

in time to build a car, you can't do it. Eventually, this is going to damage our economy and kill jobs.

So I would like to reiterate, in conclusion, that the HUMANE Act is bipartisan; it is bicameral; and it would provide real relief for folks in Texas and other border states who are struggling to manage the crisis. Most importantly, it would be a much more humane way to treat these children and families who are flooding across our southern border.

I know most of our congressional Democratic friends have adopted the posture of reflexively standing against the President on anything and everything he asks for rather than standing for policies that would actually become the law and make the situation better.

I think this is a much better solution than tariffs on Mexican goods brought into the United States.

The President's team is negotiating the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, the USMCA, and I am hopeful we can get that passed here in the Congress once it is sent over from the administration. But I worry that not only are these tariffs that are potentially being placed on goods brought in the United States going to hurt our booming economy and jobs here, they also are going to jeopardize the passage of the USMCA—the successor to NAFTA, which I think we should all acknowledge is a big, positive development for the administration. Why would we jeopardize the passage of the USMCA? Why would we hurt our economy while trying to punish Mexico for not doing more—which they should do to stop the illegal passage of people across their country when there is a reasonable and responsible alternative.

I urge all of my colleagues to take a serious look at the HUMANE Act so we can finally do our part, which only we in Congress can do to stem the flow of Central American migrants who are flooding our borders and to prevent criminals and human smugglers from infiltrating our country as they are doing now.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

DETER ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleagues for supporting the Defending Elections against Trolls from Enemy Regimes Act, aka the DETER Act, a bipartisan piece of legislation I introduced with the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, Senator BLUMENTHAL, and Senator GRASSLEY.

This legislation would prevent foreign regimes from exploiting U.S. immigration laws to undermine U.S. elec-

tions. Specifically, it would make “improper interference in U.S. elections” a violation of immigration law.

Given the ongoing threat to the United States in terms of the integrity of our electoral process from Russian interference, we need to ensure that we are denying—and, if necessary, revoking—any visas to foreign nationals who seek to improperly interfere in our elections.

One of the most important takeaways from the Mueller report is that Russia successfully attacked America in 2016 by doing everything it could to undermine our election process.

Page 1 of the Mueller report says: “The Russian government interfered in the 2016 presidential election in sweeping and systematic fashion.”

The report detailed numerous examples of Russian interference, including an “intelligence-gathering mission” that employees of the Internet Research Agency—also known as the IRA—took in June of 2014. The IRA was the Russian troll farm that waged information warfare against the 2016 election with stolen identities, fake social media accounts, fake campaign events, and even attacking the voter list for the State of Illinois.

The report and the earlier indictment of several IRA employees noted that two of the Russians arrived in the United States for a 3-week trip “for the purpose of collecting intelligence to inform [IRA’s] operations.”

The DETER Act would respond to threats like this, barring foreign actors from traveling to our country to interfere in our elections. I thank my colleagues for supporting this important legislation which was approved on Monday night. I hope the U.S. House of Representatives will quickly pass it and send it to the President’s desk for his signature.

This should be the first of many steps Congress takes to deter and punish future election interference by the Russians or by any foreign power.

IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT

Mr. President, as a Presidential candidate, Donald Trump campaigned on a promise to the American people that he would “get tough” on immigrants and secure our border. We heard it loud and clear, didn’t we. The wall was to be built by the Mexicans, accusing Mexicans coming into this country of being murderers and rapists. We heard it over and over and over again.

Now, more than 2 years into the Trump administration, it is clear that the President has failed in his efforts on immigration—especially when it comes to families and children. It is obvious our southern border today is much less secure than it was when Donald Trump took office.

Take a look at these numbers. They tell the story, a dramatic story. In fiscal year 2017, which was the end of the Obama administration and the beginning of the Trump administration, in 12 months, 303,000 people were apprehended at our border, including 75,000 families and 41,000 unaccompanied children. Now, 2 years later, the numbers are dramatically higher under President Trump’s watch. Only 6 months into this fiscal year 2019, 361,000 people have already been apprehended at the border. It was 303,000 over a 12-month period 2 years ago, when the President took office; now, 361,000 in 6 months, including 189,000 families and 36,000 unaccompanied children. That is more total apprehensions in the first half of this year, in the first 6 months, than all 12 months of 2017.

The Department of Homeland Security has been engulfed in Trumpian chaos. In less than 2½ years of the Trump administration, there have already been four heads of the Department of Homeland Security—four—in 2½ years: Secretary John Kelly, Acting Secretary Elaine Duke, Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, and now Acting Secretary Kevin McAleenan. Within the Department of Homeland Security, there have already been, under this administration, in a little over 2 years, four Acting Directors of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and three nominees to head this agency.

Under President Trump, ICE has never had a Director confirmed by this Republican-controlled Senate, which spends all of its time approving nominees. The Trump administration has never had a Director of ICE confirmed because the proposed nominees’ names keep changing. In fact, every major position at the Department of Homeland Security is now held by a temporary appointee not confirmed by the Senate—not confirmed by the Republican-controlled Senate.

A major front in President Trump’s war on immigrants has been his attack on Dreamers. Dreamers are young immigrants who came to the United States as infants, toddlers, and children. They have gone to school with our kids. They have given back to their communities as teachers, nurses, engineers, and even soldiers. They are American in every way except for their official immigration status.

In 2010, I joined with the late Republican Senator Dick Lugar of Indiana, on a bipartisan basis, calling on President Obama to use his legal authority to try to protect these Dreamers from deportation. President Obama responded by creating the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program, known as DACA.

DACA provided a temporary 2-year legal status to Dreamers if they stepped forward, paid a filing fee, went through a criminal background check, registered with the government, and had nothing in their background that would disqualify them from staying in the United States.

More than 800,000 of these young people came forward. They received DACA protection. DACA has really given them their first chance, on a 2-year renewable basis, to not be afraid of deportation and to be able to legally

work and go to school in the United States. They used that opportunity well. They became soldiers of the United States, engineers, teachers, small business owners, and medical professionals, but on September 5, 2017, President Donald Trump repealed this program. Hundreds of thousands of Dreamers faced losing their work permits and being deported to countries they barely knew.

President Trump also terminated the temporary protected status program—known as TPS—for more than 300,000 immigrants. TPS allows nationals of another country who were in the United States to stay here legally if it is too dangerous to return to their country. The termination of this program by President Trump jeopardizes the safety of these immigrants, and many of them with American children, who number in the thousands.

When he announced the repeal of DACA, President Trump called on Congress to “legalize DACA,” but then he turned around and rejected numerous bipartisan proposals to protect the Dreamers.

Last year, I worked with Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, the Republican chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, to craft a bipartisan agreement that included the Dream Act and path to citizenship for TPS holders. However, President Trump profanely rejected my legislation in a tense meeting in the Oval Office.

Instead, the President tried to put the entire hard-line immigration agenda on the backs of the Dreamers. He said he would only support legalization for these young people if Congress passed his plan—his complete plan—which would, among other things, slash legal immigration by more than 40 percent.

There is a lot of debate in this country about immigration, for sure, but we usually agree on a couple basics: First, we are a nation of immigrants. Second, many immigrants come to this country and work extremely hard for their families, for their future, creating businesses and opportunities at great personal sacrifice. The notion by some that we would cut back on legal immigration to this country at a time when we desperately need increases in our workforce is so shortsighted.

This plan to slash legal immigration by more than 40 percent by President Trump was rejected by the bipartisan Senate. It would have been the largest cut in legal immigration in almost a century. The President would have taken our Nation back to one of the darkest chapters, when we were closing immigration to certain groups across the board, discriminating against them in terms that are largely unacceptable to America today. Thank goodness, the Senate rejected this plan by a bipartisan supermajority.

Yesterday was quite a day here on Capitol Hill. The legislative achievement of the U.S. Senate yesterday: a unanimous consent request to strike a

coin to commemorate women’s suffrage. I was happy to support that, but that is what we did yesterday.

What happened across the Rotunda in the House of Representatives? Yesterday the House of Representatives responded to President Trump’s cruel decision on DACA and TPS. The House passed the American Dream and Promise Act on a bipartisan vote of 237 to 187.

I went over to stand on the floor of the House, where I served for a number of years, just to hear the debate and to thank my colleagues for their leadership. I want to call out especially the statements that were made and the support given by Speaker NANCY PELOSI, Majority Leader STENY HOYER, Judiciary Committee Chairman JERRY NADLER, Immigration Subcommittee Chair ZOE LOFGREN, and the lead sponsors of the bill Congresswoman LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD, Congresswoman NYDIA VELÁZQUEZ, Congresswoman YVETTE CLARKE, and my friend and fellow Illinoisan Congressman CHUY GARCÍA.

This vote was especially important to me because this legislation that they passed yesterday in the House of Representatives includes the Dream Act. It was 19 years ago that I introduced the first DREAM Act, bipartisan legislation that would give Dreamers a chance to earn their way to legal status and citizenship.

Now the eyes of hundreds of thousands of Dreamers have moved across the Capitol and are focused on the Senate. They are counting on us to solve the DACA crisis that President Trump has created. Will Majority Leader Senator McCONNELL of Kentucky give them a chance? I certainly hope so. The Senate should send the American Dream and Promise Act to the President’s desk for his signature.

The Senate also has a responsibility to address the humanitarian crisis at our southern border, a crisis which this administration has made much, much worse.

When this President threatens to shut down the border, which he has on many occasions, it is like a neon sign to the smugglers to use this threat to encourage more desperate families to flee toward our border.

When the President says he is going to block all assistance to the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras and shut down any avenues for legal migration, he just guarantees that more refugees in desperation will head to our borders.

Earlier this year, the President forced the longest government shutdown in the history of the United States, 35 days—35 days, when men and women who serve in our government in important jobs like air traffic control at our airports were denied their pay. Why would the President do this to these men and women and to others, thousands of others, in our Federal workforce? It was his desperate pursuit of his beloved border wall so he could

fulfill a campaign promise that he told us over and over and over again would be paid for by Mexico.

The Trump government shutdown paralyzed our immigration courts. For 35 days, they saw their backlogs increase. The backlog has already grown by close to 300,000 cases pending before those courts in the last two years. These courts play a critical role in processing cases of immigrants seeking asylum at our border.

Within the last week, the President has said he will impose tariffs on all goods coming into the United States from Mexico, which will raise prices on American consumers, kill jobs in America, and once again put the burden—the political burden—on farmers in the United States, including in Illinois.

The administration and its Republican allies in Congress argue that critical humanitarian protections for families and children are the real problem here. They claim with a straight face that we can better protect these migrants by making it easier to detain them indefinitely and deport them without any due process. But if people were migrating to the United States because of the so-called legal loopholes, which the administration keeps talking about, they would be coming from all over the region. They are not. The vast majority of families and children are not coming from Mexico but from the three countries in the Northern Triangle, as I mentioned earlier.

In April, I visited the port of entry in El Paso, TX, and a nearby Border Patrol station. What I saw in those overcrowded facilities was heartbreaking. There are detention cells where these migrants are being held. Over the door of one of these cells, which has a window that you can look into, it says: “Capacity: 35.” I counted close to 150 men standing shoulder to shoulder in that detention cell. They are served their meals, and they eat them standing up. There is room for maybe 20 or 30 to sit on benches. The rest stand all day and take turns at night lying on the floor. There is not room for them. I have since been told that this cell has increased its numbers from 150 to 200.

Next door to that cell was a sign outside of the door that read “Capacity: 16.” Inside that cell, I counted about 75 women, including nursing mothers with their babies. I have been told that this number has since dramatically increased as well.

How long will they be in these cells? I am told anywhere from 3 days to 6 weeks. As I said, one of the women cells had a capacity of 16. I looked in there, and it was painful to catch the eyes of those who are being held there, and they mouthed the word “Help.”

It has reached a point where over 20 Senators have joined me in writing to the International Red Cross, which inspects prison facilities around the world. We asked them to inspect our detention facilities on America’s border. It was a sad day to make the request, but it had to be made.

I also asked the DHS Acting Inspector General to investigate these Border Patrol facilities. Last week, the Inspector General's Office at DHS released a report detailing the inhumane and dangerous overflow of migrants at the El Paso port of entry. The Inspector General's Office found that overcrowding was "an immediate risk to the health and safety of detainees and DHS employees."

While we fail to even debate this issue here in Washington, we cannot overlook the inhumane conduct that is occurring at the border. We are better than that.

This notion of zero tolerance, where we separated 2,880 infants and toddlers from their parents, some of whom it took months to bring back together—to me, that does not speak well of who we are as a nation.

Look at this picture that was taken by the IG at one of the cells. Their faces are blanked out, but it gives an idea of the mass of humanity I counted—the IG found 76 women were in a cell for 12 people.

The Inspector General's report said that the Department of Homeland Security has been aware of the situation in El Paso for months but has not identified a process to alleviate overcrowding. Meanwhile, weeks ago, months ago, Congress passed an emergency appropriation of hundreds of millions of dollars for humanitarian care of these people at the border. It isn't as if we haven't given the administration resources to deal with at least the immediate crisis on their hands. The IG report said that DHS has been aware of this situation for months, but they haven't taken measures to deal with it. This report called on them to take immediate steps.

The Department of Homeland Security gave a target completion date of November 30, 2020—a year and a half from now—for the completion of a centralized processing center in El Paso. The Inspector General found this response completely inadequate, and so do I.

Democrats are serious about addressing this situation. There are some bottom-line standards that I think we all should look to.

First, we need border security, there is no doubt in my mind. In an age of terrorism, with the worst drug epidemic in the history of the United States, I want to know who is crossing our border and what they are bringing. Every American should want to know.

Secondly, there is no excuse for allowing a dangerous person to come into this country. If we know they are dangerous, they are not welcome. And if they are here in any questionable status and a danger to America, they have to go.

Third—and it pains me to say this as the son of an immigrant woman, but it is a fact—we cannot absorb all of the people in the world who want to come to the United States. It is not economically or even physically possible for

that to happen. We have to have standards when it comes to immigration.

Once we have established those three standards, shouldn't we come together, Democrats and Republicans, and rewrite our immigration laws, this broken system that has led to this point? It will not be solved by threats of walls, by threats of closing the borders, by threats of cutting off foreign aid. That makes the situation even worse, and, sadly, President Trump has proven that point in the 2-plus years he has been in office.

I am serious about addressing this, deadly serious about what it means to Dreamers and people here in temporary protected status. In February, after the President finally ended his government shutdown, I helped write an omnibus appropriations bill. We put \$564 million in the bill for inspection equipment so we could scan and x ray every car and truck coming into the United States and grab the narcotics at the border before they make it to my hometown and yours. I hope we all agree on that. There was \$414 million in that bill for humanitarian assistance. I can't tell you how that is being spent.

We could do more to make sure that even in the midst of political controversy, our border is secure and our treatment of these desperate people is humane and that we will be able to answer to history for how we are conducting ourselves.

Democrats have introduced the Central America Reform and Enhancement Act as a comprehensive response to this problem.

We need to address the root causes in the Northern Triangle countries that are driving these migrants here.

We need to crack down on the cartels and traffickers who are exploiting these migrants.

We need to provide for in-country processing, which the Obama administration provided for and the Trump administration eliminated. What it meant was that residents in those three countries did not have to make a dangerous and expensive trip across Mexico to our border to find out if they were eligible for asylum; they could do it in their home country. The Obama administration had that program. The Trump administration eliminated it, and people started making that trip across Mexico to test whether they were legally eligible to stay in this country.

In that Democratic bill, we eliminate immigration court backlogs so that asylum claims could be processed more quickly.

We stand ready to work on smart, effective, and humane border security policies. But the President needs to be part of the solution. If this is about his reelection, appealing to his base, and being tougher and tougher, I could tell him: It is not working, Mr. President. It is not working for the good of this country. Perhaps your political base finds it appealing, but I think the American people are now looking for

solutions. They want us to work on a bipartisan basis. We have a chance and an opportunity.

The House of Representatives' action yesterday, I hope, is the beginning of a meaningful dialogue to deal with this crisis.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The Senator from South Dakota.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, our economy has made tremendous strides over the past 2 years. Americans on the whole have access to more jobs, higher wages, and more opportunities. Unfortunately, our Nation's agricultural economy is trailing behind the broader economy.

A combination of low commodity prices, protracted trade disputes, and natural disasters and weather-related issues have left many farmers and ranchers struggling. Nationwide, net farm income is about half of what it was in 2013—half.

In my home State of South Dakota, farmers and ranchers are currently facing the fallout from severe winter storms, heavy rainfall, bomb cyclones, and spring flooding. Less than half of this year's acreage intended for corn has been planted. Compare that to this time last year, when 96 percent of our State's corn was in the ground and growing. Today, just 14 percent of South Dakota's soybeans have been planted, compared to 83 percent this time last year. To make matters worse, for many farmers, this year's planting season is already over, as their land is completely flooded and will not dry out in time for anything to be planted. Other States that produce the bulk of our country's corn and soybeans are facing similar planting challenges.

There have been some recent wins for farmers and ranchers. The administration's announcement that it is lifting the ban on the year-round sale of E15—15 percent ethanol-blended fuel—is great news for corn producers in South Dakota and around the Nation. It is a big win for consumers, too, who will have access to this cleaner, lower cost fuel during the summer driving season for the first time. I have spent nearly my entire time in the Senate advocating for higher blends of ethanol, and I am pleased the Trump administration has followed through on its commitment to address this issue.

Another recent win was Japan's announcement that it was lifting age limits on U.S. beef imports, giving America's ranchers full access to the Japanese market. CNBC reports that the U.S. Meat Export Federation predicts that Japan's move could increase U.S. beef sales to Japan by \$150 million to \$200 million per year.

While these victories are important, there is a lot more work to be done to get our Nation's farmers and ranchers back on their feet. I hear regularly from South Dakota ag producers about the challenges they are facing, and I constantly share their concerns with