

is because of the fact that we stand accountable to the people at the most regular intervals. Every Member of the House stands for election every 2 years. A third of the Senate stands for reelection every 2 years. So we should debate and discuss the authorities of the CDC here in Congress for that very reason.

I look forward to that discussion, which we need to have more of, but the matter at hand today is much simpler. We must consider whether the CDC Director ought to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate. Now, it is absurd to think that someone so powerful can assume this office with no say whatsoever from the legislative branch. It is even more absurd to say that the Senate confirms members of an advisory board on broadcasting in Cuba to protect the interests of the American people—those we represent and those who elected us—but that it has no business confirming someone to be the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

My bill would fix that problem. The Restoring Trust in Public Health Act would require that the CDC Director be confirmed by the Senate. This bill is cosponsored by Senators BLACKBURN, TUBERVILLE, SULLIVAN, BRAUN, TILLIS, and SCOTT of Florida. I appreciate their support for this long-past-due measure.

In order to increase trust in the vaccine and trust in government, we must return transparency and accountability to the process. This bill, in the spirit of the Constitution, would provide an important check on government power and give the people a say in the CDC.

Now, today, I had planned to ask the Senate to pass this bill by unanimous consent. However, just in the last few hours, I have learned that negotiations are now underway and a deal may well be struck in order to make this proposal or something very similar to it law. In light of that development, I will withhold my live UC request for today. But I will note here that if progress isn't made on such a deal, I will be back soon—certainly before the end of the year—to ask this body to immediately take up and pass S. 2734.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The Senator from Illinois.

VETERANS DAY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, next week, our Nation will commemorate Veterans Day. It will be the first time in a generation that we will honor that day as a nation no longer at war.

With the conclusion of the war in Afghanistan—the longest war in our history—thousands of American troops finally came home. These heroes have returned to our shores, just as this Veterans Day stands as a reminder of everything we owe them, as well as every American who has served this Nation in uniform. More than 2,400 Americans perished in the war in Afghanistan. Thousands more return home with wounds—visible and invisible—that will stay with them for life.

Words are not enough to honor that sacrifice. We need to ensure that our veterans and families have access to the best healthcare in the world, affordable housing, programs that support them as civilians, whether it is students, employees or businessowners.

To serve our Nation in uniform takes a special measure of courage and devotion. For some members of our military, it also takes a great deal of persistence and determination.

Let me tell you about one. I am speaking, of course, of those members of our military who were born in other nations and want to serve America. Over the years, I have shared the story of one of these heroes—his name: Oscar Vasquez.

When Oscar was 12 years old, his family made the journey across the border from Mexico to America. They settled in Arizona. From the time he was a child, Oscar dreamed of serving America in the military. He studied hard in high school, even joined high school ROTC.

But during his junior here, he ran into a problem. He tried to sign up for basic training, but the recruiter informed him that he couldn't serve in the U.S. military without a U.S. birth certificate. It was a tough setback, but Oscar was determined.

He was awarded JROTC officer of the year by his high school, and he led a group of students in an underwater robotics competition. They squared off—these high school students—squared off against college students from schools like MIT. Guess what. They won. The victory led him to Arizona State University, where he earned a degree in mechanical engineering.

After graduating, Oscar got married and had a child, but his undocumented status still prevented him from reaching his full potential, so he moved back to Mexico—a country he hadn't lived in since he was a young boy—to apply for legal entry into the United States. He would have been barred from reentering the United States and separated from his family for 10 years without a special waiver, so he decided to call my office.

He reached out to us and said: "Can you help me get a waiver?"

When the Department of Homeland Security finally granted it, Oscar came home to America.

What was the first thing that he did?

He got his paperwork in order and enlisted in the U.S. Army. Within 6 months of returning to the United States, he was off to basic training. Oscar served our Nation with honor as a cavalry scout in Afghanistan. And, today, he is finally an American citizen.

We spend so much time around here talking about immigrants in negative terms. You look at Oscar and the sacrifice he made to serve our Nation in the military—this man who came to the United States as a little boy, knew what his goal was, and it was to risk his life for this great Nation.

When I hear some of the speeches given on the floor—one yesterday about how the United States is going to give a million dollars to every one of these undocumented people—I think to myself, these preposterous, outlandish, exaggerated stories told about these immigrants belie the real determination many of them have to come to this country and make a difference in their lives and a difference in our future.

Oscar is a living example. Oscar, like so many others, fought for our Nation in every war in our history. But even those who are ready to risk everything in America, for them, our immigration system still is broken.

During this pandemic, thousands of DACA recipients and undocumented immigrants have actually helped save lives across America. They didn't enlist in the Army. They used their skills as doctors and nurses and paramedics and respiratory therapists. They may have saved a member of your family, these immigrants.

On farms throughout the country, thousands more performed back-breaking labor to put food on our table. Donald Trump's administration classified them as "essential workers." I think, for once, President Donald Trump was right.

The pandemic has proven how much we depend on immigrants as members of the military, first responders, and agriculture workers. We couldn't function without them.

That is precisely why reforming our broken immigration system is an integral part of President Biden's Build Back Better. We must include protections for immigrants, like Oscar Vasquez, who have given everything they can to America.

If we want to rebuild our economy and drive its growth for years to come, we should begin by ensuring that immigrants can earn their place in the American story.

How many examples do each one of us know in our own families and other families where these immigrants came to America with literally nothing?

Many of them couldn't speak the language and went hard at work to establish a life, a family, a community, a business that ended up helping the entire Nation.

Immigration reform could boost our Nation's GDP by more than \$1 trillion over the next 10 years—hundreds of thousands of new jobs. And don't buy this theory that it is zero-sum when it comes to the creation of jobs. We have found over and over again that a determined, hard-working person takes a job and helps create a new job in the process. It happens with the creation of business, the creation of jobs over and over again.

It is far past time to reform our immigration system. With the Build Back Better package, we can finally get it done.

BUILD BACK BETTER AGENDA

Mr. President, on the topic of budget reconciliation, we are on the cusp of a

historic accomplishment. This Build Back Better agenda is part of a great American tradition: marshaling our Nation's resources and ingenuity to build a better future for our country.

This is the strategy that drove our victory in World War II or the Cold War and our dominance now in the Age of Information.

Years of gridlock left us at risk of falling behind. Our competitors on the global stage, like China, sense an opportunity. They look at the same statistics we view. And those statistics tell a sobering story.

For example, America used to lead the world in the best roads and bridges, but today, according to the World Economic Forum, we rank 13th.

How is that for a slogan?

Our Nation has also fallen behind when it comes to educational attainment. We rank 35th out of the 37 major countries when it comes to investing in early childhood information and care. Our economy is the most unequal it has ever been since the Gilded Age, leaving behind millions of American families who are struggling to pay their bills.

The Build Back Better agenda, inspired by Joe Biden's administration, is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to restore the American promise. It will create millions of jobs and ensure every family has a chance to live in dignity and protect our children's and grandchildren's future.

Sadly, like the American Rescue Plan, we still don't have a single Republican who will step up and join us. I hope that changes.

In my home State of Illinois, the Build Back Better package would be life-changing. It will fund high-quality childcare for more than 750,000 children.

I have told the story before of how—when my son Paul learned that his wife Tanja was going to have a baby, they called the grandparents right away. The next call was to a daycare center to enlist their little baby—they didn't know was a boy or girl—as early as possible in their neighborhood daycare center. That shows you the kind of demand there is in quality daycare.

We also need to make preschool a reality for more than 250,000 additional children in Illinois with this package. That is a million children combined, between childcare and preschool, that will finally be able to access high-quality care and education.

The Build Back Better package will also prevent hundreds of thousands of kids from going hungry. And it will give low-wage workers a tax cut of up to \$1,500 a year.

How is that for a change?

Four years ago, in the Trump administration, the Republican priority was a tax cut for the highest income Americans.

Our priority, the Democratic Biden priority, is a tax cut for working families and lower-income families to give them a fighting chance to make ends meet.

These are just a few of the provisions included in the Build Back Better package.

I might add something that is often mistaken. What I have just described to you is fully paid for. We pay for it by making certain that those who are making the highest incomes in America and the corporations that are the most profitable pay their fair share of taxes. This is policymaking at its best—fair and fiscally responsible.

Yet when our Republican colleagues hear how these investments will ease the burdens of working families, they seem to have one takeaway. It is the one thing we hear from them over and over: "Socialism!"

I mentioned that the Build Back Better agenda is part of the great American tradition. Well, that word "socialism" is part of the American tradition, too, on the Republican side, but one that hasn't stood the test of time.

Let's look back at history, at how many times the word "socialism" has been thrown around. During the Great Depression, President Franklin Roosevelt proposed Social Security to protect the elderly from financial ruin. In response, one Republican lawmaker declared Roosevelt "the first Communist President of the United States" and accused him of advancing a "Socialist platform."

Sound familiar?

Thirty years later, a similar debate played out over the creation of Medicare. The American Medical Association even recruited a future President, Ronald Reagan, to cut a television ad to record an album warning the public about the dangers of "socialized medicine."

Well, more than a century later, the vast majority of Americans are still covered by private health insurance. But Medicare is one of the most popular programs in America.

Can you imagine where American seniors and families would be today if we had listened to those socialist denunciations of Social Security and Medicare?

Here is one more example from the Great Depression: When joblessness in America reached 25 percent and Congress was considering the creation of America's first unemployment insurance system, a Congressman named Samuel Dickstein decried the idea of unemployment insurance as an "out-and-out communist program."

Now, you need to hear the rest of the story because, years after he made that declaration, it was discovered that Samuel Dickstein was a Soviet spy.

Time and again, the claim of socialism has been banded about to oppose commonsense policies that help working families get by. Now, as then, these claims have no basis in reality. It is a smear tactic that is, once again, being used to frighten Americans and distort and derail a meaningful debate.

Let's get past the name-calling and get down to basics. Do you support yet another huge tax cut for massive cor-

porations? Or is it time—at long last—to support working families?

Our Republican colleagues answered that question when they were in charge. They took on nearly \$2 trillion of debt in America to cut taxes for corporations and the wealthy. It seems they are happy with that brand of socialism, so long as it benefits major corporations and those who are well-off.

Democrats believe in putting working families first, which is why the Build Back Better package includes the biggest tax cut—let me repeat that—it includes the biggest tax cut—for working and middle-class families in American history, and we believe in making smart investments in good-paying jobs.

We have an opportunity to do all of this by enacting President Biden's Build Back Better agenda. Let's continue this great tradition and fight off the charges that we are somehow lapsing into socialism.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

TRIBUTE TO DEREK COATS

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, there are lots of things we disagree on here on the Senate floor, but one thing we all agree on is the importance of getting the right people to help us do these jobs.

I rise today to honor one of my outstanding staff members, Derek Coats.

Derek has recently been awarded the Great Griffon Award by his alma mater, Missouri Western State University in St. Joseph, MO. The Great Griffon Award is given to those Missouri Western alumni who have made outstanding contributions to the workforce, to society, or to Missouri Western. Derek has done all three.

After graduating from Missouri Western in 2002, with a bachelor's degree in political science, Derek began his service to Missouri in the U.S. Senate, in the office of my predecessor, Senator Bond. He served on Senator Bond's staff through 2010 in a variety of different jobs, rising to the role of district office director.

When I came to the Senate in 2011, I asked Derek to join my team. Since then, he has served as my State director and deputy chief of staff, overseeing day-to-day operations across five statewide offices.

Derek regularly spends his days traveling the State, meeting with Missourians and hearing their issues and concerns. The information he shares with me from those visits ensures our work in Washington aligns with the critical needs and priorities of our State. To provide just one of many examples, this information assisted in my efforts to work with others to restore year-round Pell grants to community colleges and all colleges and universities in our State. That, of course, included Derek's alma mater, Missouri Western.

Derek's knowledge and experience are an incredible asset to me and to