

those of us on the Democratic side don't want to get comfortable in our minority status, we are determined to make sure it is, as described, a constructive relationship.

To that end we have not used some of the tactics we have seen in past years. We have not insisted on burning 30 hours and 60 hours at a time, causing people who subscribe to C-SPAN to call their cable operators and say why am I paying for the Senate; nothing is happening. Instead, we have tried to use that time to put together packages, bipartisan packages of amendments and we have been successful.

I hope we can continue with that. As long as there is mutual respect, good faith, and cooperation, I look forward to in my role—as soon as Senator REID returns—as the whip on the Democratic side to do our best to continue this constructive relationship.

I have said it before and I will say it again. What we have seen over the last several weeks is the Senate I remember, the Senate I was elected to, the Senate where there was active debate, deliberation, amendments. For some Members, it is a new experience. I hope in our role as the minority we can work with the Senators with a feeling of mutual respect to achieve at least debate on the floor, if not some significant legislation.

Mr. MCCONNELL. If the Senator would yield.

Mr. DURBIN. I would be happy to yield.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I thank the Senator from Illinois for his comments. I agree, this has been good for the Senate, good for both parties, and good for America. We are getting back to normal, and I thank the Senator for his comments and for his cooperation.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank the majority leader.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY FUNDING

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, 29 days from today, on February 27, the Department of Homeland Security of the United States of America will run out of money. The only way to prevent this is for Congress to pass legislation to fund this Department. We should not even be debating whether we are going to fund the Department that protects America from terrorism threats, but that is fact.

Republicans in the House, when we did the budget bill, insisted that we would fund the entire Federal Government through September 30, except for the Department of Homeland Security. The reason they withheld regular budget funding for that Department was they wanted to make a political point. They are angered at President Obama for stepping forward with Executive orders on the issue of immigration, even though the same House Republicans have refused for over a year and a half to call the comprehensive immigration reform bill that passed this Senate on

a bipartisan basis and refused for over a year and a half to address any aspect of immigration. In a fit of pique they said: We are so angry President Obama is going to do something by way of Executive order, we are going to withhold regular funding from the Department that protects America from terrorism.

What were they thinking? Look at the world we live in: a world of Charlie Hebdo, a world of beheading of Japanese journalists, a world that is in danger of terrorist threat, and the United States has felt that danger. We will never forget what happened on 9/11. After that experience, we made the Department of Homeland Security a critical, viable part of America's defense against terrorism.

The Republicans have said: No, before we fund this agency, we have to have five riders on the appropriations bill that attack President Obama. Then we might consider giving regular funding to this Department. One aspect of those riders is particularly troubling.

It was 14 years ago that I introduced the DREAM Act, a simple concept. Children brought to the United States by their parents who are undocumented should be given a chance—simple. Children who were brought to the United States as infants and toddlers and had no voice in the decision of their family and end up here undocumented should be given a chance—a chance to complete school, to be good citizens, to go on to college, to serve in the military, and then a path to legal status. It is not a radical idea.

At times many Republicans have openly supported the DREAM Act. When we couldn't pass it I appealed to the President, at least protect these DREAMers from being deported. These kids did nothing wrong. They were brought here by their parents. Why hold these children accountable? The President agreed and 2½ years ago created DACA.

DACA is an Executive order that says to these young people who would otherwise qualify for the DREAM Act, you come forward, you identify yourself, you let us make sure you have no criminal record that would be of worry to anyone, pay your fee, and we will allow you to temporarily stay in the United States as a student or a worker without being deported. It is just that simple.

We estimate 2 million young children are eligible for the DREAM Act—2 million—and 600,000 have already registered under DACA, the President's Executive order.

What did the House Republicans say? They said, before we will fund the Department of Homeland Security protecting America against terrorism, you have to deport the DREAMers, refuse to renew the DACA protection for 600,000 who have signed up, and refuse to allow any new young person to sign up for this protection.

I have come to the floor for a long period of time and I will continue to be because I want people to know what the

DREAM Act means. It is something, I guess, of significance to stand and give a speech, but it truly doesn't touch people until they hear actual stories.

The story I wish to tell today is of a young woman whom I know. I was just with her in Chicago. Her name is Karen Villagomez. She was brought to the United States at the age of 2. Incidentally, that was the same age my mother was brought to the United States as an immigrant.

Karen was brought here at the age of 2 from Mexico. She grew up in Chicago. She was an outstanding student, and she always had an interest in public service. In May of 2012 she graduated from the University of Rochester in New York with a major in political science. She was not only the first person in her family to graduate from a 4-year college—because Karen Villagomez is undocumented, she didn't receive one penny of government assistance. She made it through college on her own without any help because as an undocumented young woman that was the only chance she had.

Just 1 month after she graduated, President Obama created the DACA Program. After she applied and cleared and received DACA protection from deportation, she found a job as a paralegal in a law firm in Chicago, where she has been working for the last 2 years.

I saw her 1 week ago Friday. She was in Chicago, and she is amazing. She served as an intern in my office. She is one of the brightest, most engaging people one could meet. She looked me in the eye and said: Senator, I am going to law school. I have just been accepted. She is supposed to start this fall. But if the House Republicans have their way, this fall she will find herself being deported from the United States of America.

Think about it. All we have invested in her, all we have put into her life in terms of education, not only K-12 but a college degree now, and the House Republicans would say to Karen Villagomez: Thank you for being part of America, but no thanks, leave. Take whatever skills you have, whatever determination you have to make a difference and take it someplace else. America doesn't need your idealism, the House Republicans say.

I couldn't disagree with them more. If they have their way, Karen would never attend law school. She will never be an attorney. She will be deported back to Mexico, a country she hasn't lived in since she was 2 years old.

Karen got up every morning in the classroom—just as we do on the Senate floor—and pledged allegiance to that flag. That is the only flag she knows. When she sings the national anthem, it is not the national anthem of Mexico, it is the national anthem of the United States of America. Karen wants to be part of the future of this country.

Two weeks ago when she joined me at Erie House in Chicago for a press conference, this is what she said:

DACA represents the values and heritage of this country of immigrants; it was the right thing to do and it has changed my life by replacing fear with hope. This executive action gave me an overwhelming sense of relief and hope. It lifted me from the shadows.

Karen's is one of 2 million stories of eligible young people who want to be part of the future of America.

It is time for the Senate to say no to the House on a bipartisan basis. It is time for us to reject this hate-filled amendment process they engaged in that put five riders on this appropriations bill to penalize young people such as Karen Villagomez.

Is that the face of the Republican Party of America—deporting Karen Villagomez and saying to her and others: You are not welcome in America. Leave.

I don't think so. There are many Republicans who come to me and say: I support the DREAM Act. So let's support the DREAM Act. This is their chance. Step up and defeat these horrible riders that were attached to this appropriations bill by the House Republicans. Step up and give us a chance as a nation to renew our commitment to our diversity, to our heritage as a nation of immigrants, and to renew our commitment to young people such as Karen, whom we have told: If you work hard against the odds and succeed, we want you to be part of our future.

CUBA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, earlier this month I had a chance to visit Cuba with a delegation of Senators and House Members. We met with Cuban Archbishop Jaime Ortega, who shared the wonderful story of Pope Francis's efforts to improve relations between the United States and Cuba and to secure the release of American prisoner Alan Gross.

We met with many Cuban reformers and activists, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez, foreign ambassadors from many countries, various ministry officials, agriculture, telecommunications, science and technology, and the environment—all areas of considerable potential for the greater U.S.-Cuban cooperation.

Our visit came 1 month after President Obama secured the release of Alan Gross and made the historic decision to restore full diplomatic relations with Cuba and begin rolling back over 50 years of failed policies toward that island.

As I have said many times, I am not a fan of the Castro regime. It has a troubling history of human rights abuse and suppressing peaceful political dissent. It has squandered the talents of so many of its own people with a frozen economic and political system, and it has refused to provide a full accounting of the tragic death of Cuban activist and patriot Oswaldo Paya.

But I have also argued that our policy toward Cuba, which has spanned 11 different U.S. Presidents, has failed—

and failed miserably—to bring reform and change in Cuba. Our policy toward Cuba has also hurt the United States and our diplomatic standing in the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean, where many—fairly or unfairly—regard U.S.-Cuban policy as an outdated relic of the Cold War.

So I was delighted and fully supportive when President Obama took this bold move. During my visit I could already see the dividends, most notably in the expressions of hope by the Cuban people. If you go down the streets of Havana, on their pedicabs there are American flags. That would have been unthinkable 2 months ago. Now it is part of their statement that it is time for a new relationship between Cuba and the United States.

As one Cuban activist starkly told me, her talks with others around the island highlighted something she thought had been lost to the Cuban people—a sense of hope.

We need to do all we can to fulfill the hopes of the Cuban people, and one easy way is to provide greater engagement with America, with ideas, with energy, with the vibrancy that our Nation can offer.

I am going to join today with my colleagues: Republican Senators FLAKE, ENZI, MORAN, and BOOZMAN, as well as Democratic Senators LEAHY, UDALL, and WHITEHOUSE, to introduce legislation that will lift the remaining travel restrictions on American travel to Cuba. Representatives SANFORD and MCGOVERN will have a similar bill in the House.

President Obama recently eased these restrictions, but we need to do our part in Congress. It is not only the right thing for the Cuban people; it is the right thing for America. Americans shouldn't have restrictions on their freedom to travel. We don't restrict Americans from traveling to nations with whom we fought wars such as Vietnam, and we don't restrict Americans from traveling to countries with troubling regimes—North Korea, Iran, and Uzbekistan.

During the height of the Cold War, Americans were allowed to travel to the Soviet Union. So why not Cuba? Why do we still isolate this country? Some say that this is a repressive regime, and we don't want to show recognition to this regime.

It is just within this week that our President visited Saudi Arabia to attend the memorial service for the late King of that country. I would daresay there are aspects of the human rights policy of Saudi Arabia which aren't even close to American standards, and yet we consider them a valuable ally.

There is also a lesson in history. When the Soviet Union started to come down, it was cracking on the edges, in the Baltics, and in the Warsaw Pact. As the other republics saw the outside world, they saw the opportunity and the need for change.

We have not prevailed with isolation. Let's engage the Cuban people. Let's

engage their economy. Let's engage their minds in thinking about a 21st century far different than the dark days of communism which they have lived under for so many decades.

I know that several of my colleagues here—particularly those of Cuban descent—have strong, strong personal and family feelings about our relationship with Cuba. I don't diminish that one bit. There is real suffering that has taken place by their families and many others.

But I hope we can look to the future, look to the next generation, and look to the possibility that we can engage Cuba in a positive way. Ultimately, it will be this new flow of American engagement and ideas that will help open Cuba and improve the lives of their people.

Certainly, we ought to try something different. There have been 50 years of isolation, and those 50 years have not worked. Today we are taking the first few steps on a path which I strongly support.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the Democrats controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

The Senator from Delaware.

CUBA

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, while Senator DURBIN is still on the floor, I wish to say very briefly that we came to the House of Representatives a few years ago in 1983, and we didn't get a lot of time to speak on the House floor—maybe 1 minute a day if we were lucky. We would say when we were debating, when we agreed with somebody: I would like to be associated with the remarks of the gentleman from Illinois.

I would very much like to be associated with the remarks of the Senator from Illinois.

I served three tours in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam war. We have most-favored-nation trading status, and they enjoy most-favored-nation trading status with us today.

I like to work out and run. I like to run in the mornings. The mornings I stay here, I run down to the Lincoln Memorial, come back by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and I am reminded of the 55,000 lives that we lost in that war. Yet we enjoy normal diplomatic relations with that country, and they