

obsessed with decimating healthcare for millions of Americans and ripping off the National Treasury to deliver benefits to the wealthiest Americans.

Let's get this done for our Dreamers. More than 100 a day are losing their status, which means they can no longer legally work in our country. It matters. It is urgent. It is productive for our communities. It is bipartisan. Let's get it done.

How about disaster relief? We certainly saw a powerful punch against our States from the raging forest fires in the West to the hurricanes in the South and Southeast. Hurricanes have hit Texas and Florida and Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands—massive destruction. Fires have scourged States from Montana to Idaho, to Washington, to Oregon, to California. Those fires burned well into the winter months of November and December.

These afflictions hit Democrats and Republicans, red States and blue States. Why don't we get this done? These are basic, bipartisan, let's-get-it-done agendas. Let's get it done now.

Let's make sure, when we are addressing the impact of those storms in the South and those hurricanes—Harvey, Irma, and Maria—we simultaneously recognize the destructive impact forest fires have had that have been scourging the West. They have destroyed a lot of the infrastructure in the forest that needs to be replaced. They have affected a lot of communities that need economic help recovering.

Certainly, it made us recognize that we have millions of acres of forests that can become much more fire resilient if they are thinned, if we get rid of the fuel buildup on the floor of the forests. When they become more resilient, they stop the forest fires.

Thinning is a win-win. It produces a steady supply of sawlogs for the mill and stops forest fires when they are raging. There was a forest fire headed right for Sisters, OR, and it hit an area that had been thinned. Guess what. It stopped. The trees were farther apart. The fuels were removed from the floor of the forest.

Now we have created a real fire hazard with our clear-cut strategy of years past—the forestry grows very close together, often replanted. Trees are all the same height. It is very easy for the fire to get into the canopy, and once in the canopy, every tree is touching the next tree. It rages on, and there is no break.

But a natural forest is very different. We can more effectively replicate the fire-resistant nature of a natural forest by thinning these overgrown, second-growth forests. We can then create that supply of saw logs, keep our mills open, keep our people working, and strengthen our economies in rural America. We can do it by funding this reduction, these thinning programs in acreage that has already gone through the environmental process. In Oregon, we have 1.6 million acres already ap-

proved for thinning, if we can pass the funds to get it done.

So let's take this on in 2018. Let's dedicate 2018 to that vision in our Constitution of "we the people." Let's stop passing legislation targeted specifically to help out the richest at the expense of everyone else in America. Let's turn over a new leaf from campaigns and policies and legislation by and for the privileged and the powerful to honor the vision of our Constitution, the vision of our Nation, a Nation of laws which distributes power that produces policies by and for the people of the United States of America, for making families stronger, for building those foundations of jobs and healthcare and education and a healthy planet.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority win.

FUNDING OUR MILITARY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I admit I wasn't here during the entirety of the comments from our friend, and I saw his to-do list. The only thing missing from that to-do list was to fund our military—or at least I didn't see it on there. In all fairness, maybe he mentioned that in his comments.

We now have 9 days to reach an agreement to keep the government funded, to keep the lights on, to keep paying the salaries of our government employees, and, of course, to fund our military, which ought to be our No. 1 priority. If we think about things that government must do, funding our national defense is the only thing that we can do and that government can do. There are a lot of other things that government does that are optional or maybe things we would like to do, but funding our military is the No. 1 priority—or should be.

As the Senate majority leader mentioned earlier this week, our Democratic colleagues persist in the notion that we should only increase defense spending if we increase nondefense spending by the same amount. The parity that the minority leader and the other Democrats call for doesn't make any sense, though. It is apples and oranges. They act as though all government spending is exactly alike and enjoys or should enjoy the same priority, and that is just not true. We know that from our own family budgets or from a small business. There are things we must do, things we want to do, and things we will do if there is money left over. But our friends across the aisle, who are obstructing our ability to get to negotiated budget caps and fund our military, act as though all of that is the same, that must do, want to do, and what you will do if you have money left over—that those are all exactly the same, and that is just not the case. It is not the case in our family budgets, in our small business budgets, nor is it the case for the Federal budget. Not everything is a priority. But we do know that the No. 1 priority must be the safety and security of the Amer-

ican people by making sure our military is adequately funded.

The Budget Control Act signed into law in 2011 was what I would call a necessary evil. The Budget Control Act provided that we would have a bipartisan, bicameral negotiation and try to come up with a grand bargain.

That was what President Obama liked to talk about a lot—the grand bargain. But some people suggested that was kind of like a unicorn, something that people describe but no one has ever seen—a grand bargain. I wish it weren't true.

The Budget Control Act said that in the absence of a grand bargain, we would have budget caps or sequestration imposed on discretionary spending above certain levels. It proposed separate budget caps for defense and non-defense, and if the budget caps are exceeded, there is an automatic enforcement mechanism called sequestration which imposes across-the-board cuts, which I mentioned a moment ago.

The purpose of this sequestration—or these across-the-board cuts—is to do something in the absence of us doing what we should do; in other words, we should take it upon ourselves to figure out what the appropriate spending levels should be for defense and non-defense, and then we should act to appropriate that money. But this is basically a fail-safe mechanism, which operates as a result of our failure to deal with this in a proactive way, and it has hit our defense spending much, much harder than domestic spending.

As we know, neither our defense spending nor tax cuts are the cause of our deficits and debt. It is the 70 percent of spending that happens in the Federal Government on autopilot. It is the entitlements that have been going up well in excess of 5 percent a year and are causing instability and unpredictability in those important programs, such as Medicare and Social Security, but at the same time racking up huge deficits and debt that future generations are going to have to pay back. Somebody is going to have to pay it back, and it won't be the present generation because we won't be around then. It is simply immoral to continue to see this happen without trying to deal with it.

But back on the matter of the Pentagon, as one op-ed writer put it in the Washington Post last month—he said:

The Pentagon and the welfare state have been locked in brutal combat for decades, and the Pentagon has gotten clobbered. . . . Welfare programs—Social Security, Medicare, food stamps and other benefits—dwarf defense spending.

In the 1950s and 1960s, defense spending was roughly 8 to 10 percent of our economy. In 2016, it was just 3 percent. That is a huge change.

James Clapper, the former Director of National Intelligence, said that in his 50 years in the intelligence community, he had never seen a more diverse array of threats confronting the United States around the world—never in his

50 years of experience. So we are simply asking our military and our national security personnel to do too much with too little.

It is no surprise that Secretary of Defense James Mattis said last June that “for all the heartache caused by the loss of our troops during [our] wars [abroad], no enemy in this field has done more to harm the readiness of our military than sequestration.”

More recently, General Mattis said that so far our continuing resolutions have not done even greater damage to our readiness thanks to certain additional or supplemental funding that we voted on. But at the same time, he soberly cautioned that there could be real impact—and it won’t be positive, it will be negative—if the problem persists and if the Department of Defense doesn’t have a real budget sometime this month.

His remarks echo that of practically every service chief. Together, their views mean we have to act. I don’t know who else we would listen to if we are not going to listen to the Secretary of Defense and our service chiefs when it comes to national security because that is their job, and we ought to take their advice and heed their counsel.

Cuts in defense spending have real consequences. Much less money is available for training and necessary maintenance, for example. The length of deployments for our troops grows, and our soldiers are stretched thin. Our military is forced to operate beyond its normal capabilities.

The former Air Force Chief of Staff recently described the Air Force as the smallest, oldest equipped, and least ready force across the full spectrum of operations in our service history. Those are chilling remarks—or should be. More than half of all Marine Corps fixed and rotary-wing aircraft were unable to fly by the end of 2016. I have no doubt that we can turn that around very quickly if Congress were to step up to its responsibilities and adequately fund the military, but that is the status quo unless we act. The Navy fleet currently stands at 275 of the 350 ship requirement. Of our 58 Army brigade combat teams, only 3—3 out of 58—are ready for combat.

Our enemies shouldn’t take any comfort in these numbers because, as I said, the United States always pulls together and Congress always acts when they see a national emergency. But it shouldn’t take an emergency for us to do our job and to make sure that our military is adequately funded and is ready to fight. As General Brooks in Seoul, South Korea, said, their motto is “ready to fight tonight.” That is the kind of world we live in.

Last summer was the perfect example of why, when we draw attention to these numbers, we are not just blowing smoke. Operational accidents in the South Pacific exposed our readiness failures in a dramatic fashion and in a tragic fashion. Ten sailors died when the USS *John S. McCain* collided with a

600-foot merchant vessel off the coast of Singapore. Seven sailors died when the *Fitzgerald* collided with another vessel off the coast of Japan. And the USS *Lake Champlain* collided with a boat near Korea—although thankfully that time no lives were lost. This ought to be a wake-up call to all of us.

Many have drawn credible correlations between these accidents that have taken the lives of our military servicemembers and our readiness failures, citing studies like the 2015 independent investigation by the Government Accountability Office. That study determined that the Navy’s mandate to keep ships afloat in the Pacific was shortchanging crew training and degrading the condition of our ships—in other words, additional readiness failures.

These accidents, by the way, are happening at the same time our national security threats are not going away, as General Clapper’s comments would indicate.

We have seen North Korea continue to improve its nuclear and long-range ballistic missile capabilities beyond the estimates of our intelligence community—much faster—and detonate what is widely considered to be a hydrogen bomb recently.

We have seen large-scale protests in Iran—and I hope they continue—exposing the instability of a regime that continues to use its proxies to advance its aims throughout the broader Middle East; in other words, the No. 1 state sponsor of international terrorism—Iran. We ought to encourage the people of Iran to continue to rise up in protest and to change the regime there into one that does not prey on its neighbors in the region.

We have seen a growing China—something that more and more people are realizing is a threat. I know that when we deal with countries like China, frequently we deal with them in the commercial context where we see a business that hires people and we see investments here in the United States. But what we need to recognize is that they don’t do business the way the United States does business. Sitting at the top of every company in China, in the board room of every Chinese company, is the Communist Party. They operate on an all-of-government basis. And it is not just the government; it is also what we would consider the private sector. But, in truth, there is no private sector in China; it is all an arm of the government. It is posing a rising threat to American wages and labor as they erode our industrial base by stealing our technology. And because of loopholes in the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States—the so-called CFIUS process—they are now able to tailor financial arrangements through joint ventures and others in a way to capture our dual-purpose, cutting-edge technology. They then copy it in China and erode our defense industrial base here in the United States, along with the jobs that go with it. So

it is a very real and present threat to American wages and workers. It is a threat to our intellectual property edge and the innovation that we are the best in the world at, but they are all too eager to steal it, copy it, and to harm the jobs and the investment in those businesses here in the United States.

Of course, when it comes to China, there is the threat to human rights in nondemocratic nations like Venezuela and Zimbabwe, which China often has no qualms supporting.

With this diverse array of dangers, we simply can’t afford to straitjacket our military by arbitrarily cutting the amount of money we appropriate to fund it. But that is what is going to happen unless we act—and act quickly. The current continuing resolution expires on the 19th of this month.

The truth is, even if we are able to come up with negotiated budget caps for defense and nondefense spending, we are probably going to have to have a short-term continuing resolution to give the Appropriations Committees time to put that into bill text. In other words, we can’t just snap our fingers once the decision has been made. It is going to take some time to actually put it on paper.

The bottom line is, if we want to return to having the strong military that we have always had, if we want to continue to lead in the world, if we want to continue to be a force for peace and stability, we have to maintain our military strength. That was the lesson we had to learn again during the last administration when we saw America retreat from its leadership in the world.

There are countries, tyrants, bullies, and dictators all too willing to fill the void left by American retreat, and one way we retreat is when we don’t fund the readiness of our military, when we are not “ready to fight tonight,” as General Brooks has said, and we need to start with ending this cycle of continuing resolutions and defense sequestration.

So I come to the floor today to call on my colleagues from all across this Chamber, but specifically across the aisle, to quit holding our military hostage to other unrelated demands, and I urge this body to come together in agreement on new budget caps as soon as possible.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CHIP AND COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about an issue that is critical to patients and families in my home State of Washington and across the country. Today, parents are wondering if they will be able to get the healthcare their kids need, and communities are wondering if they will be able to provide it.

That is unacceptable.

Congress has to swiftly and fully restore the Children's Health Insurance Program, or CHIP, and funding for other services families need, like community health centers, which have been waiting more than 100 days for a long-term solution. They should do so without making deep cuts to successful prevention programs in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that tackle avoidable conditions like heart disease and diabetes.

Democrats have wanted to get this done for months. By focusing on pushing through partisan tax reform at the end of the year, Republicans instead put massive corporations and the wealthiest ahead of making sure our children and their families have the healthcare they need. I hope they are now ready to give these issues their full and immediate attention. In case they aren't, I want to make sure they know exactly what this is about.

It is about children like Stella. Stella lives in Washington State. She is 5 years old. She has two brothers. She has a love of the outdoors, especially swimming and kayaking. She has a typical kindergartner's boundless energy and excitement. But Stella was born with spina bifida, an issue with how her spinal cord was formed. In the past year of dealing with that condition, Stella's family went through 5 catheters a day, almost 2,000 in total. They went on 10 different occasions to have MRI scans. They went to get her new leg braces. Given the cost of all that, they went through their \$5,000 deductible in the first 5 weeks of the year. That is right. It took just 5 weeks. Additionally, this year Stella is also scheduled to have bladder and kidney surgery.

As one can imagine, the expenses are really adding up. Even with both parents working, covering Stella's healthcare needs would be an unimaginable task. Fortunately, Stella does qualify for health insurance through CHIP. CHIP has helped her family afford the treatment she needs, including physical therapy.

Stella's story is just one of many examples of families who rely on this program. There are 60,000 children in Washington State who are now insured through CHIP. Nine million families nationwide rely on it to help address the healthcare needs of their children. Yet Congress has taken over 102 days and counting to restore it. There is no excuse for this inaction.

Families who rely on the CHIP Program are not alone in needing our immediate attention. Thanks to CHIP

and Medicaid, the uninsured rate among children is now at an all-time low. Jeopardizing this accomplishment by letting CHIP twist in the wind is simply unacceptable. This Republican-controlled Congress has also failed to renew other investments that our families rely on for the care they need—programs such as community health centers, which serve 25 million patients, particularly in our rural and poorer communities; the National Health Service Corps, which brings doctors and other healthcare providers to underserved areas through scholarships and loan repayment; and the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education Program, which brings primary care and dental residencies to communities in need. Leaving these programs without long-term extensions a minute longer is utterly irresponsible because this lack of certainty for them is already bringing a negative impact on our communities.

For example, the Northeast Washington Health Programs serve some of the most rural areas in my State, including Ferry County, which has fewer than four people per square mile. They are struggling to hire needed medical staff and managers because of this uncertainty that is now there. Ferry County cannot wait.

The Community Health Association of Spokane runs 12 health center sites and sees more than 70,000 patients a year. They recently began offering very much needed opioid addiction treatment. If Congress does not reauthorize the community health center funding, those efforts will be jeopardized and expansions will be halted. Spokane cannot wait.

Yakima Neighborhood Health Services served over 22,000 patients in 2016. Almost all of those patients were below 200 percent of the Federal poverty line.

If Congress does not act soon, three different clinics, including a clinic in one of the poorest cities in Washington, will be at risk. Yakima cannot wait.

I have heard additional stories of similar hardships from across my State. North Olympic Healthcare Network has had to put expansions on behavioral healthcare on hold. Another health center in Washington may have to reconsider building a new children's dental residency program. A center serving Whatcom County may have to cancel a project for medical, dental, and behavioral healthcare facilities as well.

Across the country there are a lot of examples for community health centers just like the ones I mentioned. Healthcare that people of all ages and backgrounds rely on is being put in jeopardy, all because Republicans prioritized tax cuts for those at the top before the health needs of millions of people at the end of last year.

It is far past time to show these families that we are willing to work to get this done. We need to give them the peace of mind that they can get the

healthcare they need. They deserve that.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. NELSON pertaining to the introduction of S. 2292 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. NELSON. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. HEINRICH. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DACA

Mr. HEINRICH. Madam President, I rise today to stand up for the hundreds of thousands of young immigrants known as Dreamers, whose lives President Trump has thrown into terrifying uncertainty.

Immigrant communities have long helped write the economic, social, and cultural story of my home State of New Mexico and, for that matter, the entire Nation. That is certainly true for Dreamers, undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States as children and are vital members of communities across New Mexico.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of meeting many of New Mexico's estimated 7,000 Dreamers. I have met with students who grew up here and are now striving to become doctors, scientists, teachers, and even serve in our military. These young people are our children's classmates. They are our next-door neighbors. They are our colleagues. They are family members, and many are truly rising stars. In fact, I would argue that these Dreamers are the future of a great America.

Every day these young people add to the strength of our economy, to the vitality of our country. More than 97 percent of DACA recipients are in school or in the workforce.

The DACA Program allowed them to work legally, to get driver's licenses, to go to college, to serve in our military and give back to their communities. DACA helped almost 70 percent of recipients secure a job with better pay, and better pay leads to real investments in our communities and our economy.

After their DACA applications were approved, nearly two-thirds of recipients reported buying their first car, and almost one in six reported buying a new home. DACA recipients also paid billions of dollars in Federal, State, and local taxes. Why on Earth would