

the threats we face and the Biden administration's willingness to address them seems to be growing wider. President Biden has just turned in his fourth straight budget request that would cut defense funding after inflation. So the work before us is gravely necessary, and I am encouraged that we are beginning this week with an agreement in hand to actually complete the process.

Congress has secured a path forward to fund the Department of Homeland Security, which will allow us to complete the fiscal year 2024 appropriations process in the coming days. As always, making headway depends on serious cooperation, and I am grateful to our appropriators and negotiators for their commitment to working in good faith. Providing for the common defense is among our most basic constitutional responsibilities, and we need to be honest with ourselves: Growing threats and increasing military requirements make fulfilling this responsibility even more critical.

The legislation in front of us will not be Congress's last word, but it represents an important down payment, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to complete the annual appropriations process very, very soon.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Now, Mr. President, on another matter, over the weekend, Putin claimed electoral victory in a display of his regime's disdain for the Russian people. With a fresh 6-year term in office, he is on track to pass Joseph Stalin as the longest ruling despot in modern Russian history.

For the past 2 years, Putin has sacrificed tens of thousands of its countrymen on the altar of an obscene neo-Soviet fantasy of Stalinist empire building. The human cost of Russia's war of aggression—to Russians and Ukrainians alike—is truly tragic, but this weekend's sham election came at a particularly critical moment in this conflict, and the Kremlin is showing its cards.

Former Russian President Medvedev laid out exactly how Putin intends for his lawless conquest to end. Here is what he said:

[The] entire territory [of Ukraine] is the territory of the Russian Federation.

As he sees it, Ukraine's "complete and unconditional surrender," full "demilitarization," and reparations to Russia would help forge a "benevolent consensus" on peace.

This is from a close ally of Vladimir Putin—the autocrat who said that "negotiating with Ukraine just because it's running out of ammunition" was "ridiculous."

Russia has been showing us its intentions for over 2 years now, but for anyone who still struggles to see what is going on here, the words of Russia's leaders leave no room for doubt.

As I said before, Putin and his allies are emboldened precisely because the West is hesitating—because America is hesitating. They are spelling out their true intentions because they sense that

we might not have the resolve to actually resist them.

Here is the truth: Russia is playing for keeps. It is set on subjugating a sovereign democracy—whole hog.

There is every reason to believe this war ends with a negotiated outcome—most wars do—but it is absurd and self-defeating to insist on negotiations without preparing Ukraine to operate from a position of strength. Whether or when Putin ever decides to turn from his bid for total conquest to the negotiating table, it will be lethal Western assistance that determines what comes next.

That is why what Congress does next will influence the eventual outcome of this conflict. What we do will determine whether an administration that wants to facilitate negotiations has the leverage to produce terms favorable to America and our allies. Our next move will either reaffirm America's global influence or kneecap—kneecap—both Washington and Kyiv.

Anyone who thinks starving partners of support is good diplomacy or politics needs only to look at the Biden administration's withdrawal from Afghanistan. If Congress does its job, it will be American weapons in Ukrainian hands—and stronger forces and defense industrial capacity here at home—that determine what conclusions the world draws from the first major land war in Europe since 1945—whether or not authoritarians conclude they can continue to redraw maps by force; whether or not America's top strategic competitor concludes that we are not prepared to defend our interests or equip our friends to defend ourselves; and whether or not the next Commander in Chief inherits an unfixable quagmire.

Every day that the national security supplemental spends as a Senate-passed bill and not a law is a day that America's adversaries smile. The decisions before Congress, both in annual appropriations as well as in the supplemental, are about more than Ukraine or Israel; they are about whether America has the will to defend our interests and uphold our influence.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic whip.

DREAM ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise again today to discuss an issue that I have been working on for more than 20 years: the ongoing uncertainty and plight facing America's Dreamers.

It was a little over 20 years ago when my office in Chicago got a telephone call. There was a girl graduating from high school in Chicago, and she had a problem. The good news was she was a musical prodigy; she played the piano, and she was extraordinary. The bad news was she was undocumented.

She had been brought to the United States at the age of 2. Her parents had brought her originally from Korea through Brazil to Chicago. Her father's goal in life was to become a minister of a church and preach the gospel, and she used to travel with him to these

churches and pound away at the piano while he was practicing his sermons. Over the years, she enlisted in a program called the Merit music program and developed her piano skills to an extraordinary level.

All of her teachers said to her—Tereza Lee was her name—you have got to go to music school. Juilliard, Manhattan Conservatory—you qualify for all of them.

So she sat down to fill out the application and came to the space that said her nationality and citizenship. She didn't know what to put there, so one of her friends called our office, figuring Senator DURBIN would know the answer. Well, we found the answer, and it was terrible. Because she was an undocumented person in the United States and had been here since the age of 2, her recourse under the law was and still is to leave the United States for 10 years and petition to come back in. She was 18 years old. Her prospect was ridiculous.

As a result of that casework, I decided to introduce a bill called the DREAM Act. The DREAM Act basically said, if you came to the United States under the age of 18, grew up in this country, and had no problems with the law, you should have a path to citizenship. It was that basic. Well, as one can guess, we tried to pass that bill many times. It has passed on the floor of the Senate a couple of times, but never have we been able to get both the Senate and the House together on this issue.

I continue to come to the floor to talk about it because there is a new wrinkle. It seems that one of my former Senate colleagues became President of the United States, Barack Obama. He had cosponsored the DREAM Act, and I appealed to him, along with Senator Richard Lugar, a Republican of Indiana, to create by Executive order some program that could protect these young people. He created DACA. DACA, at one point, had almost 800,000 young people in America protected from deportation as they renewed every 2 years their status with DACA so they could go to school; they could have a life; and maybe, someday, at some future time, actually become citizens of the United States.

I thought the best way to describe this issue to people—because it is still in controversy and still tied up in the courts as to whether DACA will have a future—was to share stories of the DACA recipients and who they are. I do that again today. This is the 141st DACA recipient Dreamer about whom I have told the story here on the floor of the Senate.

This young man's name is Edon Molla. He came to the United States with his family when he was 2 years old, fleeing the war in Kosovo. He excelled in the United States. He was the salutatorian of his high school class; and he helped to lead his high school basketball team to three undefeated seasons, three State titles, and two national championships.

His story goes on from there. He was selected for the all-State team and played Division I basketball at St. Francis College in Brooklyn, NY. In addition to his basketball career, Edon excelled in the classroom and graduated from college with honors.

After college, multiple teams approached him about playing professional basketball in Europe. Unfortunately, he was forced to decline all of these offers because of his immigration status, but he didn't let it discourage him. He switched paths and started to pursue a new career in the music industry. With DACA, Edon has become a renowned professional musician. He has worked with successful artists like Roberta Flack, released an album, and performed at a music festival headlined by major international stars.

In addition to his successful music and basketball careers, Edon has made time to give back to his community. He has led a basketball clinic for children with cancer, taught music lessons to kids with special needs, and performed at multiple charity concerts. Edon is now starting a master's in business administration at Cornell University. He plans to pursue his master's degree as he continues his musical career.

DACA has allowed Edon to pursue his dreams for the time being, but DACA was also intended to be a temporary solution. Since President Obama established the program, Republicans have waged a relentless campaign—many of them—to overturn DACA and deport these Dreamers back to the countries they may not even remember. Now this program is hanging by a thread in the courts, and DACA recipients like Edon are being forced to live in fear and uncertainty every single day.

Last September, a Federal judge in Texas declared the DACA Program illegal. Though the decision left in place protections for current DACA recipients—and there are almost 600,000 of them—while an appeal is pending, they live in constant fear that the next court decision will upend their lives.

Court decisions have also prevented any new Dreamers from registering for the program. This means that, without congressional action—if we do nothing, if we continue to do nothing—hundreds of thousands of Dreamers who are ready to serve in their communities across the country may never have that opportunity.

Studies have estimated that, if DACA were to end, we would lose 1,000 U.S. jobs every day for the next 2 years. Business owners in my State often tell me that they need more workers. So the question I ask my colleagues today and ask America: Can we afford to lose 1,000 jobs a day from young people who grow up here, went to school here, stood up in the classroom every morning and pledged allegiance to that flag, believing it was their flag and their future? I think not.

When he was President, Donald Trump tried to end the DACA Pro-

gram. The first time I ever met Donald Trump was the day he was inaugurated as President. There was a luncheon, and I was invited to it. I went up to him, face-to-face in conversation personally, and I said: I want to tell you something. My priority is to cover these Dreamers, these DACA recipients, and give them a chance in America.

He leaned over and said: Don't worry. We are going to take care of those kids.

Well, he took care of them for sure. He tried to end the program altogether, with no protection for these young people. And, as a candidate, he has threatened to round up and deport undocumented immigrants, like this young man whom I just described.

We can no longer stand idly by while extremist judges and politicians toy with the future of these young people who have never known life in this country formally as legal citizens. We in Congress should protect Dreamers like Edon right now. I urge my colleagues to reach out to Dreamers in their States to learn more about these talented young people.

I have given these speeches on the floor. As I said, this is the 141st young person I have described. I have yet to have a disappointment where they came back and said: Oh, Senator, that young man, that young woman you just described got on the other side of the law and did something terrible.

It has never happened. These young people are good people. They deserve as much chance as our children to become part of this Nation's future.

They are business owners, teachers, parents, athletes, scientists, nurses, healthcare workers, musicians, and so much more. Would America be better if they were gone? I think not. It is clear that they are an important part of our future and an important part of our American life.

It is time to get to work and pass the Dream Act once and for all. It is the right thing to do, and it is long overdue.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Hawaii.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT DISASTER RECOVERY FUNDING

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, Congress is failing disaster survivors across the country right now. Whether in Lahaina or in Burlington, survivors are not getting the full support of the Federal Government because Congress has yet to provide funding for long-term disaster recovery needs. That is in spite of the fact that, every passing month, more and more communities are being struck by extreme weather and need help in the rebuilding process.

It was more than 4 months ago that President Biden requested \$2.8 billion for the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery Program, or CDBG-DR.

CDBG-DR funding is a lifeline for families and businesses that are trying to recover from disasters, helping them

to get back on their feet faster and more fully. Yet the spending package that Congress passed 2 weeks ago did not include a dime in new funding for CDBG-DR, despite the efforts of myself and my colleagues—including the Presiding Officer—on both sides of the aisle from disaster-affected States.

Supporting disaster survivors has never been and should never be a partisan issue, nor can it be buried at the bottom of a long list of Federal priorities. It is one of our most core responsibilities, as the Federal Government, to show up for Americans in their hour of need, when the State and local governments are overwhelmed. We have a chance to do that by including CDBG-DR funding in the appropriations package that we will be voting on later this week.

People on Maui and in every other disaster-struck community are counting on us for support, and it can't be that the Federal Government leaves them high and dry, midway through the process of putting their lives back together, because we couldn't get some numbers to add up. That is unacceptable, and we need to pass this funding now.

TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING, AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. President, in a place where bipartisanship is harder to find than it is to talk about, there is a glimmer of hope this week. In the appropriations package that passed 2 weeks ago, there was a rare product of quiet, good-faith, bipartisan efforts: a record amount of funding for housing for Native communities across the country.

Working together, Democrats and Republicans in the Senate and the House included \$1.3 billion for Native housing as part of the Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development appropriations bill. That is an increase of a little more than \$300 million.

Tribal communities, as a direct consequence of perennial underfunding and neglect by the Federal Government, experience some of the highest poverty rates and worst living conditions in the Nation. They are 5 times as likely to live in homes without plumbing, 4 times more likely to not have basic appliances, such as sink or stove or a refrigerator, and 1,200 times likelier to experience issues with heating—1,200 times likelier to experience issues with heating.

So for them, the historic funding is a very, very big deal. It means that they can build more affordable housing, provide rental assistance, and get electricity and plumbing into their homes.

The bill also includes a significant increase for funding for Tribal transportation, which will help to repair roads on Tribal lands that are in dire shape and improve transit across reservation land for people trying to get to work or to school or to the grocery store. This funding builds on the historic investments we have made in Tribal transportation infrastructure