

moment, make sure that victim gets the help and support she or he needs to do the unthinkable, and that is to lay herself or himself bare to the public about what has happened. The way you do that is through the reforms my colleague Senator MURRAY stressed and that we have incorporated in this bill, and that is that every single victim gets their own lawyer.

I don't think many Members understand how extraordinary that is. That reform alone will make our military the most victim-friendly criminal justice system in the world. In no other criminal justice system anywhere—civilian, military, United States, our allies—does a victim get that kind of support. That is what is underlying in these reforms. We already know it works because it has been a pilot program in the Air Force. Unlike those who say reporting will never go up unless we make another policy change, reporting is spiking in our military, up 50 percent just this year. That is because the victims are getting the word, not only do you not have to report to the chain of command, you are going to begin to get the resources and help and knowledge you need to navigate the choppiest waters, emotionally and personally, you will ever encounter.

Not only have we done that in the underlying bill, we also have done other work such as stripping commanders of their ability to abuse this system by changing the outcome of a trial—very important.

Making the crime of retaliation a reality in the military—it should be actionable in a criminal court within the military if you retaliate against a victim who reports. Now not only will the victim know that retaliation is a crime, not only will the unit know retaliation is a crime, the victim has her own lawyer who can help press those charges if that occurs.

Think of the practical consequences of this reform. You go back into your unit, you are retaliated against, you call your lawyer: You will not believe what they did to me today. Your lawyer helps you bring charges against those who might retaliate.

It requires automatic discharge from the military for rape or assault convictions.

There will be other opportunities to debate the policy difference we have about how these cases are handled in the military, but I cannot say how grateful I am to the dean and to Senator COLLINS for doing this today. It is very important that we not lose sight that this is not about a bumper sticker. It is not about one side versus the other. This is about doing the very best job we can on the policy so we can protect victims, prosecute offenders, and get them the hell out of our military. That is what this is about, and with every fiber of my being I believe we are going to accomplish that with the reforms we are embracing.

I will come back to the floor to talk more about the amendment I will be of-

fering on the floor to go even further with some of these reforms that we think are necessary.

I am so grateful that my colleagues have taken a moment to recognize the obvious; that what we have done is historic; that what we have done we do in agreement; and what we have done is going to make a difference.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, how much time do we have under this morning business agreement?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time in morning business has currently expired.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. MIKULSKI. We have two more speakers, Senators from Massachusetts and Washington State. I ask unanimous consent morning business be extended for these two for approximately 10 minutes.

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

Ms. MIKULSKI. I yield to the Senator from Washington State and the Senator from Massachusetts.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Maryland and the Senator from Maine for helping to bring so many of us to the floor today to talk about an issue that cuts across partisan lines and has plagued our Nation's military and has gone unaddressed for far too long. Military sexual assault is an epidemic and it has rightly been identified as such by the Pentagon. It is absolutely unconscionable that a fellow servicemember, the person you rely on to have your back and to be there for you, would commit such a terrible crime. It is simply appalling that they could commit such a personal violation of their brother or sister in uniform, but what is worse and what has made change an absolute necessity is the prevalence of these crimes. Recent estimates tell us that 26,000 servicemembers are sexually assaulted each year and just over 3,000 of those assaults are reported. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, about one in five female veterans treated by VA has suffered from military sexual assault; one in five. That is certainly not the act of a comrade. It is not in keeping with the ethos of any of the services, and it can no longer be tolerated. That is why the women of the Senate have been united in calling for action.

There has been made much of the fact that there are now 20 women in the Senate, a historic number that I think we all agree can still grow. But it is important to remember that the number alone should not be what is historic. Instead, it is what we do with our newfound strength to address the issues that are impacting women across the country.

With this bill, the first Defense authorization of this Congress, we are doing exactly that. We are taking historic action to help servicemembers access the resources they need to seek justice without fear. One way this bill will do just that, help protect our servicemembers and assist victims and punish criminals, is through the inclusion of a bill I introduced across party lines with Senator AYOTTE. Our bill, which is included in the base bill, creates a new category of legal advocates called special victims' counsels. They would be responsible for advocating on behalf of the interests of the victim. These special victims' counsels would advise the victim on the range of legal issues they may face.

For example, when a young private first class is intimidated into not reporting a sexual assault by threatening her with unrelated legal charges such as underage drinking, this new legal advocate would be there to protect her and tell her the truth. Since January, the Air Force has provided these advocates to over 500 victims through an innovative new pilot program. Ten months later, the results are speaking for themselves. Ninety-two percent of victims are extremely satisfied with the advice and support their SVC lent them through the military judicial process, 98 percent would recommend other victims request these advocates, and 93 percent believed these advocates effectively fought on their behalf.

In describing their experience with an advocate, one victim shared that:

Going through this was the hardest thing I ever had to do in my life. Having a Special Victim Counsel helped tremendously. . . . No words could describe how much I appreciate having one of these advocates.

Through our bipartisan effort, the Defense authorization bill will also enhance the responsibility and authority of DOD's sexual assault prevention and response office, known as the SAPRO. This improvement will help provide better oversight of efforts to combat military sexual assault across the Armed Forces. SAPRO would also be required to regularly track and report on a range of MSA statistics, including assault rates and the number of cases brought to trial, and compliance with each of the individual services.

Some of the stat collection is already being done so this requirement is not going to be too burdensome, but it will give the office authority to track and report to us on the extent of the problem.

I believe the great strength of our military is in the character and dedication of our men and women who wear that uniform. It is the courage of these Americans who volunteer to serve our country that are the Pentagon's greatest asset. I know it is said a lot but take a moment to think about that. Our servicemembers volunteered to face danger, put their lives on the line, and protect our country and all its people. When we think of those dangers, we think of IEDs and battles with insurgents.

We should not have to focus on the threats they encounter from their own fellow servicemembers, and we should never allow for a culture in which the fear of reporting a crime allows a problem such as this to fester year after year. These are dangers that can never be accepted and none of our courageous servicemembers should ever have to face them.

Earlier this year I asked Navy Secretary Ray Mabus about the sexual assault epidemic, and I was glad he told me that “concern” was not a strong enough word to describe how he feels about this problem. He said he is angry about it. I know many of us in the Senate are angry as well, particularly our female colleagues who have dedicated so much time to this issue and share this feeling and want to put an end to this epidemic.

I am hopeful we can work quickly to do right by our Nation’s heroes. When our best and brightest put on a uniform and join the U.S. Armed Forces, they do so with the understanding that they will sacrifice much in the name of defending our country and its people. But that sacrifice should never have to come in the form of abuse from their fellow servicemembers.

I am proud the women in this Senate have taken this issue head on, and what should never be lost in the effort to enact the many changes that have been proposed is that for too long this was an issue that was simply swept under the rug. That is no longer the case thanks to bipartisan cooperation, the work of thousands of dedicated advocates, and the voices of countless victims who have bravely spoken.

We are poised to make a difference on an issue that women everywhere have brought out of the shadows, and I am proud of the women who have worked so hard on this issue.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I rise to express my strong support for efforts to stamp out sexual assault in our military, and I wish to begin by thanking the Senator from Maryland and the Senator from Maine for their extraordinary leadership in bringing us here to speak on this issue.

For over 20 years our military has said it has a zero tolerance policy toward sexual violence. Government agencies have put out 20 reports examining the problem and suggesting potential solutions. Yet, shamefully, incidents of sexual assault involving our military personnel continue at staggering rates.

Data from the Department of Defense indicates that thousands of men and women serving in the military are subject to these horrific experiences every year. More than 20 percent of women serving in the military have reported unwanted sexual contact at some point during the course of their military service.

Perhaps most shameful, about half of all female victims in a 2012 DOD survey

indicated they did not report these crimes because they believed such reports would simply be ignored.

This is an outrageous situation. We have called on the military over and over to solve this problem, and they have failed. Simply once again calling on the military to reform will be an exercise in futility. Worse, it will be a breach of trust with the men and women who are future victims of sexual predators lurking in the military.

These are important steps forward that we take today. There are a number of extremely strong provisions to address sexual assault included in this year’s National Defense Authorization Act which will move us in the right direction. These provisions are designed to crack down on sexual assaults, to better protect and advocate for victims, and to change the climate within our military to one that ends this despicable conduct.

The bill includes provisions to promote the prosecution of these cases by eliminating the statute of limitations on certain sexual offense cases and by limiting the ability of commanding officers to modify court-martial findings in sexual offense cases.

The bill requires the provision of a special victims’ counsel to provide legal support for servicemembers who are victims of sexual violence at the hands of other members of the military and take steps to limit the potential for victims to be mistreated by defense counsel.

There are other important steps forward in this bill. As the Senate debates the Defense bill, we will consider additional provisions to prosecute and eliminate sexual assault. I support those efforts as well.

The issue of sexual violence within our Armed Forces is very personal to me. All three of my brothers served in the military. My oldest brother was career military and flew 288 combat missions in Vietnam. I know the unbelievable sacrifices our military men and women make for this country and the sacrifices their families make to support them.

Yet, in spite of those sacrifices, we as a nation have consistently refused to take sufficient steps to ensure that our military men and women are protected from sexual violence on the job. Tolerance for sexual assaults demeans the sacrifices that millions of brave men and women have stepped forward to make on our behalf. We owe it to our servicemembers, and to their families, to change the culture in our military that remains far too tolerant of this abuse. We owe it to our servicemembers, and to their families, to do everything in our power to stamp out these incidents.

No matter the outcome of this week’s amendment votes, this year’s Defense Authorization Act will make significant strides toward finally making the military’s zero tolerance policy a reality.

I am proud to support these efforts, and I promise that so long as these

crimes continue to occur, so long as victims are fearful to come forward, so long as justice is denied to victims, we will be right back here next year and the year after that and the year after that, doing everything we can to end sexual assault in the military.

The brave men and women serving in our Armed Forces have no intention of giving up on us, and we have no intention of giving up on them.

I yield my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, with the outgoing statement by the Senator from Massachusetts, we have now concluded the time that the women of the Senate have taken, on a bipartisan basis, to speak out against sexual assault in the military and to speak for the 30 reforms we have all agreed upon, on a bipartisan basis, that will enable prosecutorial reform, help to the victims, guarantee that there is fairness with the process, and make sure that if a victim comes forward, that victim will not be retaliated against or ignored, and for anyone who is accused, that person will get a fair process.

I am very proud of the way the seven women on the Armed Services Committee took the lead on this issue and were then joined not only by the rest of us but also social workers, advocates, former Attorneys General. We could not have done it without the very good men on the committee, particularly the chairmanship of Senator LEVIN and the help of Senator INHOFE.

I note the Senator from Rhode Island Mr. REED is on the floor. We want to thank Senator REED for his strong advocacy and advancement for women in the military and also these important reforms.

I would also like to add, as the dean of the women, that what we did this morning was pretty historical. We have 10 women from the Senate across the aisle speaking out on 30 reforms that were agreed to in the underlying bill. This is what the American people wanted—Members of the Senate working together with the chairman of the committee, listening to victims, listening to experts, and listening to the military.

Do you know what was disappointing. There was only one person in the press gallery. If we had been in conflict—and there will be disagreements later on where there are differences in some policies, and that is OK with me. But we don’t make press when we have actually worked together, and worked with such incredible diligence and expertise among ourselves, to solve these egregious and historically intransigent problems.

I say to the press, you know you like conflict, you know you like controversy, and you particularly want to see it among the women. We have a precedent where we have disagreed before on goals. When I led the fight with Lilly Ledbetter, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison took me on with nine

amendments. We had a good debate and a good bill at the end of it.

Senator MURKOWSKI, from the State of Alaska, has also disagreed with me on what should be the best approach on preventive health. We had debates without personal conflict, and we then came up with some good ideas.

I say today, when I listen to our colleagues on the other side of the aisle—who again have great backgrounds—this is pretty historic.

If you are watching on C-SPAN, you saw history being made. There were 10 of us—and there will be more later today—who actually agreed. We are trying to govern the way we were elected to govern. I am proud with what we are going to do with the reforms that are involved. I am proud of the way we have gone about it, and if we disagree on some matters here and there, that is what debate, intellectual rigor, and civility will be all about.

I will conclude this debate for now. Other women will be coming throughout the day to speak, and we know we will be debating some other important policies as well.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). Morning business is closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1197.

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1197) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2014 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Reid (for Levin-Inhofe) amendment No. 2123, to increase to \$5,000,000,000 the ceiling on the general transfer authority of the Department of Defense.

Reid (for Levin-Inhofe) amendment No. 2124 (to Amendment No. 2123), of a perfecting nature.

Reid motion to recommit the bill to the Committee on Armed Services, with instructions, Reid amendment No. 2125, to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 2126 (to (the instructions) amendment No. 2125), of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 2127 (to amendment No. 2126), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 12:30 p.m. will be for debate only.

The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I think everyone is aware that we have a lot of differences on both sides of the aisle. Quite frankly, I just had a meeting with some of the House people. There are some problems right now. I am anxious for Chairman LEVIN to come back, perhaps after our conferences, and I will do the same thing, and hopefully we will be able to do it. I understand there has already been a statement made about the Ayotte amendment on Guantanamo. She is ready to debate, and I think Senator LEVIN has a side-by-side amendment he is ready to debate as well. So that, in my opinion, is about as far as we have come as far as progress. I will withhold any other comments I will make until the chair has made his comments, which will probably be after lunch.

By the way, I ask our Members to continue to file all amendments they have in anticipation that we will, as we have in the past, ultimately come to that conclusion, that we will have amendments.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota is recognized.

Mr. THUNE. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Senator THUNE pertaining to the introduction of S. 1724 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. THUNE. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, we need to be moving forward with the Defense bill. It is very important. I am a member of Armed Services Committee, and we had a good bipartisan vote out of committee to bring the bill to the floor. Chairman LEVIN has been fair to us in committee, so we got a good committee process. But there are some disagreements over a number of issues that the full Senate needs to discuss and vote on. They just should be able to do that.

We are drifting into a process that is absolutely contrary to the history of the Senate—the real concept of the U.S. Senate—where we bring matters up and vote on them. Just because it cleared our committee does not mean the full Senate does not get to vote on some of these differing opinions.

I voted in the committee on a number of amendments that did not pass. We had amendments up in committee that we decided not to vote on, and the phrase was: Well, we will carry that to the floor. In other words, it will be brought up and the whole Senate will vote on it, not just the committee. Maybe in the interim something could be worked out. But if not, it would go to the full Senate, and the full Senate would work its will, would have its debate and vote.

We are going days now with nothing happening, no amendments being voted on. They could have already been voted on. So Senator REID has filled the tree, and that means he has complete control over the process. He has the ability to say we will not have a single amendment. In fact, except for, I think, two, all he has agreed to in this process is to have maybe two amendments up, and that is unacceptable. Senator REID ought to know that. You cannot move the Defense bill of the United States of America, spending \$500 billion, and not have amendments and Senators actually offering suggestions on how to spend that money better and do better for America. What are we here for?

So I am really worried about this. I am afraid that this whole thing could collapse over the failure of amendments to be offered. I look here at a chart. Back, basically, when Republicans were in charge, we had 27 amendments, 25 amendments, 13 amendments actually voted on. The average number was 11.5 amendments voted on.

We already have well over 100 amendments filed. Over half of them, two-thirds of them, will eventually be withdrawn or the managers of the bill will agree to some form of that suggestion with different language and we would move on. But we should have already started on amendments, and we should recognize that a good Defense bill is going to require an open process where we can actually discuss how to fix it and make it better.

In addition, we are facing, under the Budget Control Act and the sequester, some real financial challenges for the Department of Defense that are historic. It is significant. We need to be able to talk about that and work on that and try to figure out a way to strengthen the ability of the Defense Department to function in a rational way and not do unnecessary damage to them while they work to contain spending. That is a critical thing.

So I would say to Senator REID, who has a tough job—there is no doubt about that—Senator REID, you should not attempt this dramatic reduction in the ability of the Senate to actually have amendments to a bill as large and as important as the Defense bill. You are overreaching, Senator REID.

We cannot agree to that. The loyal opposition, the Republican opposition—I say, the bill that came out of committee was bipartisan, overwhelmingly bipartisan, with a big vote in the committee. But there are things that need to be voted on here, and we are not going to agree to a handful of amendments. So if you try to move forward with this bill without allowing at least a legitimate amendment process, you are not going to go forward because we are not going to agree to go forward when you fill the tree and block amendments and have the power to deny amendments of any significant degree on the floor of the Senate.

I am worried about that. I hope my friend, Senator LEVIN, and Senator