, stalking—those kinds of activities—and some kind of homicidal behavior is something that has been well established. According to recent research, more than half of mass shootings between 2009 and 2016—that is 54 percent—involved some kind of domestic or family violence.

Before I came to the Senate, I spent 8 years as the top prosecutor for Minnesota's largest county, so I have seen that connection. And I have seen the connection between a history of domestic violence or stalking that later leads to a more serious crime. That is why it is so important that we have protection orders, and that is why it is so important—as I look at the record of the shooter—that these cases be taken seriously, so you actually get that misdemeanor conviction on the record or you actually get a felony conviction or you do something about the stalking behavior when it is reported to law enforcement.

When I was the county attorney in Hennepin County, we would have cases we would sometimes pursue when a victim had reported it and the police had gathered evidence—even if the victim later backed away and was afraid to testify—because we knew it had happened, we had the original testimony, and we had the evidence at the scene. We trained the police on getting the evidence at the scene so that we were able to actually make those cases. And you think about, in that instant, making those cases; no matter how hard it can be sometimes when you have a scared victim, it is really important.

When I was in the county attorney's office, I made prosecuting felons in possession of firearms one of my top

priorities. They weren't supposed to have guns, and when they did have guns, we had to take it seriously. I will tell you, some of the most disturbing cases that we saw involved people with a documented history of harassment—of stalking, of domestic violence—because you would see it building and building, and sometimes it would be against one victim, but often we would find out that there were others and that it was a pattern of behavior, and one horrible case would erupt into homicidal violence.

There was one case I had heard of where a woman was shot to death by her boyfriend. He killed her and then killed himself while both of his kids were still in the house. It was ultimately his 12-year-old daughter who went to the neighbors for help. The worst part of the story is that it could have been prevented. In the 2 years leading up to the murder-suicide, the police had been called to the boyfriend's residence at least five times to resolve domestic disputes. Yet somehow the man, with a history of violence like this, was able to have a gun in his hand on the day he killed his girlfriend.

I wish I could say that it was a rare tragedy, but the truth is, studies have shown that more than three women per day lose their lives at the hands of their partners, and over half—this is an average—of the women murdered by intimate partners in the country are killed with guns. Many times these tragedies begin with incidents of stalking.

Research has shown that one in six women has experienced stalking sometime during her lifetime, and 76 percent of women murdered by intimate partners were first stalked by their partner. It is for this reason that a number of years ago I introduced a bill called the Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act to close some of these loopholes in our existing laws. My bill would make sure that those who are convicted of misdemeanor crimes of stalking are not able to buy guns. It would also expand the definition of a domestic abuser to include dating partners. The second part—when we had a hearing on this bill on these issues in the Judiciary Committee, even the Republican witnesses who were called supported the dating partner idea because so many States have started to do that.

I introduced the legislation this time. It has been bipartisan in the past, but the Republican Senator on the bill is no longer in the Senate, although it is bipartisan in the House. But this time I introduced it with Senator HIRONO and Senator FEINSTEIN, the only other two women on the Judiciary Committee of 20 members. Congresswoman DEBBIE DINGELL from Michigan is leading the same bill in the House, and her bill, as I noted, is bipartisan.

In 2014, we had a hearing on my bill. As I said, even the Republican wit-

nesses agreed that a major portion of the bill was a good idea. At that hearing, we heard from Sheriff Christopher Schmaling of Racine County in Wisconsin. He testified about the connection between stalking and guns being used in violence against women. In his testimony, he told the story of one woman from Wisconsin who, he said, had changed his career. This woman had endured 3 years of a violently abusive marriage before divorcing her husband. She then took out multiple restraining orders against him over several years. That horrible day in 2004, he threatened her with a handgun, beat her with a baseball bat, bound and gagged her, and left her in a storage unit to die. Through what he described as some good breaks and some great luck, the Sheriff and his partner rescued Teri before she died. As a result of the ordeal, she had a miscarriage and had to have her toes surgically removed. In his testimony, the Sheriff talked about the importance of my bill's provision to extend the protections in current law to include dating partners so that abusers would not be able to buy a gun if they are convicted of beating up their girlfriend or boyfriend, regardless of whether they lived together or had a child.

As the sheriff said, "Dangerous boyfriends can be just as scary as dangerous husbands; they hit just as hard, and they fire their guns with the same deadly force."

This is a simple point that you would think we could all agree on. Sadly, we still have not been able to pass this bill.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the sheriff's written testimony be printed in the RECORD.

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

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF SHERIFF CHRISTOPHER SCHMALING—JUDICIARY COMMITTEE HEARING: "VAWA NEXT STEPS: PROTECTING WOMEN FROM GUN VIOLENCE"—JULY 30, 2014

Chairman Whitehouse, Senator Grassley, Senator Leahy, members of the Committee, thank you for hosting this hearing today, and thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Christopher Schmaling. I am the sheriff of Racine County, Wisconsin and have been a law enforcement officer for 19 years. I am a conservative Republican, and I'm here today to ask you to pass two laws that will protect our sisters, our mothers, and our daughters by keeping guns out of the hands of domestic abusers. The first bill is the Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act of 2013, which will block abusive boyfriends and convicted stalkers from possessing guns. The second is a bill that would require criminal background checks for gun sales by unlicensed sellers.

More than half of the women murdered each year are killed by intimate partners or family members. That's 48 women killed by husbands and boyfriends each and every month. We know that people with a history of committing domestic violence are more likely to become killers—and we know the role that firearms play: When a gun is present in a domestic violence incident, the chances that a woman will be killed increase by 500 percent.

These numbers are tragic. As the top law enforcement officer in Racine County and over my two decades on the force, I've seen far too many of these tragic incidents firsthand.

I want to tell you about one such domestic violence incident, a tragedy that changed my career. In 2004, Teri Jendusa-Nicolai was violently abused and left for dead by her ex-husband. Teri had endured three years of a violently abusive marriage before divorcing him, and had then taken out multiple restraining orders against him over several years.

That horrible day in 2004, he threatened her with a .38 caliber handgun, beat her with a baseball bat, bound and gagged her, and left her in a storage unit to die. My partner and I were the lead investigators on the case, and through some good breaks and some great luck, we rescued Teri before she died. As a result of the ordeal, Teri had a miscarriage and had to have her toes surgically removed.

Teri is one of the most wonderful people I've ever known, and has been a tremendous advocate for victims of abuse in the decade since she was nearly killed at gunpoint. We've become very close since then, and my eyes have been opened to the reality of domestic violence and gun violence. I've also become close with Elvin Daniel, who is sitting here beside me today, and have been moved by his sister Zina's story.

I'm proud to say we are the first county in the State of Wisconsin to have a full-time domestic violence specialist. We work closely with victims to figure out how best to protect them. We've made this very intimate and very deadly area a top priority for our department. So much of the crime we face in Racine County is intimate partner abuse, and any cop will tell you that domestic violence calls are the most dangerous calls. The last thing a victim needs, and the last thing my officers need, is for these dangerous abusers to be armed with illegal guns.

We respond to domestic violence incidents differently than other calls, because these are "heightened risk" calls—we send more officers, we go ahead and assume that guns will be involved, because they are so often involved. Abusers routinely threaten to shoot my deputies and I upon arrival at domestic violence calls. In fact, according to FBI data, over 150 law enforcement officers have been killed in action while responding to domestic disturbances.

I'm proud to have worked on a great domestic violence bill in Wisconsin in 2014 known as "The Safe Act," a bill that ensures guns are kept out of the hands of domestic abusers. This bill was passed by a bipartisan majority and signed by our Republican governor Scott Walker. This year alone, similar bills were passed with bipartisan support in New Hampshire, Minnesota, Vermont, and Washington. And in Louisiana, where another Republican governor—Bobby Jindal—signed the bill into law.

The first bill I'm asking you to pass today is the Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act of 2013, S. 1290, introduced by Senator Klobuchar. This bill would close a loophole that allows abusive dating partners to buy and have guns—simply because they are not married to their victims. And it would also block people with stalking convictions from having guns.

Why is this bill so important? I can tell you firsthand that domestic violence is horrific, whether or not the abuser and victim are married. When we send our police into danger to respond to domestic violence calls, we send the same folks regardless of the couple's marital status. Dangerous boyfriends can be just as scary as dangerous husbands; they hit just as hard and they fire their guns

with the same deadly force. In fact, according to FBI data, more women are killed in America by their abusive boyfriends than by their abusive husbands.

This past March, just a couple hours from Racine County, Cheryl Gilbert was killed by her ex-boyfriend in a domestic dispute. The killer apparently shot Cheryl with her own gun, after a struggle. According to news reports, she had been seeking a restraining order at the time of the killing. But in cases like Cheryl's, a restraining order isn't good enough. If you've never been married to your abuser, federal law likely will not stop him from buying a gun.

If Congress passes this bill, federal law will be catching up with the states. Among the 22 states that prohibit gun possession by domestic abusers subject to restraining orders, 19 of those states already include abusive dating partners. And 42 of our states have recognized that dating partner abuse is a form of domestic abuse by allowing victims to take out domestic violence restraining orders against their boyfriends.

The second bill I'm asking you to pass today would require criminal background checks for gun buyers who shop with unlicensed sellers. Current federal law prohibits many abusers from buying guns, but only requires them to pass a background check if they buy a gun from a licensed dealer. This is a gaping hole in the law: It means a convicted wife-beater can slip through the cracks and get a gun simply by finding a seller who does not have his own gun store.

This is exactly what happened in Dane County: Tyrone Adair was a domestic abuser who had been convicted of battery twice, and was legally prohibited from owning a gun because of a restraining order. So instead of going to a gun store—where he would have had to pass a background check—he found an ad for a 9mm Glock in a local paper, and met the seller at a hardware store. There was no background check, though the seller did ask, and I quote, "You're not going to go out and kill someone, are you?" Tyrone Adair used that gun on a horrific murder spree, killing his two daughters—ages 1 and 2—and killing their two mothers.

Background checks work. Sixteen states and DC already require background checks for all handgun sales, and about 40 percent fewer women are shot to death by their husbands and boyfriends in those states. And background checks save law enforcement lives as well: about 40 percent fewer cops are killed with handguns in those states, as well.

These are the cops that risk their lives when they respond to domestic violence calls, rushing into the middle of very dangerous and very intimate situations. We see the terror that abusers can create when they are armed. We see the impact on their wives and girlfriends, and on their children. We're major proponents of community policing in Racine County, and if I have my officers on the street, working closely with our residents, I want to know that our laws are doing everything they can to keep guns out of abusive hands.

So I'm here to speak for victims of abuse and to speak for my cops. I've made it a priority to talk to victims. I've seen the escalation over the years, from yelling, to battery, to homicide. When an abuser has a gun, the victims say to me, "Sheriff, is not a question of if he'll use the gun to abuse me; it's a question of when." And I recognize the value of preventing even one gun from winding up in the hands of an abuser: one gun may translate into one more lives saved.

So today, I'm asking you to pass S. 1290, which will apply the same rules to all abusers, regardless of whether they are married to their victims or not—and will prohibit convicted stalkers from having guns.

And I'm asking you to require criminal background checks for gun sales by unlicensed sellers, and ensure that abusers don't get a free pass when they buy guns from them—often strangers they meet online, at gun shows, or through classified ads. The bipartisan bill introduced last year by Senators Joe Manchin and Pat Toomey would do just that, and it has already received the support of 55 senators.

I'm asking you today to stand up against abuse by fixing our out-of-date laws and passing this common-sense legislation. Thank you for your time and I look forward to answering your questions.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. I also note that a justice from the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania also testified on that day as the Republicans' witness. Even though he did not agree with everything in the bill, he also said: I absolutely agree that we should have boyfriends, dating partners as a part. We have it in Pennsylvania, OK? It is important. As the sheriff said, they can shoot, and they can beat up people just like anybody else.

He was, actually, the Republicans' witness at the hearing. That is why I am happy that in the House of Representatives it is a bipartisan bill, but I would like to see it as a bipartisan bill here in the Senate. Maybe they will reconsider this now. Just as the NRA has said that it was looking at the bump stock issue, maybe they would be willing to look at this issue because they wrote kind of a fast memo on this—it is only a page long—back when we had the hearing and when we were gaining support for the bill. Remember that this is very narrow legislation that is focused on making sure that dating partners are covered and also people who are not charged but convicted of stalking. They wrote that the legislation "manipulates emotionally compelling issues such as 'domestic violence' and 'stalking' simply to cast as wide a net as possible. . . ."

I want to make this very clear—and I have never addressed this on the floor before—that this was really focused narrowly so that we could gain Republican support. I didn't really think the NRA would support it, but I thought that maybe they would be neutral, and, sure enough, their witnesses at the hearing supported it. We have had Republican Senators support it in the past, and we have also had Republican House Members support it. In going after the bill by saying that it manipulates emotionally compelling issues, well, I would agree in that I am sure that a lot of people shed tears when watching what happened in Texas, and I am sure that they have shed a lot of tears when they have heard the stories from people in their own communities of the victims, of the women who had died at the hands of domestic abusers after years of abuse. So if they want to call that emotionally compelling and manipulative, that is up to them, but I call it the truth.

The other thing they said about this bill—and this was even more interesting—is the part about the stalking,

which is a major part of the legislation as well. That part of the bill, as I mentioned, just takes what we know as a signal for trouble in the future and violence in the future, and you would actually have to be convicted of stalking to have the gun protections apply.

The example they used—as I said, it did not make any sense to include this, and it is the only example they used—was of two men of equal size, strength, and domestic status, joined by a civil union or merely engaged or formally engaged in an intimate social relationship, being subject to this prohibition for conviction of simple assault arising from a single shoving match.

Actually, this part applies to the domestic partners. I think they are really taking this in a way that has surprised me since whom we are talking about are boyfriends and girlfriends and domestic violence, but they have changed it into a shoving match in a bar with people who might have some kind of social relationship. I just do not think this is a valid reason for my Republican colleagues to oppose this bill, and I am going to keep bringing this up because it does not make sense to me.

They end by saying that, whatever the case may have been 30 years ago, domestic violence is now taken seriously by the legal and criminal justice systems.

That was the reason they gave for opposing the bill. Really? Look at what we just found that happened in the last week when this was not just a minor example of domestic assault but was a felony. The person was court-martialed, and the person was, basically, detained for a year. Yet, somehow, this was not taken seriously enough through our entire system to show up on a record check. How about all of the reports that had been made by previous girlfriends and other people about his behavior, and nothing had seemed to come up then?

As I mentioned, of the many cases that we had had in our office, even when the victim had gotten scared and decided that she had not wanted to pursue anything, we had felt that we had an obligation to her and to the other women we knew would come after her to pursue those cases, and, many times, we had done that if the police had been trained and they had been able to get the evidence at the scene. Sometimes there had been child witnesses and others, and we had been able to pursue those cases and win them, and we did.

So to say that you don't want to support my bill because you think this system is so great, is working so well, and is being taken seriously by the legal and criminal justice systems after you saw what just happened in Texas, I do not think is true. This memo was written 2 years ago. So I hope they will look at this again and consider supporting my bill.

I conclude my remarks by sharing another story about yet another tragic shooting from my State. In this one I

truly got to know the widow. She is the widow of a police officer in Lake City, MN. This was a case in which the officer, who was a wonderful man in a small town police department, responded to a domestic violence call from a 17-year-old girl who was being abused by her ex-boyfriend. He went to the scene in the middle of the winter. He had a bulletproof vest on and everything because the domestic violence cases can be much more dangerous than people think, and officers know this. He was shot in the head, and he was killed. The 17-year-old girl lived. This officer literally gave his life to save another.

There was a big funeral, and there were law enforcement people there from all over our State. I will never forget that funeral. I was sitting there in the aisle, and I had learned that the last time that officer had been in that church was to see his own kids—three young children, two boys and a girl—in a Nativity play. He had been sitting right in the front row of that same church, so proud of them at Christmas. Shortly after that, he was shot. At his funeral, there were those three children walking down the church aisle—the two young boys and the little girl in a blue dress that was covered with stars. I always think about that little girl in that blue dress that was covered in stars. This was domestic violence gone bad. He was a police officer who had shown up at the scene.

When you look at these cases—we can look at the numbers; we can look at the stories; we can look at what has gone on on TV—you see this connection between domestic violence and stalking and then, later, either mass shootings or violence against one person, which happens much more often. It is not a coincidence. It is something that has been well documented.

As we extend our sympathies and prayers to all of those who were affected by that tragedy in Texas and, of course, not too long ago in Las Vegas and in so many other communities and to all of those, of course, who were also victims of that act of terror in New York—we think of all of them—we also think: What can we do to make this better? In this case, when it comes to domestic violence and this specific issue that I know a lot about from my past job, we can do something. So let's pass this bill.

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

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

DACA

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, whenever a Higher Power is looking down on us as we move through our daily lives,

I imagine that He probably doesn't see political borders. I imagine He probably doesn't care much about the distinctions that we create to tell the difference between us and others. He probably doesn't care much about walls and fences. He cares about us as people. He looks at us, at how we conduct ourselves, and at how we treat others.

We spend a lot of time here talking about the arbitrary divisions between us, but in the end, when we face our Maker, it probably is just about how we treated those around us, whether we tried to make their lives a little bit better.

So I am on the floor this afternoon to talk about a handful of my constituents who need our help, young people who we have labeled with the term Dreamers, who came to this country not by their decision but by the decision of their parents, when they were very, very young. They are Americans in every sense of the word. They are beautiful, beautiful young men and women, and they want us to see them as the beautiful individuals they are. They don't want to be labeled. They don't want to be put into the middle of a divisive political dialogue. They just want our help.

We all hear from them because there is no State that doesn't have these kids. There are 800,000 who have officially registered under the existing law that provides them with protection. They are in every single congressional district.

I thought it would be useful for my colleagues to hear from just a few of them today because they can tell the story of why we need to give citizenship, permanent protection, to these kids at the very least, if not their parents and others who have been waiting for a long time for comprehensive immigration reform. They can tell this story better than I can.

Vania from Willimantic is a student at Eastern Connecticut State University. I want to read what she wrote to me. She said:

I was born in Mexico, and I was brought to the United States at the age of 3 and have been living in Willimantic since. I am 19 now. I grew up in Willimantic, Connecticut, and I consider it my home. It's where I grew up, where I went to school, where I made friends, and where all my memories are.

As an undocumented student in the United States, you are constantly unsure of what your future may hold, but not because you're indecisive or unsure of what you are going to do, but rather because you don't ultimately have power of your own future. At a young age I always knew I wanted to go to college; however, I also knew that because of my status, I might have not been able to carry out that goal. However, I didn't let it discourage me. I like many other undocumented students did the best we could and constantly strived to be the best at anything we did, and now, thanks to DACA, all that hard work has finally begun to pay off.

See, DACA is more than just a legal status; it is the puzzle piece that many of us have been missing in order to reach our goals. It has allowed me to get a Social Security number, a driver's license, but more importantly, a higher education.