

are offered to the bill and handled one way or another but end up getting added to the legislation. This year we have not even been able to have a managers' package, which would include many of these noncontroversial amendments.

I support Senator INHOFE, who is the ranking Republican on the Armed Services Committee and my Republican colleagues here in the Senate, in the approach they have taken while this bill has been on the floor. Considering this bill, there needs to be an open amendment process. We are not talking, as I said, about the hundreds of amendments that have been filed, but a reasonable number should be considered on the Senate floor.

Everyone here is aware of the time constraints we are under, but that is not an excuse for bypassing an open amendment process on this important piece of legislation.

As the Senate debates the annual Defense authorization bill, our military continues to face increasing budget constraints. These budget constraints have forced our military to prioritize and develop ways to increase efficiency and reduce spending. As we look ahead, the Department of Defense must continue to focus on ways to best prepare for the threats our country will face in the future.

On all fronts, these future threats will require an increasingly mobile force that relies on speed and technology to reach conflict points around the world. With regard to the Air Force, this means a modernization of our current fleet. According to General Welsh, the Chief of Staff for the Air Force, the next generation long-range bomber is one of the top three procurement programs our Air Force must pursue to modernize our fleet and to meet future challenges. The other two, the F-35 joint strike fighter and the KC-46 aerial refueling tanker, are currently underway.

The next generation bomber, which General Welsh has called a must-have capability, will ensure our ability to operate effectively in anti-access and area-denial environments. As potential adversaries continue to modernize their anti-aircraft systems, our ability to penetrate those systems must modernize as well.

The Department of Defense has already begun investing in the research and development phase for the next generation bomber. In the meantime, our current bomber fleets, B-2s, B-1s, and B-52s, continue to provide robust deterrent in long-range strike capabilities. The upgrades which are currently being made to these aircraft allow them to operate in the modern environment. However, as this fleet continues to age into the mid-2020s, the next generation bomber will need to come online.

My home State of South Dakota is home of the 28th Bomb Wing, which commands two of three combat squadrons operating the B-1B strategic

bomber. The men and women of the 28th Bomb Wing have bravely defended our country in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In 2011, the B-1 played a key role in Operation Odyssey Dawn, launching from Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota, dropping munitions in Libya, and returning home in one continuous flying mission. This operation marked the first time the B-1 launched combat sorties from the continental United States to strike targets overseas, and it exemplifies the B-1's crucial flexibility and capability to project conventional airpower on short notice anywhere in the world. Of the three aircraft in our bomber fleet, the B-1B has the highest payload, fastest maximum speed, and operates at the lowest cost per flying hour. As I have said before, the B-1 is the workhorse of our U.S. Air Force.

As the R&D continues for the next generation bomber, the Air Force has already identified many essential capabilities to this aircraft. According to the Air Force, the next generation bomber should be usable across the spectrum of conflict from isolated strikes to prolonged campaigns. It should provide the Commander in Chief the option to strike a target at any point on the globe, and it must be able to penetrate modern air defenses despite an adversary's anti-aircraft systems. In terms of payload, it must be capable of carrying a wide mix of standoff and direct attack munitions and have the option for either nuclear or conventional capability.

As part of the strategy for development, the next generation bomber should allow for the integration of mature technologies and existing systems, taking into account the capabilities of other weapon systems to reduce program complexity.

While developing the next generation bomber will not be easy, the Air Force has learned several important lessons from its most recent procurement efforts. The Department of Defense has already streamlined requirements and oversight to ensure a timely decision-making process for the next generation bomber.

This initiative has included efforts to reduce costs for the overall program with a goal of preventing cost overruns which have plagued previous acquisition programs.

The Department of Defense already knows the importance of this program. As outlined in the 2015 to 2019 Program Objective Memorandum, the Air Force intends to prioritize the development and acquisition of the long-range strike bomber over the next several years. As the Air Force continues to modernize, the long-range strike bomber remains a must-have capability for future combat operations.

This amendment is very straightforward. I hope we get back on the Defense authorization bill. I hope we have an open amendment process. I hope that amendments such as this, which are germane and noncontroversial, can

be included in a managers' package of amendments or at least considered on the floor by my colleagues in the Senate.

It is essential in light of the many challenges we face around the globe today with the potential adversaries out there and the threats that exist as we look out over the horizon that we make every preparation and take every necessary step to ensure our country can defend itself and our allies around the world. American interests and American national security interests are always at stake, and it is important for us to invest wisely in those types of weapon capabilities that can ensure that the United States is prepared for whatever contingency might develop around the world.

I hope we will get back on the Defense authorization bill, allow amendments to be considered, as they have been in the past. Whenever we have processed Defense bills in the past, we have had a process that has allowed for consideration of many amendments. As said before, we had 80 to 100 amendments in most cases and multiple roll-call votes—way more than we had on this bill so far.

This is important to the men and women who wear the uniform of the U.S. military. This should be a priority for us, and it should be a priority for our country. I hope we can get the bill on the floor, process amendments, pass it, and get it on the President's desk where it can be signed into law.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NATIONAL HOMELESSNESS AND HUNGER AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, next week, Americans across the country will gather with family and friends to celebrate a national tradition, Thanksgiving. Some will give thanks for their good fortune or health over the past year, while others will simply be thankful to see their loved ones together in one place. What most of us will take for granted, however, is that we will have a meal to eat and have a home in which to gather. Far too many Americans will not have that luxury. During this time of reflection, and in

honor of National Homelessness and Hunger Awareness week, I would like to take a moment to speak about those who are all too often overlooked, the homeless and the hungry.

Each and every day, millions of Americans face the uncertainty of when their next meal will be or when they will be able to feed their family. On any given night, a disgraceful number of Americans face the uncertainty of not knowing where they will sleep. Sadly, many have nowhere to turn. These Americans live in both large States and small, in urban centers, and small, rural towns across the country. These are men, women, and children who live, work, and attend schools in our communities without the basic needs of food security and a place to call home.

There are nearly 3,000 Vermonters who do not have a roof over their head each night. And while organizations like the Committee on Temporary Shelter, COTS, Spectrum Youth and Family Services, and the Vermont Coalition for Runaway and Homeless Youth do their best to provide emergency shelter, services, and housing for people who are homeless or marginally housed, the need far outweighs their capacity.

Nationally, we have made some progress to address this issue and have seen the number of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness and homeless veterans significantly decrease. Unfortunately, the face of homelessness is changing, and the number of families facing homelessness has dramatically increased. Shelters are seeing an unprecedented number of families. Many of these families have at least one adult who is working full time, but who does not earn enough to afford a place to live. Of the 4,244 people who used emergency shelters in Vermont last year, 952 of them were children. We know that children who experience homelessness suffer from high rates of anxiety, depression, behavioral problems, and below-average school performance. Regrettably, shelter workers are beginning to see the first signs of generational homelessness. This is unacceptable, and we owe it to those children and families to do more.

Across the country nearly 1 in 6 people faces hunger on a daily basis; 1 in 5 children are living in a household with food insecurity. In a Nation where \$165 billion worth of food goes to waste each year, it is clear that there is enough food to feed everyone in America. We need to do a better job of getting that food to those who need it most. For the more than 84,000 Vermonters facing food insecurity, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP, known as 3Squares in Vermont, is a lifeline helping to feed their families. SNAP is our single most important anti-hunger program providing assistance to nearly 49 million Americans in need of help to afford food. With so many Americans still struggling to put

food on the table, it is deplorable that some in Congress continue to call for reductions to food assistance as a way to solve our Nation's deficit problems.

No one can deny the effects of hunger on Americans, especially children. Children who live in food insecure homes are at a greater risk of developmental delays, poor academic performance, nutrient deficiencies, obesity and depression. Yet participation in food assistance programs turns these statistics on their head. Federal nutrition programs have been shown to decrease the risk a child will develop health problems and is associated with decreases in the incidence of child abuse. Children from families who receive food stamps have a higher achievement in math and reading and have improved behavior, social interactions and diet quality than children who go without.

Two-thirds of SNAP beneficiaries are children, the disabled, or the elderly who cannot be expected to work. The remaining participants in the program are subject to rigorous work requirements in order to receive continuing benefits. While SNAP offers crucial support to a family's grocery expenses, the benefits far from cover a family's food expenses. With a benefit average of about \$1.25 per person, per meal, it is understandable that families typically fall short on benefits by the middle of the month.

Across the Nation, wages have remained flat as prices for every day essentials like food, heat, and especially housing, continue to rise. At the same time, as more families find themselves in need of some help, the programs that provide that safety net have been devastated by cuts over the past several years and continue to be targeted for even further reductions in the name of protecting tax loopholes for corporate jets and oil companies.

The budget decisions made in Congress have real impacts for real people. Reductions to funding for the organizations providing emergency shelter, or programs that build much needed affordable housing, means more Americans face housing insecurity. Cuts to the SNAP program means benefits will run out earlier in the month and even though donations to food banks and soup kitchens are down, they will see a record number of families looking for a little help to just make it to the next month.

As the budget conferees discuss a path forward, it is essential that they find a common sense compromise to replace sequestration and put an end to the deficit reduction on the backs of those most in need. There are just too many people that are one unforeseen expense away from a desperate financial situation that could result in them losing the roof over their head, and the means to feed their family. We can all agree that there is something fundamentally wrong with the reality that children living in one of the wealthiest nations in the world do not know when they will get their next meal and do not have a safe place to sleep at night.

Every child in America deserves a fair shot. This is why I have championed the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. Programs authorized by the RHYA have successfully helped countless runaway and homeless youth and their families in Vermont and across the nation over the last 30 years, but we can and must do more. We must recognize the importance of investing in our Nation's youth, and direct resources where they are needed most. Programs authorized by the RHYA expired at the end of September. I hope that we can work to reauthorize and improve RHYA by addressing the needs of children in the most vulnerable communities, and provide services that meet the needs of youth who identify as LGBT and the young victims of trafficking or exploitation. We need more training and resources to help our grantees meet the needs of young victims, and that is what the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act provides.

There are families that are having difficulty making ends meet. We must pass a farm bill that does not include the extreme House cuts to SNAP benefits at levels 10 times as high as the bipartisan Senate bill and nearly twice as high as the House's original bill. Those cuts would mean that each year, an average of three million people will be kicked off food assistance, and hundreds of thousands of children will lose access to school means. I hope that the bipartisan efforts of the Senate to pass a responsible farm bill will help produce a good farm bill out of conference that does not contain these deep and damaging cuts to food assistance.

We owe it to the American people to put politics aside and especially during this time of year, to give a voice to those who are most in need, to those often overlooked and marginalized and to start making meaningful progress to eliminating homelessness and hunger in this country.

TRIBUTE TO JAMES L. HURLEY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate a friend of mine and a good friend to the Commonwealth, Mr. James L. Hurley, on his recent inauguration as the 20th president of the University of Pikeville. A graduate of the class of 1999 himself, President Hurley's new post makes him the school's first alumnus to serve as president.

President Hurley was sworn in last month at the Eastern Kentucky Expo Center in Pikeville, KY. He succeeds former Governor Paul Patton in the position. Patton previously appointed Hurley as the institution's vice president and special assistant. James is a native of eastern Kentucky and is married to Tina, also an alumna of the University of Pikeville.

President Hurley, after earning his bachelor's degree at the institution he now leads, earned a master's degree in educational leadership from Indiana