

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

Richard J. Durbin

UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM ILLINOIS



United States Senator Richard J. Durbin was a law student when he and his wife Loretta welcomed their first child, a baby girl born with a congenital heart defect. With no insurance, the Durbins had to rely on low-cost hospital clinics for their daughter's care. That life-altering experience left Senator Durbin with a profound gratitude for skilled, caring health professionals and a deep conviction that every family deserves access to quality, affordable health care.

Today, Senator Durbin is Illinois' senior U.S. Senator. He also is the Majority Whip, the second highest-ranking position in the U.S. Senate. He chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee and serves on the Appropriations and Agriculture committees.

Durbin received both his bachelor's degree and his JD from Georgetown University. He was also awarded honorary degrees from Millikin University, Lincoln College, and the Illinois Institute of Technology. Senator Durbin began his career in public service serving in the Illinois Senate. He was elected to the

U.S. House of Representatives in 1982, and to the U.S. Senate in 1996.

In 1987, while representing the 20th district of Illinois in Congress, Durbin sponsored the first-ever smoking ban on U.S. airlines. The ban became the tipping point in a global movement to create smoke-free workplaces. He supported the creation of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and helped lead the passage of the Affordable Care Act. Senator Durbin has worked to double the size of Pell Grants, expand scholarship and loan repayment programs for new physicians and nurses, and reduce racial and ethnic disparities in health care, especially maternal mortality rates. In addition, he has helped marshal bipartisan support in Congress for increased investment in breakthrough medical research and discovery. Since 2014, this effort has boosted federal investments in medical research at the National Institutes of Health by more than \$17 billion, or nearly 60 percent—funding that supports pioneering research at Loyola University Chicago's Stritch School of Medicine and other leading universities and labs.

Through the HEAL Initiative, Senator Durbin is working with Loyola Medicine and other leading Chicagoland hospitals to reduce gun violence by expanding trauma-informed care and economic opportunity in some of the city's poorest neighborhoods. Twenty-two years ago, Senator Durbin first introduced the Dream Act to allow undocumented young people known as Dreamers a path to citizenship. He is grateful to Loyola and Stritch School of Medicine for their support of Dreamers and DACA recipients and is determined to make the Dream Act the law of the land.