

those benefits are often that company paying for the rest of your education—finishing, maybe, your associate's degree or your bachelor's degree or graduate school.

We need to overcome the assumption that career and technical schools are a ceiling to future success. They are a ladder to careers with good wages and benefits that can support a comfortable lifestyle.

There is a high demand for these workers now. That is because we have what is called a skills gap in this country. Every Senator has it in their State. It is one of the things I hear about frequently when I travel around Minnesota, especially when I talk to businesses. I hear about job positions employers can't fill because they can't find qualified workers or workers with the right skills. At the same time, I hear from students who are anxious to start a career but lack specific technical skills.

To remain competitive in today's global economy, we need a better trained workforce. That is why I introduced the Community College to Career Fund Act. The grants would help create public-private partnerships that support Learn and Earn on-the-job training programs. Employers would develop a workforce with the specific skills they need to grow their businesses, and everybody wins.

Here is how it works. You go to get a credential. That credential gets you a job. Then the employer will pay for you to continue your education as you continue to work and make a living. I have seen this time and again, and it works.

We also need to reauthorize the Perkins Career and Technical Education law, which includes support for public-private partnership training programs in K-12.

I think some of the things we need to do to make college more affordable and accessible and valuable for students are pretty clear. But let's be honest. The Trump administration—after nearly a year in office—has been going in a very different direction and has been working against the best interests of college students. One of the most unfortunate aspects of this is that predatory for-profit colleges have been able to get even more of a foothold in our higher education system since Secretary DeVos took over.

The good news when it comes to education is that America still has teachers and principals and school board members and superintendents who work hard every day to take responsibility for every student under their care and deliver on the promise of a great education. We still have parents and neighbors and coaches who look out for our children's well-being and who work to equip them with the skills they need to succeed in school and beyond.

As anyone who has spent any time in a school lately can tell you, our kids themselves still have some pretty impressive potential. What is more, we

still have people on both sides of the aisle in the Senate who care passionately about education and are willing to do the hard work of bipartisan legislating in order to improve our schools and keep that promise of opportunity for the next generation.

If the last 8½ years have taught me that progress on education is possible, even in a divided Washington, this past year has taught me that further progress isn't inevitable and that the progress we have already made may not be safe.

It will be up to my colleagues not to address just the policy challenges posed by an education system that faces a big transition and a budget that forces hard choices but also the political challenges of the moment. It is my hope and prayer that they will be up to the task. Our children's future depends on it.

Thank you.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

LIBYAN SLAVE TRADE

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, I rise today to bring to this body's attention and to the attention of all Americans what can best be characterized as a modern-day slave trade. It is an outrage that is hard to fathom but that still exists today.

I was recently speaking to a group of pastors from my home State of Illinois who do wonderful work advocating on behalf of human rights and human dignity. One of them, Rev. Walter Johnson of the Greater Institutional Church in Chicago, shared his frustration that abuses and atrocities being inflicted upon migrants and refugees in Libya have received not nearly enough attention or outrage in the American public, government, or in the press. I couldn't agree more. That is why I have come to the Senate floor today to speak on this alarming human rights crisis.

Every American should be appalled by chilling images of modern-day slave auctions. Earlier this month in an investigative piece, CNN released video of an auction taking place. It was not an auction for a piece of art or another item one might bid on but an auction for human beings—human beings sold for the equivalent of \$400.

The reports were a wake-up call for the world about the gravity of this situation in North Africa as migrants fleeing danger and economic hardship face new horrors on their journey to seek a better future. The wars in the Middle East and instability in North Africa have upended huge swaths of the region, displacing thousands of vulnerable men, women, and children. Thou-

sands of people fleeing Africa and the Middle East make their way through Libya, hoping to cross the Mediterranean. Unfortunately, many of them face horrifying human rights abuses and danger along the way.

Because of Libya's limited capacity to govern, its restrictive policies against migrants, and its inability or refusal to accommodate the migrants, conditions are ripe for exploitation and abuse in their detention centers. Particularly horrifying have been reports from survivors about the exploitation at the hands of smugglers who are openly engaging in human slavery, preying on the most vulnerable, who have surrendered everything for a shot at the future. Migrants have been subjected to horrible human rights abuses in Libya over the past few years, including forced labor, torture, and sexual violence.

The administration must put this issue front and center when we engage with Libyan officials and demand accountability and progress. Sadly, it appears the administration missed such an opportunity to address this issue during Prime Minister Fayiz al-Saraj's visit to Washington earlier this month.

The United Nations-backed Government of National Accord in Tripoli, however, has taken an important step in acknowledging these abuses and is requesting international support. The European Union and African Union evacuation plan to repatriate the detained migrants that was agreed upon in the Ivory Coast is a move in the right direction.

In 2016, the United States provided emergency funding for the International Organization for Migration—the IOM—to help shut down migrant detentions centers in Libya. While the EU rightly picked up the majority of funding to repatriate migrants, the United States should once again consider another emergency infusion to the IOM to help accelerate the closure of these facilities in addition to the \$31 million in foreign operations funding for Libya that the administration requested this year.

Additionally, we have a former American Ambassador, William Lacy Swing, who is the Director General of the International Organization for Migration. He is on the frontlines of this fight and stands ready to work with Libyan authorities, the European Union, and African Union countries so that he can help address this crisis. The United States can play an important role in supporting Director General Swing and other international efforts to protect these migrants from exploitation and abuse.

Human rights are essential to the functioning and well-being of our global community, and that community is threatened when migrants fleeing persecution are forced into inhumane, exploitative conditions and slavery. Given this country's own dark history with slavery, we cannot afford to remain silent in the face of such suffering. We must stand together with

the help of the United Nations and other international partners to eradicate slavery and the conditions that precipitate it.

Thank you.
I yield back.

DACA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today to speak to an issue that I have spoken to many times on the floor of the Senate. It is the issue of the DREAM Act, a measure which I introduced in the Senate 16 years ago.

Sixteen years ago I tried to find a way to give young people brought into the United States, who grew up here in this country but did not have legal status, a chance—just a chance—to earn their way to legal status, to earn their way to citizenship. We set a number of hurdles in their path. We made it clear that they had to complete their education. We made it clear that they had to pass a serious criminal background check. We gave a timetable when they would be able to reach legal status and not fear deportation.

That was 16 years ago, and it still is not the law of the land. Unfortunately, there are hundreds of thousands of young people who fit the description that I have just given.

When President Obama was in the White House, I wrote him a letter and said: Mr. President, can you do something to help them? And he did. He created something called DACA, or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. It was an Executive order that said to these young people: If you fit that definition of the DREAM Act and if you will come forward and pay a filing fee of \$500 or more, if you will submit yourself to a criminal background check and give us all of your background information about you and your family, then, we will give you temporary, renewable status to stay in America, not be deported, and be allowed to work.

It was a big leap for many of these young people to do it because they had grown up in families where, in whispered conversations in the evening, their parents told them: Be careful. If you get arrested and they come to see this family, many of us will be forced to leave this country. Be careful.

These young people decided to trust the President of the United States, to trust the Government of the United States, and to run the risk of disclosing everything—giving the most sensitive, personal information about themselves and about their families. They trusted us, and they trusted this country to treat them fairly and justly.

So 780,000 have come forward. They submitted their filing fees. They paid for the expenses of the government. They did it knowing that even with this new status—this DACA status under President Obama's Executive order—they didn't qualify for one penny of Federal Government benefits,

and by working, they would be forced to pay taxes, which they were glad to do. Again, 780,000 came forward.

Then came the last election—the election of a President of the United States who had made immigration the centerpiece of his election message and who had really sewn doubt, and even fear, about allowing immigrants into our Nation of immigrants. It is not a new message in America. It is hardly a new message around the world. Being suspicious and fearful, even hateful, of immigrants has been a part of human experience from the beginning of time.

So what would happen to these DACA-protected 780,000 young people? President Trump announced, through his Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, on September 5 of this year, that DACA protection was ending. As of March 5 of next year, 2018, no one could sign up for DACA protection, and as the protection expired for each of them, there was no renewal for 780,000 young people.

The President then challenged Congress and said: Do something. If I believe, he said, that DACA is wrong, pass a law; take care of the problem. He said that on September 5. Here we are in December, just days away from the end of the year, and we have done nothing—nothing. And what has happened?

Across America, these young people, their families, and the people who believe in them have begged us to step up and do something. They have said: In the name of justice, in the name of fairness, in the name of morality, do something. And we have done nothing—nothing.

Many of them have decided in desperation to bring their message here to the Capitol. Right now, as I stand and speak on the floor of the Senate, there are thousands outside on the Mall, roaming through the corridors, trying to stop people who they believe might be Congressmen or Senators, to beg for the passage of the Dream Act, to beg for the reinstatement of the DACA protection. Some of them have made great sacrifices. I have gone out to talk to a lot of them. They have never been to Washington before. They have never been inside this Capitol Building. They don't know what it means to lobby. They can't afford a lawyer or a lobbyist. They are coming here to beg for their lives and to beg for their families. Some people are shunning them, refusing to talk to them. Others are gracious and warm and welcoming. They get on people's nerves because there are a lot of them and they want to talk to people about solving the problem. Some of them have sat in our offices—even my office—and I understand it. As awkward as it may be, I welcome them. I want them to know what America is about—a place where people in this country have the right to speak, to assemble, to petition their government. They believe this is their government. They look at that flag and they say: That is my flag too.

Legally, they are wrong. They are undocumented. Many have no country at all to which they can turn.

Who are they? Who are these 780,000 young people? I can tell you who 900 of them are. Nine hundred of these undocumented young people stood up and took an oath to a country that will not legally recognize them to serve in our military and risk their lives for each and every one of us. What greater proof can we ask about their commitment to this country? Nine hundred of them did this. If we fail to provide DACA or Dream Act protection to them, these 900 will be forced to leave the military of the United States of America. They will be turned away, despite the fact that they have volunteered their lives for this country.

Twenty thousand of them teach in our classrooms around America. I have met many of them. They are teaching in inner city schools through a program called Teach For America, which sends them to some of the poorest school districts in America. They are spending their lives, as undocumented in America, trying to help the least of those of the population, those in desperate need of their assistance.

Among them are thousands who are going to school now and college. Let me tell you that their challenge in college is a heck of a lot harder than the challenge for most young people. They don't qualify for any Federal assistance to go to college—no Pell grants, no Federal loans. They have to go to work. They have to work and earn the money to pay for tuition. That is what their lives are all about.

So for those who would dismiss these as lazy people who really can't offer much to the future of America, take a minute to get to know them.

Yesterday, one of my Republican colleagues looked me in the eye and said: We are talking about amnesty; these are people who violated the law. You are talking about forgiving them for violating the law.

Some of them, by his definition, violated the law when they were carried in their mothers' arms to the United States at the age of 2. Does that sound right? Does that sound just? Does it sound fair to say that these are people who have broken the law in America? I don't think so.

Let me say a word about their parents. There are some people who say: OK, I don't hate the Dreamers, but I get to hate their parents, right? They did break the law.

Technically, they probably did. I will not argue the point, but I will tell you something. As a father, I would risk breaking the law for the life, future, and safety of my children. I would, and most people would, and they did. It wasn't for any selfish motive. It was so that their kids had a chance. That is what it was all about, and that is why they came to this country. They knew that at any minute it could fall apart and they would be asked to leave, or worse. They risked it for their children. So I am not going to stand in