

Ahead Of Veterans Day, Durbin Highlights How Immigration System Remains Broken Even For Those Who Want To Serve Our Nation

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – In a speech on the Senate floor ahead of Veterans Day, U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee and lead author of the *Dream Act*, today discussed the impact and sacrifice immigrant veterans have made to our country—yet how our immigration system remains broken even for those who would put their life on the line to defend our freedoms. Durbin also discussed Senate Democrats’ continued efforts to include immigration provisions in the Build Back Better reconciliation package.

“To serve our nation in uniform takes a special measure of courage and devotion. For some members of our military, it also takes a great deal of persistence and

determination... I'm speaking, of course, of those members of our military who were born in other nations and want to serve America," Durbin said.

Durbin went on to once again share the story of Oscar Vazquez. When Oscar was 12 years old, his family made the arduous journey across the border from Mexico to Arizona. From the time he was a child, Oscar dreamed of serving his adopted home by enlisting in the military. He studied hard in high school—and he joined the Junior ROTC.

During his junior year, Oscar tried to sign up for basic training, but the recruiter informed him that he couldn't without a U.S. birth certificate. It was a tough setback, but Oscar persevered. He was awarded JROTC officer of the year by his high school.

Oscar attended Arizona State University, where he earned a degree in mechanical engineering. After graduating, he got married and had a child—but his undocumented status still prevented him reaching his full potential. So, he moved back to Mexico—a country he hadn't lived in since he was a young boy—to apply for legal entry into the United States. He would have been barred from reentering the United States – and separated from his family – for 10 years without a special waiver.

When the Department of Homeland Security finally granted Oscar a waiver with the help of Durbin's office, he enlisted in the U.S. Army. Within six months of returning to the United States, he was off to basic training. Oscar served our nation with honor as a cavalry scout in Afghanistan. And today, he is finally an American citizen.

"Oscar, like so many others, fought for our nation and every war in our history. But even those who are ready to risk everything for America, for them our immigration system still is broken," Durbin said.

Durbin continued, "The pandemic has proven how much we depend on immigrants. As members of the military, first responders, and agricultural workers, we couldn't function without them. That's precisely why reforming our broken immigration system is an integral part of President Biden's Build Back Better . And as the Senate finalizes the budget reconciliation package, we must include protections for immigrants, like Oscar Vazquez, who have given everything they can to America. If we want to rebuild our economy and drive its growth for years to come, we should begin by ensuring these immigrants can earn their place in the American story... It's far past time to reform our immigration system. With the Build Back Better package, we can finally get it done."

Video of Durbin's floor speech is available [here](#).