

You ought to listen to the story of one of these people and come to understand what I am talking about.

This is Juan Chavez Velasco. What does he do for a living? He is a medical laboratory scientist.

How long has he lived in the United States? Twenty-five years.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Juan was a frontline worker at the hospital in his hometown. He never missed a day of work.

Juan has a problem, though. He is undocumented. His parents brought him to the United States when he was 8 years old. They made the decision to come to this country. Juan was in the backseat of the car.

For more than a decade, his ability to live and work in this country has been protected by one thing: DACA. You see, Juan is a DACA holder.

What is the DACA Program? Let me give you a minute or two of background. Over 20 years ago, I introduced a bill called the DREAM Act. And the DREAM Act said, if you were brought to the United States by your parents as a child—an infant, a toddler, a child under the age of 18—they made the decision to come to this country. You came with them. You were part of the family. And they didn't file the right paperwork for you. You are undocumented in the United States. The DREAM Act said, if there was a violation of law, you shouldn't be held responsible at 8 years of age due to your family's decision to come to this country.

What have you done with your life since? Have you gone to school? Have you committed a crime? There are serious questions we should ask.

But if you pass those tests, if you pass a criminal background check—a criminal background check—if you pay \$600 every 2 years, you can have what is known as DACA. DACA is protection for you to work in the United States legally and not be deported.

Juan is one of those people, a medical laboratory scientist, protected by DACA, and he has been for years. With DACA, Juan has been a contributing member for our country for years.

And then President Trump was elected to a second term. Everything changed.

In February, Juan was driving to deliver milk to a hospital to his infant daughter in the NICU, and he was stopped by ICE agents. You remember that you saw them on television. They wear the masks. They dress in camo. They carry guns around.

His wife Stephanie was on the phone with him as ICE agents questioned his immigration status, and they decided to detain him. He told them point-blank: I am a DACA holder. Every 2 years, I have to register and pay \$600 and go through a criminal background check, as required by Executive order and law. I have done all those things. They ignored him.

What happened to Juan? He was detained in ICE detention for 3 months.

When his son Damien visited him in detention, he sobbed at the sight of his father behind a glass barrier. He could not understand why the government took his dad away from him.

Juan was finally released last month, after his wife Stephanie bravely testified at a spotlight hearing that I convened. But he is not yet free. Juan still lives in fear that, any day, ICE agents could return and take him away from his family and deport him to Colombia.

Juan's story is heartbreaking, but it is only one of many stories from Dreamers who have been targeted by the Trump administration.

He is no danger. He is no criminal. He shows up, as the law requires, every 2 years, pays \$600, and goes through a criminal background check and then goes to his job at a medical laboratory in his hometown.

Upon returning to office, the President has used every tool at his disposal to thwart the protections of DACA, which was created to give young people like Juan a chance to remain in the United States. Last year, ICE arrested 261 people just like Juan, deporting 86 of them, all of them DACA holders.

And even those who have not been detained have been facing unprecedented delays in renewing their DACA status. They have shown up, as they are supposed to, when they are supposed to, and they are told: We are not going to approve you.

Without renewal, these young people will lose their ability to work legally in the United States and will not be protected from deportation.

The administration's attack on immigrants goes far beyond DACA. With President Trump and his close friend and adviser Stephen Miller in the White House, no immigrant is safe from this administration.

Last month, the Trump administration announced it would force legal—legal—immigrants to leave America and apply for a green card back in their country of origin, except in rare circumstances. That means immigrants who may have been here for years, who married a U.S. citizen, who have children who are citizens, would have to leave their families for God knows how long.

Rural communities, incidentally, have doctors and medical professionals that fit right into this category. They would lose the only doctor in town.

And with bans in effect preventing consular processing for green card applicants from 75 countries, there is no assurance that once having left the United States, they could ever return.

Of course, the implementation of this policy has been chaotic. After an outcry across the country, the Department of Homeland Security claimed to have rolled back their decision, saying applicants who "benefit the national interest"—whatever that means—would not be affected.

But it remains to be seen how this administration will define "national interest."

Will spouses of U.S. citizens qualify? Will immigrants sponsored for a green card for their work as doctors and nurses be allowed to stay in this country? We honestly don't know the answer to that.

The terror and fear that this administration seeks to inspire in legal immigrants does not make our Nation great. It undermines the promise we made to these people. We said to them, under DACA, if you do the right thing, if you work with government Agencies, if you are honest and don't commit a crime, we will protect you. And now the Trump administration is reversing this.

These are individuals who have lived in America for years, graduated alongside our kids, married and had their own U.S. citizen children, and are contributing to our communities.

Why would we want them to leave? As the Senate prepares to consider the upcoming Republican budget bill, which would put another \$70 billion into the President's mass deportation program, I urge my Republican colleagues to stand up and look at this honestly. I think we can agree on some basics. Let me say a few.

No. 1, we should never knowingly allow a dangerous person to come into this country.

No. 2, if someone is in this country, seeking legal status or permanent status, and has committed a dangerous crime, they are gone. Period.

No. 3, the United States cannot absorb every person in the world who wants to come into our country at this time. It has to be an orderly process.

If we agree on those three basic things, can we finally sit down and write immigration laws that make sense in the 21st century? I think we can. But we have got to take hatred and cruelty off the table. We have got to be honest and sincere.

Juan should have a future in this country. He is doing something good for this country now in this medical laboratory. He is obeying the law. He is showing up as he is supposed to. He is paying every 2 years his fee of \$600, and he goes through a criminal background check.

He was brought here at the age of 8, for goodness' sake. Wouldn't you give him a chance to earn his way toward legal status in this country? I would, the DREAM Act would, and so would DACA.

As the Senate considers the appropriations before us for recordbreaking amounts of money, to the poor people like Juan, I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle: Take a look at the reality of the situation. Stop depending on labels. These are real human beings who are doing their best to make this a better country.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

IRAN

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, yesterday, at the Senate Foreign Relations

Committee hearing, some of our colleagues suggested that the United States started a war against Iran 92 days ago. I believe the facts are to the contrary. Iran started a war against the United States and our ally Israel in 1979 from the date of the Iranian Revolution.

This is the backdrop to President Trump's military campaign known as Operation Epic Fury. While the operation has formally concluded—and there is ostensibly a cease-fire—there doesn't seem to be a resolution of the conflict to be sure. Meanwhile, there has been a block in the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20 percent of the world's energy supplies flow ordinarily. At the same time, the Iranian economy is collapsing.

Operation Epic Fury built on the success of last summer's Operation Midnight Hammer, which targeted three nuclear facilities—successfully eliminating top nuclear scientists—and it concluded within 12 days.

Negotiations, of course, are ongoing to address the underlying issues between Iran and the United States and Israel, particularly Iran's nuclear program that led to this conflict in the first place. And it remains to be seen if a permanent, durable resolution is possible.

Now, bizarrely, Democrats have almost universally criticized President Trump's actions toward Iran, and there has been a great deal of pressure on the administration to bring these negotiations to a close under any terms.

But ever since Bill Clinton was President, Republicans and Democratic Presidents alike have warned us about the risk of a nuclear Iran. And President Trump, to his credit, was in charge when we finally did something decisive about it.

But in order to assess how these ongoing hostilities should end, it is worth taking a step backward and remembering why we started down this path in the first place.

The ostensible purpose of Operation Epic Fury—building on Operation Midnight Hammer last summer—was always to prevent the Islamic regime from acquiring a nuclear weapon and to stop them from continuing to enrich uranium, as President Trump pointed out last year—that remains the goal—and to dismantle their ability to enrich uranium in the future, I might add.

The President has made very clear that he does not want Iran to ever get a nuclear weapon, and in a normal world, you would think there would be unanimous agreement among Republicans and Democrats.

Well, I agree with President Trump's position, and I hope we stay the course and complete the job that we started. Last summer, he summarized the situation well, and this is the quote: You can't have peace if Iran has a nuclear weapon.

That remains our ultimate objective: peace. But if Iran gets a nuclear weapon, we will not have peace. We will

have a ticking nuclear time bomb. Yesterday, in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, our former colleague Secretary of State Marco Rubio described the existential threat that Iran's possession of a nuclear weapon would create.

He said: If Iran ever acquired a nuclear weapon, they would be able to hold the world hostage. They would hyperscale their efforts of global terrorism and completely try to drive us out of the region and ultimately destroy the State of Israel. And you wouldn't be able to do anything about it—he said—because they would have a nuclear weapon and would threaten to blow people up if you tried to move against them.

The radical regime of Iran is the No. 1 state sponsor of terrorism, and they have made it abundantly clear to the United States and to the world that they cannot be trusted. They support, of course, terrorist proxies such as Hezbollah, al-Qaida, Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Houthis.

Recall that Iran provided materiel support for attacks on American soil in the runup to September 11, 2001. They backed and sometimes directly carried out attacks on Americans over multiple decades in the Middle East. They funded and trained Hamas terrorists who murdered more than 1,200 innocent men, women, and children, including 46 Americans, on October 7, 2023. Closer to home, Iran is also actively financing drug trafficking activities in Central America and is using the proceeds from this illicit commerce to continue funding their terror activities around the world.

Once Iran achieves a nuclear weapon, they will have complete leverage over the Strait of Hormuz. They can continue to fund terrorism around the globe, including here in the Western Hemisphere. The President's actions against the Islamic Republic of Iran demonstrate his understanding and appreciation of the danger that a nuclear Iran would pose to America and the world.

Now, of course, if possible, we should always hope that there could be productive negotiations and a cease-fire, but it has to be verifiable. We have to achieve the goals that the President has set out for us, and we can't back off of that without badly botching the leverage that we have now to accomplish these goals.

Perhaps the most significant current point of contention is that Iran has, of course, effectively, closed the Strait of Hormuz in attempting to choke off the global energy supply, leading to higher gas prices here at home. Treasury Secretary Bessent has acknowledged that, if the strait is not opened, a global financial crisis could ensue. At the same time—and as a checkmate—the United States has blockaded Iranian ships as well, which has proven to be extremely effective and has created enormous leverage for the United States and our allies.

The Iranian economy is in very bad shape and is in desperate need of relief. Again, this is another part of the maximum leverage campaign that the President started years ago. Given this, they have, obviously, proposed—the Iranian regime that is—that the United States unfreeze its assets and deliver sanctions relief as part of any negotiated deal.

Reporting from Reuters noted just a few days ago that Iran is “pushing for a limited interim agreement with the United States in a bid to ease mounting economic pressure and stabilize the situation at home, while avoiding major concessions on its nuclear program.”

I sincerely hope we don't take the bait. Agreeing to these demands would be a grave miscalculation. If the United States were to give Iran billions of dollars in sanctions relief in exchange for reopening the strait, there is no doubt the money would be put to nefarious purposes. Plus, there is no promise or no guarantee they won't simply close it again in order to extract more concessions in the future.

If we remove the U.S. blockade of Iranian ports and passage through Iranian waters without eliminating their nuclear program and the highly enriched uranium as well as their capacity to enrich in the future, then we forfeit a key point of leverage against the regime, and we will have failed to accomplish our goals in defanging the regime.

Operation Epic Fury and the U.S. blockade of Iranian ports has been extremely successful in reducing the threat posed by the Iranian regime. More than 13,000 targets have been struck, including Iranian ballistic missile sites, ballistic missile and drone manufacturing facilities, weapons production and storage bunkers, and surface-to-air missile facilities. Iran has lost many of its missile launchers, and missile attacks have fallen by 90 percent. More than 150 Iranian Navy vessels have been damaged or destroyed.

As these negotiations for a resolution to this conflict proceed toward their conclusion, it is important that we keep a couple of things in mind.

First, we must resist the temptation to declare this war has been futile or unsuccessful. We are not done yet. Weakening the world's No. 1 state sponsor of terror and removing its ability to acquire nuclear weapons will make the world a safer place.

Second, we must remember why the United States and Israel took such decisive actions in the first place, and we have to make sure the job is finished in such a way that it will provide for a lasting resolution and lasting peace.

I know there is a lot of pressure on President Trump and this administration to end the conflict as soon as possible on any terms, but that would be a serious mistake.

I believe President Reagan aptly captured this point in an address he gave to Congress after a summit with the Soviet Union, when he said:

We know that peace is not just the absence of war. We don't want a phony peace or a frail peace. We didn't go in pursuit of some kind of illusory detente. We can't be satisfied with cosmetic improvements that won't stand the test of time. We want real peace.

I hope President Trump will not waste this once-in-a-generation opportunity to end Iran's nuclear program, to recover the enriched uranium and eliminate their capacity to enrich in the future, and to force the opening—reopening—of the Strait of Hormuz and make it impossible for the regime to continue to hold the world hostage.

I hope President Trump will stay strong in pursuit of these objectives and that, if the Iranian regime will not yet agree to those in a verifiable manner, then I hope the President will use his authority as Commander in Chief to do so and force them to the negotiating table on terms that we insist on, not on what they demand.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RICKETTS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ARMSTRONG). The Senator from Florida.

TRIBUTE TO SERGEANT ERIC LEVASSEUR

Mrs. MOODY. Mr. President, I rise today to honor a true hero with the Florida's Finest Award. It is so important that we as Members of Congress recognize those who bravely step up to serve and in their own way, whether personally or professionally, preserve our democracy and preserve this Nation's commitment to the rule of law. Certainly, as the wife of a law enforcement officer, I have always been so proud to do this and recognize some of our bravest among our Florida heroes—Florida law enforcement.

Back in December, Port St. Lucie police sergeant Eric Levasseur—a 27-year veteran of the force—was brutally shot twice in the face when responding to a residence where a suspect emerged, armed with a rifle, and opened fired on him. This happened back on December 6. It was a routine response to a call for help, a call for service. That call stemmed from a neighbor dispute, and it involved a mental health issue.

Certainly, as police officers are called upon every day to show up in neighborhoods and answer these calls for service, he had no idea what awaited him. When Sergeant Levasseur and other officers arrived at the scene, they encountered an armed male suspect. The police report shows that when they arrived on scene, this person emerged from the garage, hoisting a gun and firing shots immediately. He attempted

to run at and flank them—covering them with bullets.

Sergeant Levasseur was struck twice—one bullet near his nose and another just beneath it. They are one-in-a-million injuries that narrowly avoided major arteries and brain trauma.

Other officers on scene subdued the suspect, but Sergeant Levasseur's journey to recovery was just beginning. He underwent five surgeries—two on his eyes to remove shrapnel and three others on his face. From the beginning of those recovery efforts, he repeatedly said—again, this is someone who is a 27-year veteran on the force. He said repeatedly that he was looking forward to getting back to work to continue to serve his community, to show up for others when they call for help.

In March, he was surrounded by family, friends, and fellow officers when he received a law enforcement Purple Heart from the Port St. Lucie Police Department for his service.

Since that tragic day, Sergeant Levasseur's courage and sacrifice have been repeatedly recognized by people throughout his community and even across our Nation.

Earlier this year, he was honored with a Valor Award from the First Responders Foundation, which was a fitting tribute to an officer who demonstrated extraordinary bravery in the face of danger.

Another really meaningful gesture and recognition came from a fellow American who understood sacrifice in a deeply personal way. A local veteran in Florida, SSgt Thomas Mateo, chose to present Sergeant Levasseur with one of his own Purple Heart medals—a distinction that he earned through his service to our Nation. Mateo had also served in law enforcement and had earned six Purple Hearts over two deployments to Vietnam in the 1960s. Two weeks after Sergeant Levasseur was shot in action, Mateo placed one of his own Purple Hearts in a box and presented it to St. Lucie police chief Leo Niemczyk to give to Sergeant Levasseur.

The Purple Heart, as the Presiding Officer knows, is one of our Nation's most revered symbols of courage and sacrifice. For a veteran to entrust and present his own medal to Sergeant Levasseur was a profound recognition of the selflessness he displayed while protecting his fellow officers and the community he serves.

It takes a very special person to become a law enforcement officer. I can tell you that, having served as a prosecutor, as a judge, and as the wife of a law enforcement officer, I have watched those who sign up and say they will put their safety behind the safety of others. It takes someone willing to face uncertainty, as was realized here, and not knowing what ultimately a shift may bring. It takes someone with a family who will back them to do that. Not everyone is cut out for it.

For those who swear the oath and wear the badge to protect and serve, we

are so grateful for their service and sacrifice.

Sergeant Levasseur's 27 years of service, his courage under fire, and his determination throughout recovery show that he is truly cut from a different cloth.

It is my privilege to recognize Sergeant Levasseur today on the Senate floor with the Florida's Finest Award in recognition by this Congress and to share my gratitude and appreciation for his dedicated service to not only his community but to our great, free State of Florida. It is people like him who truly make Florida the envy of the Nation and a stronger and safer State.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

TAX CREDITS

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, look at this card. Whoa, talk about something of convenience. I can go down right now and buy some coffee and put a chip. Boom, I have got my coffee. The money just goes out like that.

I can go online to Amazon and order something, click in my number. Boom, I get that good delivered. It is so easy and so seamless.

Now, this which makes our lives so much better—so much better—can be perceived as a lifeline for a family struggling to pay their bills because they can swipe and pay the bill when they don't have the money in the account to cover with a check.

Now, the problem is, that lifeline can become a noose around the neck and drag them to the bottom of the ocean—an ocean of debt. This is not a theoretical.

We know that debt is a major driver of marital problems. They can't agree on money; the young couple breaks up. They have a child; the child grows up in a broken home. Money debt can just drive a wedge into a marriage with generational effects upon how future generations do.

Now, it is convenient, and it is a weight. So let's talk about whether this is theoretical or not. The typical middle-income family in our Nation has an average of almost—somewhere around—\$10,000 of credit card debt.

Now, if we are speaking about a family making \$80,000 a year, which is kind of an average income, and they have got \$10,000 of credit card debt, they are not paying off that debt every month. They are sitting on that, paying 18 to 22 percent in interest. They are the ones who are suffering with that noose that gets tighter and tighter and tighter.

So where does the debt come from? Some of it is groceries. Some of it is gasoline. A lot of it is medical expenses.

Somebody who has a health insurance policy with a \$6,000 deductible, they would have to pay 6k. They don't have 6k, and they use their credit card, and that credit card debt mounts up.

Mr. President, 60 percent of personal bankruptcies have to do with medical