help, and sometimes we have some real heroes that emerge. Some of those heroes for us in Alaska these past few weeks have been our U.S. Coast Guard and our Alaska National Guardsmen and women.

As I started my comments, I said we do things bigger in Alaska, perhaps a little bolder. There is a new movie coming out that you may have heard about. It is called ''Big Miracle.'' It is about the rescue of the whales back in the late 1980s. Some of you may remember the whales were trapped in the ice off Point Barrow. It is a wonderful story about how we, as Alaskans, came together with the Russians, state and federal agencies, environmental and other groups that would normally not be allies, and regular folks for a common purpose. That movie, ''Big Miracle,'' reminded me that in Alaska we have a few more big miracles we can brag about, and they begin with people who truly make the health, safety, and well-being of others their top priority, even when they do not know any of those people.

I know the people of Nome and Cordova and the people of Valdez all give thanks to those who stepped up during these tough winter months to help us out and were there at our side. I thank the Chair for the extra time, and I thank my colleague from Illinois for his patience and again extend my heartfelt thanks to our U.S. Coast Guard men and women, as well as the fine men and women of the Alaska National Guard.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I wish to thank my colleague from Alaska and tell her that this week on National Public Radio there was a feature about Cordova and all the snow they have had to deal with there. I am sure this is perhaps commonplace in her great State, but as we listened to it from Chicago, we felt blessed we haven't been hit too hard yet this winter. But our hearts go out to the men and women in the Coast Guard and the National Guard in Alaska and the people who are struggling in Alaska's communities to survive these natural disasters.

THE DREAM ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, each of us takes on an agenda in Congress, things that are important to us personally, and sometimes one or two of those issues become very personal and very important to us. The one that has become very personal to me relates to the DREAM Act.

The DREAM Act is a bill I introduced 10 years ago—10 years ago. To serve in the Senate, one has to be a patient person because nothing happens quickly. But 10 years is long enough, and I am urging my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to take a close look at this legislation today.

First, let me explain what it is all about. It is a bill that would allow students to literally earn their legal status in America. These are students who came to the United States as children. They have been here for a long period of time. They have good moral character. They must graduate from high school, speak English and complete at least 2 years of service to our country in the military or at least 2 years of college, and that can include vocational training, which I think can be equally valuable to many young people. And I have talked to the Presiding Officer about this. I certainly believe that should be part of this conversation.

The DREAM Act would make us a better and stronger country. These young people are waiting for the opportunity to contribute to America. I have come to the floor dozens of times now to tell their stories. There was a time when they were afraid to speak out and to identify themselves. But thank God that has changed. They now speak out because they understand when people see who they are, what they have done, and what their dreams are, they can appreciate the fact these are good young people who, when given a chance, will make us a safer and stronger nation.

That is why this proposal has been supported by the Department of Defense. They want these young people—these high school graduates of good character—to come into our military and make it better. Of course, many others see this as a valuable addition to our economy—tomorrow's engineers and scientists and teachers and doctors and lawyers and entrepreneurs. These young people can make America a better place.

I contacted the Obama administration last year, along with 21 of my colleagues, and asked that they take a look at these young people when it comes to deportation. Understand we estimate there are 11 million undocumented people in America. There are some who just say: Oh, send them all back.

That is not even in the realm of reality. So I have asked the Obama administration, along with 20 of my colleagues, to focus on those who are any danger to the United States and send them back—deport them. In fact, the Obama administration has done just that. I have asked them as well, since we have limited resources, to please try to identify those who might fall into the qualification of the DREAM Act and do not deport them.

There are some who argue: Oh, wait a minute. They should all go. But we know we have limited resources for enforcement. If a person is a State trooper, parked on the side of a highway in Illinois or West Virginia, with a speed limit of 55 miles an hour, and one car comes by at 65 miles an hour and the next one comes hurtling by at 110 miles an hour and they can go after only one car, which one will they go after? We know the answer. They go after the car that is traveling so fast it is a danger to its occupants and everyone else. The same is true when it comes to questions of deportation. Use good sound prosecutorial judgment, with limited resources, to deport only those people who could be a threat or a danger to these United States. That is the first priority.

Earlier today, Senator GRASSLEY, who is the ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, came to the Senate floor and claimed that the Obama administration is using this discretionary authority to implement the DREAM Act because it failed to pass Congress. I respectfully disagree with my friend from Iowa.

The DREAM Act would give these young people the chance to earn legal status. That is not the case when it comes to deportation. Even if they are not deported, they are still not in a legal or permanent legal situation in the United States. Their future is still in doubt and in question. So there is no parallel as far as that is concerned.

I have come to the floor many times to introduce those who follow this debate to these young people to get to know who they are and why I think this cause is important and their lives are important to us. Let me introduce today two of them.

This is Alaa Mukahhal. Alaa is of Palestinian descent, was brought to the United States by her parents 19 years ago when she was 7 years old. She is 26, and she grew up in the suburbs of Chicago, my home State. She was an honor student in high school and graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign—a great university—with a bachelor's degree in architecture. She sent me a letter, and here is what she said:

> Being undocumented and with no pathway to the citizenship means I actually can't use my architectural degree. It means I can't get a job and move forward with my life. This year, once again, we wait for Congress to do the right thing and give undocumented young people all across America a chance to better serve our communities and our country. I am an asset to this country, a resource, with a desire to make good use of my degree. I want to be able to work and design affordable housing for low-income communities.

In the finest American tradition, Alaa has become an activist. She has stepped out to introduce herself to America so we know who these DREAM Act students are and what they could mean to the future of our Nation.

Let me also introduce to you this lovely young lady, Maria Luna. Maria has a heartbreaking but inspiring story.

Her mother lives in the United States. But just before she was to be born in the United States, her mother fled the country and gave birth to her on the Mexican side of the border. Maria's mother abandoned her in Mexico at that point—left her when she was only 3 days old. Luckily, her

grandmother stepped in and started raising Maria in Los Angeles, CA. Her grandmother passed away when Maria was 10 years old.

After her grandmother's death, Maria went to live with her biological mother who, unfortunately, was abusive both physically and emotionally to this young woman. While she was in high school, Maria learned that she did not have legal status because she was actually born across the border in Mexico. She asked her mother to file the papers for her so that she could be legal in America. Her mother refused, and she threatened to turn her into the authorities if she caused any trouble at home.

Maria persevered. She became a straight-A student. She graduated from high school with a 4.2 GPA. This is what she said:

> Even through everything that I was facing at home, I was able to find relief at school. At school, I felt worthy. My dignity was returned. I was valued based on my merit and drive.

In 2010, Maria graduated from California State University of Sacramento. She also decided to start to tell her story publicly about why she believes the DREAM Act is so important.

Maria wants to go to business school and become an entrepreneur. She has begun a career in modeling—as you can tell, a lovely young lady—although she doesn't have legal status and can't be paid for her work. She sent me a letter, and here is what she said:

> Through my involvement through the DREAM Act I have learned of many students who like me have excelled despite tough odds. One thing that we all share in common is our hunger to succeed and give back to this country. My dreams and ambitions are all for America. This is where I belong. I know no other home. It is here that I was given an opportunity, it is here that I have become educated. America adopted me and raised me as her own. And because of that, I am forever indebted to her. All I want is to have the ability to give back to my country.

Mr. President, you and I know this is a nation of immigrants. We are fortunate that at some point in the past our parents and grandparents had the courage and determination to come to these shores and fight the odds. They came here speaking broken, if any, English. They persevered through the rejection of people who wanted nothing to do with immigrants. They took the dirtiest, hardest jobs available because that was it, and they prayed that their kids would have a better life. That was the immigrant's dream, and it always has been. That is the dream of these children: that they can have a better life, that they can make this a better country. All they are asking for is a chance to earn the right to be legal, to earn it—not to be given it but to earn it.

I am going to continue to work for passage of the DREAM Act. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will look at this in an honest and fair way. I know immigration has been a hot button issue since right after the Pilgrims got off the Mayflower. The next boat that arrived, I am sure some of the Pilgrims said: Oh, not more of those people.

Well, that is the story of America. Thank goodness a lot of those immigrants from Italy, from Lithuania, from Poland, from China, from Mexico, decided to stick it out and fight for their future. These young people deserve that same opportunity.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

A SECOND OPINION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today, as I have week after week ever since the President's health care law was passed, to bring a doctor's second opinion about the health care law.

I traveled the State all the last week in Wyoming talking to people about the things they look for in a health care law, which is what they want as patients, as citizens. What they are looking for is the care they need from a doctor they want at the price they can afford. Across the board, they do not believe they are getting that with the health care law that was passed in this body and then in the House and signed by President Obama during the last couple of years of the administration.

It is interesting, as we went to the floor of the House in the House Chamber this past week for the President's State of the Union speech, it was almost 7,000 words, and he focused very little on the health care law.

One might say: Well, why is that? Well, it seems pretty obvious it is because that law was unpopular when it was passed, and it is actually more unpopular with the American people today than it was the day it was passed. The more people find out about it, the less popular it becomes.

Even the White House understands this law is deeply flawed, it is extremely unpopular, and it actually makes it harder for small businesses to create jobs. So when the President wants to talk about job creation in America, he realizes his health care law isn't helping, and it is actually making it worse.

I had townhall meetings in different communities around Wyoming last week, where you gather a group of people together. My colleagues ought to do the same in their own communities and their home States and ask the group of people: Do you believe, under this health care law—you remember, the one the President promised that if passed that the cost of your insurance would go down? Do you remember that law? Do you believe that after that was passed, that your health care costs will actually go up? How many believe the cost of your care will go up and your insurance will go up? Every hand went up.

Then ask those same people, who now say they are going to end up paying more: Do you think the quality—because there is a lot of discussion about quality and access and concerns about care. Do you believe the quality of your care will go down? Again, the hands went up.

So we have people who are saying: We are going to be paying more and getting less, and that is not what I want.

So today I am here to discuss something about the health care law that the President did leave out of his big speech on Tuesday night, and that is the issue of waivers.

On January 6, while we were all back in our home communities, many people talking to folks around their home States—on January 6, while Congress was not in session, the House was not in session, the Senate was not in session—the administration ended their program that has been a major embarrassment to the Obama administration. Month by month, the President has had to announce that he had to issue more and more waivers from his health care law, waivers that the President granted to unions, to businesses, and to insurers. Each and every waiver served as a clear admission that the health care law, as written, didn't get the job done and doesn't work.

Well, as of January 6, 2012, the administration has issued a total number of waivers that covers more than 4.1 million Americans. Over 1,700 waivers were given covering more than 4.1 million Americans.

Now, interestingly, of all of those people, a very small percentage of workers in this country are union workers. Yet over half of all the waivers given, 2.2 million of those people were those who are covered with union insurance. So we have 4.1 million Americans given waivers. So 2.2 million people with union insurance got a waiver; that is, 54 percent of all of the waivers went to union employees who supported the health care law. These are the people who were out in the streets rallying, saying: We want the health care law. They have it on their Web sites. They had celebrations when it was passed.

Then, do you remember what NANCY PELOSI said? First, you have to pass it before you get to find out what is in it. As all these people getting their insurance through unions found out, if they complied with the law as written it would break their policies, break their programs, and they said: We cannot afford to have this law apply to us. Please give us a waiver. And 2.2 million people with union insurance got a waiver. As they say, they let the word out January 6, 2012, while Congress was not in session and while people were focused on other things.

The rest of America's small business owners were not so lucky. A new poll from the Chamber of Commerce found that 78 percent of small businesses surveyed reported that taxation, regulation, and legislation from Washington made it harder for their businesses to