

spoke about on the floor this morning, I could not agree with him more. We need to put the resources in place. There are serious differences of opinion about the policy at the border—of the so-called Flores consent decree and the TVPRA legislation. There is also no common agreement between the parties in the House and Senate on that policy's language. I am not sure we will reach an agreement when it comes to some fundamental questions about how long you can hold a child in detention, for example. In the Flores decision—and this was a consent decree entered into by our government—we say that you can't detain a child for more than 20 days. The proposal now is 100 days.

Let me ask an obvious question. As a father and as a grandfather, what impact does it have in one's holding a child in detention for 100 days? Imagine, if you will, all of the possible circumstances of these kids in their having come to the border, what they have been through to reach this point, and what we then do in response. I think we need to be very sensitive to the reality that children are often harmed in ways we can't even imagine by things that happen so early in their lives. The notion of a longer detention needs to be carefully scrutinized to make sure we are never doing anything at the expense of these children and their long-term development.

I wanted to raise another issue too. While I agree with Senator McCONNELL when it comes to the humanitarian treatment of children and young people and others, too, at the same time, we are in a circumstance now where the President of the United States, in September of 2017, eliminated a program called the DACA Program.

I know a little bit about this because 18 years ago I introduced a bill called the DREAM Act, and the DREAM Act said that if you were brought to the United States as a child, where you didn't have any conscious part of the decision to come to this country, and you grew up in this country, went to school, did not have a criminal record, and went through a basic background test, then, you ought to be able to be allowed to stay in the United States and ultimately achieve legal status. That is the DREAM Act. We haven't passed it or enacted it into law, though I have tried many, many times. But we did prevail on President Obama to create the DACA Program so that these young people can step forward, pay a fee, go through a background check, be finger-printed, make certain that they were no threat to the United States, and be allowed to stay in this country for 2 years at a time without fear of deportation and be allowed to work.

Ultimately, 790,000 of these young people came forward. I have told their stories on the floor of the Senate many, many times. They are incredible young people who simply want a chance to be a part of the country—the only country they have ever known.

President Trump decided to abolish the DACA Program, leaving these

190,000 people in a precarious situation in terms of their legal rights and their future.

Fortunately for them, the Federal Court stepped in and said that the President needed to justify eliminating this program. While we are going through the argument in court, they will be protected—790,000 will be protected. No new ones have been allowed to sign up.

I see that my friend from New York is here, and I just wish, if I can, to make a statement about one of these Dreamers and then yield the floor to him. I am certain that he has some important things to say.

But I would like to, if I can—he helps me with my signs when he comes to the floor. I thank Senator SCHUMER.

I produced on the floor more than 100 of these colored photographs of these Dreamers to tell their story. This is Pratishtha Khanna, the 117th Dreamer I have spoken about on the floor of the Senate. She was brought to the United States from India at the age of 10, and she grew up in Laurel, MD. Her parents were university graduates with professional degrees. They both worked long hours in blue collar jobs for less than minimum wage with no time off.

Pratishtha said:

My parents believed in the hallmarks of American values: Work hard and you can achieve anything. They encouraged me to study hard and be the best I can be.

This is exactly what this young lady did. She was an excellent student who was placed in the gifted and talented program, and she was a peer mentor who tutored fellow students in math. In high school, Pratishtha earned college credits in an advanced placement class, was a member of the color guard, and served as treasurer and vice president of the student government association.

In 2009 she graduated from high school with honors. She attended her local community college. Because of her undocumented immigration status, she was not eligible for financial aid and had to pay international student tuition. She cleaned homes and tutored high school students to help pay the tuition. She volunteered at a local infectious disease laboratory. She graduated with an associate's degree in biology.

Then, on June 15, 2012, President Obama announced DACA, the program I mentioned earlier, which was abolished by President Trump.

Pratishtha says:

[It was] a monumental day for my family. For the first time in many years, my family sat together to eat dinner. I saw tears stream down my father's face. He talked about everything my brother and I could achieve with the basic scraps of dignity given us by DACA. The stress and despair in his eyes was replaced with energy and hope.

In May 2014 Pratishtha graduated with honors with a bachelor's degree in biological sciences from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Following graduation, she worked as a

scribe in the emergency department at Baltimore Washington Hospital Center. She kept studying, obtaining a nursing assistant and patient care technician certification. She then obtained a position at the medical intensive care unit at Johns Hopkins, while she continued working in the emergency department at Baltimore Washington Medical Center.

Her father passed away in November of 2015, just a few years after she was given DACA status. Through long night shifts in the ICU and the 5 a.m. shifts in the emergency department, Pratishtha had become the family's breadwinner.

She is now studying for a master of science in biomedical science at Western University of Health Sciences, in Pomona, CA. Her dream is to become a doctor.

She wrote me a letter, and she said: America is my home. My father's ashes will lay to rest here. I don't have another home. As assaults on immigrants and democracy run rampant, the world looks to Congress for leadership and justice.

The eyes of Pratishtha and hundreds of thousands of Dreamers are on Washington and on the U.S. Senate. Last week the House of Representatives passed the American Dream and Promise Act in an effort to save Pratishtha and the hundreds of thousands of others like her. We want you to be a part of America's future. You are an extraordinary person. Her life and what she has already given are an indication of why we need her in America's future. The fact that the Republican leader would come to the floor and speak about the humanitarian treatment of young children and overlook the fact that we have a bill that has been sent to us by the House of Representatives, which would help 790,000 and more with the American Dream and Promise Act, tells me that he is not closing in the loop on humanitarianism.

I call on the Republican leader in the Senate: Do not make this a legislative graveyard. Let's use the power of this Senate to pass the legislation that passed the House of Representatives and give this young woman and thousands more just like her an opportunity to be a part of America's future.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, let me thank my dear friend, the senior Senator from Illinois, for the passion, persistence, and intelligence he shows on behalf of the Dreamers, who simply want to be Americans, who have shown their part of the American dream, and whom we are truly blocking from achieving their dream—which is the American dream.

Thank you.

SEPTEMBER 11TH VICTIM COMPENSATION FUND ACT

Now, on another matter, Mr. President, just now Members of the House

Judiciary Committee unanimously passed a bill to address the shortfall in the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund, which provides aid to the heroes and the families of the heroes who rushed to the towers selflessly on September 11, 2001.

Even in a divided Congress, even in a divided country, this issue is an absolute issue of moral clarity. On that fateful day, the men and women of the New York Fire Department, the New York Police Department, the EMS, and the construction labor unions who rushed to Ground Zero were like our soldiers. Like our soldiers, they rushed to danger for our safety without thinking of their own, and just as we don't leave soldiers on the battlefield behind, we must not leave the brave first responders behind when it comes to their healthcare. Yet, shamefully, it has always been a struggle here in this Congress to abide by that principle.

I have lived through the years when everyone said the first responders are getting respiratory illnesses and cancers they hadn't seen in such young people. They said they were crazy for thinking that it came from the pile. I lived through the years when, even though the science eventually confirmed that 9/11 was the cause, some in Congress complained that it was too expensive to provide these heroes with the healthcare they so very needed. Then, some said: This is a New York issue, and we are not going to help—as if we care about where our soldiers come from when they die on the battlefield.

After years of struggle, we eventually passed a healthcare program, but, initially, it wasn't even permanent. We have to fight every time when there is a problem, every time we need an extension, and every time it needs more funding. It is a painful and slow process, a difficult process, one that should never have been the way it has been. Every single one of the times, those brave first responders have had to come here to testify, wheeling through the halls of Congress, their bodies riddled with cancer, to beg Senators and Congressmen to help them get their healthcare.

My good friend, my dear friend Ray Pfeiffer—God bless his memory—who knew he was dying, would come down here again and again and again, not for himself—he knew it was too late for him—but to make sure his friends and their families got the help they needed.

It is shameful—there is no other word for it; shameful—that our great first responders have had to suffer the indignity of delay after delay after delay, of searching for some must-pass bill to tuck their issue into because this Congress, this Senate, did not think it was important enough to pass it on its own.

Let me tell you something. We are done with that. We are not doing this again—not this time. The House Judiciary Committee just passed the fix to the Victim's Compensation Fund. The full House will follow suit soon.

As soon as the House passes this bill, it should be on the floor of the Senate immediately as a stand-alone bill.

Once this bill passes the House, there will be only one person who stands between the brave first responders now suffering from cancer and illness and the money they need to save or extend their lives, and that one person is Leader McCONNELL.

So I say to Leader McCONNELL: This is not politics. This is not a game. These are our heroes—American heroes who are suffering and need our help. Your help, Leader McCONNELL, is needed now. I am imploring, pleading, even begging to Leader McCONNELL to put this bill on the floor immediately after it passes the House. I am imploring, I am pleading, I am begging Leader McCONNELL to give us a commitment today that, as soon as the House passes this bill, he will put it on the floor of the Senate as a stand-alone bill.

Once he puts it on the floor of the Senate, it will pass the Senate with strong bipartisan support. This is not a Democratic or Republican issue. The President will sign it. The brave heroes who have come down here time and again will breathe a sigh of relief, knowing they and their families, even if they are gone, will get the help they deserve.

We will reach the point soon—most likely this year—when more will have died from 9/11 related illnesses than on 9/11 itself. It has been over 17 years since 9/11, but, unfortunately, brave Americans are still dying. Brave Americans are still finding the cancers that were caused by their rushing to the pile, but only discovering them now. Let's do our job. Let's take care of them now.

ANNIVERSARY OF PULSE NIGHTCLUB SHOOTING

Mr. President, today marks the 3-year anniversary of the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando, FL. On that horrible night, 49 people were killed, 53 wounded and many more forever changed in an unspeakable act of terror.

The shooting was traumatic not only as an act of brutal violence, but as a hate crime against the LGBTQ community. The shooter chose the Pulse nightclub; drove a long way specifically to Pulse. And he did it in order to target innocent people for the simple reason of being who they were.

Today, our hearts are with the victims' families, with the first responders, and with the city of Orlando. We also cannot help but remember that we are the only nation in the developed world where mass shootings happen with such regularity, many of them driven by hate. We will never be able to root out all the evil, malice, and hate in our society, but I also know that we will never see a great reduction in gun violence or in hate crimes if we do nothing. So as we remember the victims of Pulse, let us also act. Let us consider legislation to improve common sense gun safety.

We have a bill ready, sent to us by the House months ago, to fix loopholes

in our federal background check system. But Leader McCONNELL has not allowed it to reach the floor. Why not?

Why is it one of the many forgotten bills of his legislative graveyard? Are Republicans so unwilling to buck the gun lobby that they will ignore a bill supported of 90 percent of Americans, the majority of Republicans, the majority of gun owners? Something needs to change. My Republicans friends need to break out of the vise grip of the NRA.

I urge Leader McCONNELL to get this Chamber working again for the good of the American people. Commonsense background checks would be a great place to start—today of all days.

HONG KONG

Mr. President, finally, 30 years and one week ago, democratic protesters gathered at Tiananmen Square, where the Chinese Communist Party brutally suppressed the will of the people.

Today, in Hong Kong, a similar scene is playing out. The Chinese government is once again showing its true colors, suppressing democracy, denying the will of the people, trying to claw back more power and control.

The people of Hong Kong are rightfully protesting the Chinese government's interest in remanding potentially innocent people to mainland China in order to put them through the corrupt Chinese prison system.

America stands with the people of Hong Kong in their protest against this blatant abuse of power by the government in Beijing.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROMNEY). The Senator from Alabama.

EQUALITY ACT

Mr. JONES. Mr. President, today I rise to talk about a matter that is very close to my heart and rooted in my faith and belief that we are all God's children created in God's image. It is an issue of fundamental equality, of basic human dignity, and it is consistent with the values we strive to embody as American citizens.

I stand today to honor the contributions of LGBTQ Americans—the contributions they have given so selflessly to our Nation—and to remind all of my colleagues of the great risks these Americans still face simply because of who they love and who they are.

It was 50 years ago this month that the gay community finally rose up. The Stonewall riots were a product of a brutal police force cracking down on the gay community. They found a voice that others had in the previous years. This Pride Month, June, we celebrate that 50 years of a rise in the voice of people to be treated just basically as everyone else. It is an important issue for me. It is an important issue for a number of reasons—first and foremost, because I am a father, but also, I am a product of the Deep South in which I was raised. As a kid, I came of age during a very tumultuous time in our Nation's history, a very tumultuous time in Alabama.