

Excerpt From Transcript of Senate Judiciary Hearing

MAY 6, 2009

SEN. DURBIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Madam Secretary, thanks for being here. As a former governor of a border state, the story I'm about to tell you may sound familiar.

Two weeks ago, I had a meeting in Chicago with student from one of our leading high schools. I met a young woman who was valedictorian of her class and was on a winning team in a science competition who had been accepted at an Ivy League university and was looking forward to pursuing a degree in biology which may lead to medical research or becoming a medical doctor.

But she had a problem. She came to the United States when she was two years old. She was brought by her parents from Mexico. Her parents sold corn on the street corners. And she grew up here. She speaks perfect English. She's never known another country in her entire life. And she's undocumented.

I've introduced a bill for eight years now called the Dream Act. My co-sponsors this year include Senators Lugar and Menendez. And it says, for young Americans -- or young people living in America in her circumstance, that they be given a chance through either two years of service in the military or the completion of two years of college, to move toward legal status. I'm hoping, praying, for so many young people who are counting on this that we will have a chance to consider and pass that this year.

Could you tell me your opinion of the Dream Act?

SEC. NAPOLITANO: Yes, Senator.

As a governor of a border state, this is one of -- this is one of those areas where everyone wants the immigration law enforced. We must enforce it. It's part of our national sovereignty, among other things.

On the other hand, we have to have the ability to deal with some of the human issues that arise here. And the one that you have identified is one of the most acute.

I supported the Dream Act when I was governor. I support it now. One of the most moving things I've been privileged to do as secretary is to administer the oath of citizenship to men and women in our military who have been serving in Iraq, who were not citizens, who have elected to become citizen. In a way, it kind of mirrors what you're talking about in the Dream Act.

But it seems to me that the Dream Act is a good piece of legislation and a good idea.