

Durbin presses Department of Homeland Security

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WASHINGTON—U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) today pressed U. S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen on the future of the Dream Act and her recollection of the January 11th meeting on immigration at the White House at an oversight hearing of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee.



“Madame Secretary, I hope you remember me. We were together at two meetings last week. I’d like to ask you about one of those meetings. It occurred about noon on January the 11th. Some things were said at that meeting which I believe we have to address today. People across the United States and around the world want to know what this president believes should be our priorities when it comes to immigration. I’m going

to ask you, as best you can, to recall what you heard the president say when it came to those priorities. What do you remember the president saying about immigration from African countries to the United States?"Durbin asked.

Secretary Nielsen claimed, under oath, that she could not remember what specific, strong language was used by President Trump at that White House meeting.

Durbin then questioned Secretary Nielsen on the bipartisan agreement on immigration reached by himself and Sens. Graham (R-SC), Flake (R-AZ), Bennet (D-CO), Gardner (R-CO), and Menendez (D-NJ) that was presented to the White House last week.

"Now you've seen, because you commented on it on Fox News, the proposal which Senator Graham and I as well as four other Senators have made on a bipartisan basis and you've rejected it. You said at one point I believe, 'there's nothing in there that would prevent us from getting here again.' Are you aware of the fact that included in this proposal is the entire request of the Administration for border security in this fiscal year - \$1.6 billion for walls and barriers and fences, and another \$1 billion for technology. Exactly what you asked for. If you don't believe this is going to solve the problem, which is what you said on Fox News, why did you request it in the first place?

Durbin continued, "To put the entire burden of immigration reform on the shoulders of these DACA recipients is fundamentally unfair, not practical, and jeopardizes their future and their lives. What we are trying to do is an honest, bipartisan approach to deal with the first phase of this and you have rejected it."

Durbin also acknowledged two Dreamers in attendance at today's Judiciary Committee hearing – Alejandra Duran Arreola and Jhon Magdaleno. Alejandra grew up in Savannah, Georgia and is a second-year student at Loyola University School of Medicine. In addition to medical school, she volunteers at a clinic educating uninsured patients about disease prevention. Her dream is to become an ob-gyn working in underserved communities. Jhon came to the United States from Venezuela when he was nine years old. In high school, Jhon was the Commander of the Air Honor Society in Junior R.O.T.C. He graduated from Georgia Tech with a degree in chemical and biomolecular engineering with highest honors. He now works as a chemical engineer and still dreams of serving in our nation's military.

The bipartisan [*Dream Act*](#) would allow young immigrant students who grew up in the United States to contribute more fully to the country they love. These young people, known as Dreamers, have lived in America since they were children and built their lives here. They grew up pledging allegiance to the American flag and singing the Star

Spangled Banner. They are American in every way except for their immigration status. Under current law, they live in fear of deportation and cannot fully realize their potential or utilize their talents in service to the communities, cities, and nation they call home.