

“across-the-board student loan forgiveness is regressive”—student loan forgiveness is regressive.

So, Mr. President, it is really pretty simple. Millions of Americans choose—choose—to take on student loan debt and unlock higher earning potential. Millions of other Americans choose not to take on debt and make sacrifices to avoid it. The Biden administration wants to take that basic choice away and impose student loan socialism instead. They want working Americans to take on \$430 billion in debt they didn't sign up for, just to pad the pockets of Washington Democrats' base. What a raw deal.

Senate Republicans know that complex issues require thoughtful solutions, not partisan hatchet jobs. That is why several of our colleagues are working hard on legislation that actually gets to the root of soaring tuition costs. Senators CASSIDY, GRASSLEY, CORNYN, DAINES, TUBERVILLE, and TIM SCOTT have put forward ideas to increase transparency before students sign up for massive debt, to streamline repayment plans, and to go after the advanced-degree loans that are particularly responsible for driving up prices. I am grateful to our colleagues for their work on real solutions.

On the other hand, the Biden administration's student loan socialism plan is painfully, painfully unfair, and very soon we will find out if it isn't just downright illegal.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

DACA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in June, our Nation celebrates National Immigrant Heritage Month. It is a reminder that, with the exception of Native Americans and the descendants of enslaved people, every one of us shares something in common with the families arriving in America today, and that is the fact that our own ancestors once traveled far and wide to reach this land of liberty and opportunity. In my case, it was my grandmother. The year was 1911. She was forced to flee her home in Lithuania. She boarded a ship in Germany, bound for America, carrying two things in her arms: her Catholic prayer book and my infant mother. She arrived in our country with the same hopes as every immigrant who comes to America—from the immigrant business owners in my State of Illinois and communities like Little Village to all of the immigrant farm workers who keep food on our tables.

And today, the month of June is not only a chance to celebrate America's heritage as a nation of immigrants, it should also serve as a call to action for

us in Congress. That is because today, June 15th, marks the 11th anniversary of a life-changing program for a group of young people who share my mother's story—the Deferred Action For Childhood Arrival Program, DACA.

Back in 2010, on a bipartisan basis, the late Republican Senator Richard Lugar and I asked President Obama to use his power as President to protect from deportation hundreds of thousands of young people, many of whom arrived in our country as infants and toddlers, like my mom. And 11 years ago today, President Obama responded. He announced that he would use his executive authority to create the DACA Program.

These young people are known generally as Dreamers. They have grown up alongside our kids and grandkids. They pledge allegiance, as you said so many times, to the same American flag, and many have gone on to serve our Nation as members of the United States Armed Forces, first responders, and much more. In fact, over the years, Dreamers have become a household name. They have touched the hearts of Americans because in them, we see ourselves, our own history, our own families.

Dreamers have earned their place in the American story. But right now, they are still waiting on this Congress to finish the job that President Obama started with DACA.

This program was always intended to be a temporary solution. The permanent solution is obvious: Enact legislation—bipartisan legislation—that was introduced more than two decades ago—the DREAM Act. It would provide a path to citizenship for Dreamers all across America. Without the protections of the DREAM Act, these young people have been forced to live a life of uncertainty. They have to renew their status every 2 years, which means they can only plan their lives in two-year installments.

Today I want to tell you the story about one Dreamer. Her name is Sumbul Siddiqui. Her story is the 136th Dreamer story that I have shared on the Senate floor. Sumbul's family moved to the State of Georgia from Pakistan when she was 4 years old. With most of her relatives out of the country, she relied on her neighbors in Georgia as her chosen family. Growing up, she was a star student with no shortage of passions. She spent hours in the library getting lost in books, learned to play the viola, and fell in love with the arts. In her mind, she was just like any other kid, until she started applying to college and discovered officially, legally, she was not an American citizen.

So even though Sumbul graduated from high school with the highest honors, she feared that her immigration status would prevent her from pursuing a college education. Fortunately, it did not.

Instead, Sumbul was awarded a private merit scholarship to attend Agnes

Scott College in Atlanta, GA. During her first year, she was accepted into the DACA Program. She worked four jobs to cover the cost of tuition and graduated still a semester early with honors. She even found time to volunteer at a free health clinic. And it was in this role, working alongside doctors in her community, that she found her professional calling: medicine. So she decided to apply to a medical school that had supported Dreamers since the beginning of DACA. I am proud to say it is the Loyola University Stritch School of Medicine in Chicago.

You see, back in 2012, the Stritch School of Medicine made a brave commitment. They became the first medical school in America to adjust its admission policy to welcome Dreamers. And in the years since, nearly 40 Dreamers have graduated from this program at that medical school.

Last month, Dr. Sumbul Siddiqui became one of those graduates. I had the honor of speaking at her commencement ceremony before she and her fellow graduating class, which included five other DACA recipients, walked across the stage to receive their medical degrees. With her medical degree, Dr. Siddiqui plans to dedicate her career to serving families in the Chicagoland area. Soon, she will begin her residency at the University of Chicago, where she will focus on supporting underserved communities.

Ask yourself a basic question: Would America be better off if Dr. Siddiqui and Dreamers like her were unable to work here in the United States, when our communities are in desperate need of doctors and nurses? Of course not.

Earlier this year, I reintroduced the Dream Act with my friend, Republican Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM. We have been on the cusp of passing the DREAM Act for years, but time and again, Congress has failed to finish the job.

Right now, this legislation is more important than ever. That is because one judge in Texas—who has repeatedly ruled against DACA—could soon end protections for nearly 600,000 Dreamers. That would be a disaster—not just for Dreamers, but for our entire country. It is time for Congress to step up and meet our responsibility to Dreamers once and for all—as well as our responsibility for America's future—on a bipartisan basis.

I think that time is already here, and I hope we will meet our obligation that is long overdue to solve this problem, not just for this wonderful young woman and the ambition she has shown to make a better life for herself, but for the future world.

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

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

CHINA

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the threat that China poses is widely recognized. Recent events laid bare the Chinese Communist Party's interest in spying on Americans. The Chinese military is growing more aggressive in the Indo-Pacific, especially toward Taiwan. And China is aligning itself with other adversaries like Russia, whose war against Ukraine China has helped support.

We need to make the right decisions now to ensure that the United States is able to counter China from a position of strength, which brings me to the majority leader's current China proposal. Last month, the Democrat leader launched an initiative Democrats are calling China Competition bill 2.0. While this proposal has some laudable goals, a lot of Republicans are rightly skeptical of this initiative. Leader SCHUMER's last China initiative massively ballooned in cost, and now it is being implemented by the Biden administration as a vehicle for advancing progressive policies.

I am not alone in fearing the Democrats' latest initiative will turn out to be just more of the same. If Democrats are serious about competing with China, one thing they should be doing is making passage of a robust National Defense Authorization Act a priority.

Unfortunately, the NDAA has not exactly been a priority for the Democrat leader over the past 2 years. In fact, last year, Senator SCHUMER refused to bring the bipartisan Senate Armed Services Committee-passed bill to the floor. This critical legislation was allowed to languish for months before a negotiated bill with the House and the Senate finally passed in December of last year.

Our national security should not be an eleventh-hour concern.

I am encouraged that the Senate markup of the NDAA is occurring next week and that the majority leader is inclined to bring it to the floor in July. And I hope that holds.

China has made investment in its military a priority. Over the last 10 years, China's defense budget has doubled. This year, it will increase by more than 7 percent for the second year in a row, not counting any additional defense funding that China hides. It comes as no surprise that China is outpacing our military in modern capabilities like hypersonic missiles and has amassed a larger Navy.

Recent U.S. war games positing a U.S.-China conflict following an attack on Taiwan have had grim results, showing enormous military and economic costs on both sides. These war games also made clear that the United States would run through its inventory of munitions, especially for long-range strike, in a matter of weeks, blunting our ability to sustain a protracted conflict.

The United States, along with our allies and partners, need to maintain a credible deterrence to ensure that the cost is prohibitively high and the odds of success are extremely slim for China to attack across the Taiwan Strait or further attempt to assert any absolute control within the so-called First Island Chain. To do that, we have work to do on boosting our military's resources and readiness. At the very least, that starts with taking up each year's Defense authorization and appropriations bills in a timely fashion.

Besides building up our military, one of the best ways to ensure our competitiveness with China is to strengthen American industry so we continue to lead in the breakthroughs, innovations, and advanced technologies that will define the future. How we attempt to do that matters.

The President and Democrats in Congress have shown their preference for heavy-handed and often costly industrial policy that bestows taxpayer-funded subsidies on certain select industries, and it would be wise to ask where this will put us in the next 5, 10, and 20 years. Will it stifle innovation in our most important engines of growth? What will be the result of government picking winners and losers? Will small businesses and new enterprises be able to compete with large, established, and government-subsidized firms?

The way the Biden administration has so far been implementing its subsidy programs makes me suspect that we are well on our way to having government bureaucrats play an outsized role in our economy, with correspondingly negative effects.

Look no further than the strings that the Commerce Department has attached to funding for semiconductor manufacturers. The Department is giving preference to companies using union workers and, in some cases, conditioning funding on companies offering employee benefits that align with the Biden administration's agenda. It is the opposite of creating a level playing field.

America succeeds when innovators and entrepreneurs are empowered to do what they do best, and government steps out of the way. Government should be focused, not on heavy-handed regulation or picking winners and losers but on creating the conditions on which all businesses, large and small, can thrive.

Republicans have shown how pro-growth policies like this lead to greater investment, more opportunities for workers, and a stronger economy for all. Take our 2017 tax reform legislation. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act lowered tax rates for owners of small- and medium-sized businesses, farms and ranches, and made it easier for them to recover the cost of investing in their businesses, which, in turn, freed up cash for them to invest in their operations and their workers.

It lowered our country's sky-high corporate tax rate to make American

businesses more competitive in the global economy. And it brought our international tax system into the 21st century so that American businesses no longer operated at a disadvantage to their foreign counterparts.

And it worked.

In the wake of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, incomes grew, unemployment fell to a 50-year low, the income gap in this country narrowed, and the list goes on. Business investment increased, inventions—which is tax speak for companies moving their headquarters overseas—stopped. Companies created new jobs and invested in their employees, and they opened new opportunities for American workers by moving production and capital into the United States and bringing substantially more than a trillion dollars in offshore funds home.

One major thing—one major thing—that we could do to help boost our economy and increase our competitiveness with China is to extend the expired provisions of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act to give certainty to American businesses and entrepreneurs, and in Democrats' case, commit to not repealing key Tax Cuts and Jobs Act provisions.

In the defense space, we can enhance the certainty for businesses by authorizing more multiyear acquisition contracts for key munitions like those used by the B-1 bomber, something that would both enhance economic growth and strengthen our Nation's defense.

We also need to resume a real and robust trade policy. For the last 2½ years, the Biden administration has put trade on the back burner to the detriment of our economy and our place in the world. Trade opens new jobs and opportunities for American workers. It helps businesses and agriculture producers access new markets, which grows our economy, and it provides an opportunity to develop important strategic relationships, foster ties with our allies, and advance U.S. priorities abroad.

Under the Biden administration, the United States has been essentially inactive—inactive—on trade, but the rest of the world has not. China, for one, is currently negotiating or implementing a number of new trade agreements, adding to its already large portfolio of trading partners. These agreements aren't just economically advantageous, they are allowing China to build sometimes predatory relationships that serve to expand its sphere of influence.

One of the most important things we can do to ensure that our country remains competitive with China is to re-engage on the trade front and get to work on trade deals that expand market access and strengthen our relationships with other countries, particularly those that neighbor China.

There are a number of other steps we can take to boost our competitiveness with China, things like unleashing American energy production to increase our energy security and to boost