

to end the era of irresponsibility in Washington.

End of quote by the President.

I could not agree more. Congress and the administration need to find a better way to fund current military operations. Most of these funds are expected and should be addressed in the regular budget process.

Again, I want to provide our troops with the funding and the resources they need to be successful as they work to protect America. I do not, however, want the brave men and women of the Armed Forces nor the families of America who have been truly impacted by unforeseen disasters to be used as justification for unchecked and, in some cases, unrelated spending.

The men and women of our armed services deserve better than this spending bill. The people of the United States deserve better.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TERRORISTS AND GUNS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, earlier this month, the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee held a hearing on the threat posed by the ability of terrorists to purchase firearms in America and legislative proposals to address that threat. Before purchasing a firearm, an individual currently must undergo a background check to search for disqualifying characteristics such as a felony conviction or a history of domestic violence. However, if the background check reveals that the prospective buyer is on the terrorist watch list, law enforcement legally cannot block the sale unless the individual falls into another disqualifying category. In other words, being on a terrorist watch list does not prevent someone from buying a gun.

To close this dangerous loophole, I support S. 1317, the Denying Firearms and Explosives to Dangerous Terrorists Act, which was introduced by Senator FRANK LAUTENBERG. I am a cosponsor of this legislation because it would authorize the Attorney General to deny the transfer of a firearm when an FBI background check reveals that the prospective purchaser is a known or sus-

pected terrorist and the Attorney General has a reasonable belief that the purchaser may use the firearm in connection with terrorism.

Law enforcement should have the authority to block the purchase of a firearm by a known or suspected terrorist. Giving them that authority is simply common sense and has support across the political spectrum. At the May 5 hearing, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg expressed his support, and that of the other 500 American mayors who are members of the bipartisan coalition Mayors Against Illegal Guns, for passing S. 1317. Mayor Bloomberg focused on data recently released by the U.S. Government Accountability Office showing that between 2004 and 2010, individuals on the terrorist watch list were able to purchase firearms and explosives from licensed dealers 1,119 times. I agree with Mayor Bloomberg's testimony that this data represents a serious threat to our national security and that Congress needs to act to address it.

Representative PETER KING, ranking member of the House Homeland Security Committee, also appeared at the hearing and spoke about legislation similar to S. 1317 that he introduced in the House. Congressman KING mentioned that his bill has Republican and Democratic cosponsors and would have a positive impact on law enforcement agencies across the country, highlighting the support of the International Associations of Chiefs of Police.

Closing the "terror gap" also is supported by an overwhelming majority of American gun owners. In December 2009, pollster Frank Luntz conducted a poll showing that 82 percent of NRA members and 86 percent of non-NRA gun owners favored a proposal to prevent individuals listed on a terrorist watch list from purchasing firearms.

Closing the loophole in Federal law that prevents law enforcement from blocking the sale of firearms to terrorists is not a controversial proposal. To the contrary, legislative efforts to close the "terror gap" enjoy widespread, bipartisan support. In order to keep Americans safe, it is essential that law enforcement is provided with every legal tool to keep guns out of the hands of known or suspected terrorists. I urge my colleagues to take up and pass S. 1317, the Denying Firearms and Explosives to Dangerous Terrorists Act.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I regret that I was unavoidably detained on May 24, 2010, and missed rollcall votes No. 163 and No. 164. I ask that the RECORD reflect that had I been present I would have voted as follows: rollcall vote No. 163, a Brownback motion to instruct conferees: "yea"; rollcall vote No. 164, a Hutchison motion to instruct conferees: "yea."

NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise today in recognition of National Mental Health Awareness Month to fight the stigma associated with mental illness that discourages people from seeking help and raise awareness of disparities in access to mental health services.

The National Institute of Mental Health estimates that while only 6 percent of Americans suffer from a serious mental illness, over a quarter of adults suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. These illnesses—depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, phobias, personality and body image disorders, and substance addictions—are real diseases with proven treatments.

Mental health determines how we make decisions, handle stress, and relate to others, consequently affecting our relationships with our families, our colleagues, and our communities. Normally defined as how one thinks, feels, behaves, and copes, mental health is as integral to our well-being as our physical health. However, mental health disorders are chronically underdiagnosed and undertreated.

While public education and awareness campaigns can go a long way in addressing the stigma associated with mental health disorders, improved access to high-quality mental health care should be a national priority. Unfortunately, access to mental health services is often more disparate than access to medical care, particularly in rural areas. Rural States like South Dakota have long struggled to recruit and retain an adequate mental health workforce to meet the needs of their citizens. I am pleased the new health reform law will increase investments in the health care workforce, including mental health providers. Increased access to adequate and meaningful health insurance coverage has also been addressed with health reform, ensuring more Americans can obtain the care they need. All too often, insurance companies have failed to cover mental health services or impose restrictive measures on the scope and duration of the treatment. Last Congress, I was proud to cosponsor and support passage of the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, which ensures health insurance coverage for mental health services is comparable to coverage of physical ailments.

In the short term, however, I remain deeply concerned about our Nation's mental health safety net. I recently joined several colleagues in support of increased funding for comprehensive community services for low income and uninsured people living with mental illnesses. While the economic downturn has placed an additional financial strain on Federal, State, and family budgets, community mental health centers and other safety net providers are simultaneously reporting a significant increase in demand for mental

health and addiction services. We must continue our investment in these critical mental health programs for those most in need.

I recognize that mental illness affects many South Dakotans. It is my hope that awareness efforts throughout the month of May will help recognize the need for improved access to services, promote overall health and well-being, reduce the stigma associated with mental disorders, and encourage Americans to seek help when they need it.

TRIBUTE TO AMBASSADOR OLEH SHAMSHUR

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I wish today to mention the outstanding work of an ambassador who is leaving Washington after 4 years of distinguished achievement—Ambassador Oleh Shamshur of Ukraine.

There is little doubt that he has made a major contribution to strengthening bilateral relations between our countries. Ambassador Shamshur was one of the senior negotiators of the United States-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership signed on December 19, 2008, which elevated relations between the United States and Ukraine to a new level. The charter is a living document and continues to guide cooperation between the two countries. On April 12, 2010, President Obama and President Yanukovych reaffirmed their commitment to the charter and expressed their intention to realize its full potential.

Ambassador Shamshur also played an important role in the establishment of the United States-Ukrainian Strategic Partnership Commission and participated in its first inaugural session in December 2009. The commission has reinvigorated relations between the United States and Ukraine with an ongoing dialog and program of cooperation on issues of democracy, economic freedom and prosperity, security and territorial integrity, energy security, defense-related cooperation, the rule of law, and people-to-people contacts.

During Ambassador Shamshur's tenure in Washington, Ukraine once more demonstrated its important leadership on the question of nonproliferation and arms control issues. Cooperation on these issues between Washington and Kyiv has been significantly enhanced. These efforts were conspicuous in the positive outcome of the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington.

While in Washington, Ambassador Shamshur's accomplishments were not limited to issues of international security or geopolitics. Early on in his service here, the United States reinstated tariff preferences for Ukraine under the Generalized System of Preferences and granted Ukraine market economy status. The Ambassador was instrumental in the efforts that led to Ukraine's graduation from the Jack-

son-Vanick Amendment on 23 March 2006. The United States and Ukraine were also able to sign a bilateral agreement on market access issues, which became a key step in Ukraine's eventual joining the World Trade Organization. The establishment of the United States-Ukraine Council on Trade and Investment in March 2008 was also a result of Ambassador Shamshur's tireless efforts. This year, Ambassador Shamshur can also claim credit for the resolution of difficulties surrounding the operation of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation in Ukraine and its return to the Ukrainian market.

Many of us on Capitol Hill and in the administration share an appreciation for Ambassador Oleh Shamshur's achievements. He leaves relations between Ukraine and the United States immeasurably stronger for having served here these 4 years. We wish him and the Ukrainian people well on the occasion of his departure.

AMERICA COMPETES ACT

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, about a year ago, the United Arab Emirates decided to secure its energy future. The Emirates is a small Persian Gulf state that is awash in oil and annually rakes in about \$80 billion in oil revenues. For its own domestic energy needs, however, it opted to go with another technology—nuclear power. Its reasoning was that the oil in the ground will eventually run out and that it would be best to conserve and prepare for that day.

The Emirates specified they wanted to build four nuclear reactors and estimated the costs at around \$40 billion. Sure enough, the bids soon started coming in from the world's leading nuclear vendors. There was Areva, the company born out of France's nuclear effort—they now get 80 percent of their electricity from nuclear and are building one of their new Evolutionary Power Reactors in Finland. There was Westinghouse, which is building its new AP1000 reactors in Japan and China. You may recognize the name. They were once, along with General Electric, America's leading electrical manufacturer. Now they are a Japanese company, bought by Toshiba in 2006.

While these two giants duelled, a third competitor entered the field. South Korea only started building its own nuclear reactors in 1996. Before that they bought from the U.S. and the Japanese. But then they took an old design from Combustion Engineering, another American company, and fashioned the APR-1400. After building a few for themselves they entered the world market. Meanwhile, in the Persian Gulf oil business, the Koreans had established a reputation for getting things done on budget and on time.

Still, it was a complete shock last October when the United Arab Emirates passed over bids from the world's two leading companies, Areva and Wes-

tinghouse, and awarded the contract to South Korea for \$20 billion—half the original estimated price. The French and the Japanese have gone back to the drawing boards to figure out what went wrong so they will be better able to compete next time.

How did the Koreans come so far so fast? People will talk about “cheap labor,” “government enterprise” and “copycat technology.” But I have another hypothesis. Year after year, Korean students are at the top of world performance in math and science while the United States doesn't even rank in the top 10. In the Program for International Student Assessment's math test for 15-year-old students, for instance, South Korea ranks third, behind Finland and Taiwan, while the United States ranks 21st. They are 75 points ahead of us on a scale of 1,000.

We have been hearing about these statistics for decades—maybe we have even grown used to them—but now we are starting to see the consequences. We are a country that is falling behind the rest of the world in science literacy. In terms of energy, the rest of the world is currently going through a nuclear renaissance while we are barely able to construct new reactors in our own country. Part of our population still thinks a nuclear reactor is an atomic bomb that can go up in a mushroom cloud any minute. A larger number believes that if we cover the Great Smoky Mountains with windmills we could generate all the electricity we need without having to build either nuclear reactors or coal plants. I call this “Going to War in Sailboats.” That is the title of a book I have just written. If we were to go to war tomorrow, would we put our fleet of nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers in mothballs and commission a fleet of sailing vessels?

Four years ago Senator JEFF BINGAMAN and I asked the National Academies:

What are the top 10 actions, in priority order, that federal policymakers could take to enhance the science and technology enterprise so that the United States can successfully compete, prosper, and be secure in the global community of the 21st century? What strategy, with several concrete steps, could be used to implement each of those actions?

The Academies responded quickly to that request by assembling a distinguished panel, headed by Norman R. Augustine that quickly produced a list of 20 recommendations along with strategies in the report, “Rising Above the Gathering Storm.” That report was issued 3 years ago. I think its message is even more immediate today.

In response to the Gathering Storm report, Congress enacted and the President signed the America COMPETES Act in 2007, incorporating many of the Academies' recommendations and establishing a blueprint for maintaining America's competitive position. In the COMPETES Act we authorized funding to improve education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.