

cloture vote at 11 a.m. equally divided between the two leaders or their designees; finally, that the Senate recess from 12:30 p.m. until 2:15 p.m. to allow for the weekly conference meetings.

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

PROGRAM

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, at 11 a.m. tomorrow, the Senate will vote on cloture on the committee substitute to the antitrafficking bill. If cloture is not invoked, there will be a second immediate vote on cloture on the underlying bill.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senator COTTON for up to 45 minutes and Senator BROWN for up to 15 minutes.

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

The Senator from Arkansas.

AMERICA'S MILITARY STRENGTH

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I speak for the first time from the Senate floor with a simple message: The world is growing ever more dangerous and our defense spending is wholly inadequate to confront the danger. To be exact:

During the last four or five years the world has grown gravely darker. . . . We have steadily disarmed, partly with a sincere desire to give a lead to other countries, and partly through the severe financial pressure of the time. But a change must now be made. We must not continue longer on a course in which we alone are growing weaker while every other nation is growing stronger.

I wish I could take credit for those eloquent and ominous words, but I cannot. Winston Churchill sounded that warning in 1933, as Adolf Hitler had taken power in Germany.

Tragically, Great Britain and the West did not heed this warning when they might have strangled that monster in his crib.

Rather than let the locusts continue to eat away at the common defense, the Axis Powers were stronger and the West weaker, conciliating with and appeasing them, hoping their appetite for conquest and death might be sated. As we all know, however, that appetite only grew until it launched the most terrible war in human history.

Today, perhaps more tragically because we ought to benefit from those lessons of history, the United States is again engaged in something of a grand experiment of the kind we saw in the 1930s. As then, military strength is seen in many quarters as a cause of military adventurism. Strength and confidence in the defense of our interests, alliances, and liberties is not seen to deter aggression but to provoke it.

Rather than confront our adversaries, our President apologizes for our supposed transgressions. The administration is harsh and unyielding to our friends, soothing and suffocating to our enemies. The President minimizes the threat we confront, in the face of territory seized, weapons of mass destruction used and proliferated, and innocents murdered.

The concrete expression of this experiment is our collapsing defense budget. For years, we have systematically underfunded our military, marrying this philosophy of retreat with a misplaced understanding of our larger budgetary burdens. We have strained our fighting forces today to the breaking point, even as we have eaten away at our investments in future forces, creating our own "locust years," as Churchill would have put it. Meanwhile, our long-term debt crisis looks hardly any better, even as we ask our troops to shoulder the burden of deficit reduction, rather than shoulder the arms necessary to keep the peace.

The results of this experiment, it should come as no surprise, are little different from the results from the same experiment in the 1930s. American weakness and leading from behind have produced nothing but a more dangerous world. When we take stock of that world and our position in it, there can be no doubt a change must now be made.

An alarm should be sounding in our ears. Our enemies, sensing weakness and hence opportunity, have become steadily more aggressive. Our allies, uncertain of our commitment and capability, have begun to conclude that they must look out for themselves, even where it is unhelpful to stability and order. Our military, suffering from years of neglect, has seen its relative strength decline to historic levels.

Let's start with the enemy who attacked us on September 11: radical Islamists. During his last campaign, the President was fond of saying Al Qaeda was "on the run." In a fashion, I suppose this was true. Al Qaeda was and is running wild around the world, now in control of more territory than ever before. This global network of Islamic jihadists continues to plot attacks against America and the West. They sow the seeds of conflict in failed states and maintain active affiliates throughout Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Greater Middle East, and South Asia.

Further, Al Qaeda in Iraq was let off the mat when the President disregarded its commanders' best military judgment and withdrew all troops from Iraq in 2011. Given a chance to regroup, it morphed into the Islamic State, which now controls much of Syria and Iraq. The Islamic State cuts the heads off of Americans, burns alive hostages from allied countries, executes Christians, and enslaves women and girls. The Islamic State aspires and actively plots to attack us here at home, whether by foreign plots or by recruiting a lone wolf in our midst.

The President's suggestions, in other words, that the war on terror is over or ending, are far from true. Indeed, the Director of National Intelligence recently testified that "when the final accounting is done, 2014 will have been the most lethal year for global terrorism in the 45 years such data has been compiled." Yet the President will not even speak our enemy's name.

The threat of radical Islamic terrorism brings us to Iran, the world's worst state sponsor of terrorism. My objections to the ongoing nuclear negotiations are well known and need not be rehearsed at length here. I will simply note that the deal foreshadowed by the President, allowing Iran to have uranium enrichment capabilities and accepting an expiration date on any agreement—to quote Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu—"doesn't block Iran's path to the bomb; it paves Iran's path to the bomb." If you think, as I do, the Islamic State is dangerous, a nuclear-armed Islamic Republic is even more so.

Recall, after all, what Iran already does without the bomb. Iran is an outlaw regime that has been killing Americans for 35 years, from Lebanon to Saudi Arabia, to Iraq. Unsurprisingly, Iran is only growing bolder and more aggressive as America retreats from the Middle East. Ayatollah Khamenei continues to call for Israel's elimination. Iranian-backed Shiite militias now control much of Iraq, led by Qassem Suleimani, the commander of the Quds Force, a man with the blood of hundreds of American soldiers on his hands.

Iran continues to prop up Bashar al-Assad's outlaw regime in Syria. Iranian-aligned Shiite militants recently seized Sana'a, the capital of Yemen. Hezbollah remains Iran's cat's paw in Lebanon. Put simply, Iran dominates or controls five capitals in its drive for regional hegemony. Moreover, Iran has rapidly increased the size and capability of its ballistic missile arsenal, recently launching new a satellite. Just 2 weeks ago, Iran blew up a mock U.S. aircraft carrier in naval exercises and publicized it with great fanfare.

Iran does all of these things without the bomb. Just imagine what it will do with the bomb. Imagine the United States further down the road of appeasement, largely defenseless against this tyranny.

You do not have to imagine much, though; simply look to North Korea. Because of a naive and failed nuclear agreement, that outlaw state acquired nuclear weapons. Now America is largely handcuffed, watching as this rogue regime builds more bombs and missiles capable of striking the U.S. homeland and endangering our allies.

But perhaps an even more obvious result of this experiment with retreat is the resurgence of Russia. The President aspired for a reset with Russia and made one-sided concessions such as withdrawing ballistic missile defenses from Poland and the Czech Republic.

So Vladimir Putin saw these concessions as weakness and continues to violate the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. The West refused to assist the new Ukrainian President, so Putin invaded and stole Crimea. The Western response was modest sanctions. So Russian-supplied rebels shot a civilian airliner out of the sky in the heart of Europe. The President dithers in providing defensive weapons to Ukraine, so Putin reignites the war, takes Debaltseve, and stages outside Mariupol. When bombs and bullets were called for, blankets were rushed to the frontline.

That is just in Ukraine. Putin is also testing NATO's resolve. Russia has tested a ballistic missile with multiple warheads, designed to threaten our European allies in direct violation of the INF treaty. Russian bombers recently flew over the English Channel, disrupting British civil aviation. Estonia asserts that Russia kidnapped an Estonian security officer on its Russian border. And Russia continues to intimidate and harass other NATO partners such as Sweden, Moldova, and Georgia.

Finally, Russia's ability to continue its aggression will only grow because its defense spending has more than quadrupled over the last 15 years. Moreover, the Russian military today is qualitatively better than the old Soviet military, despite its smaller size, as Admiral Bill Gortney, Commander of NORAD testified just last week.

Some say that falling oil prices will restrain Putin. In fact, Russia's Finance Minister recently announced 10 percent across-the-board budget cuts to all departments of their government—except defense. This should give us some insights into Putin's intentions and ambitions.

Among major nation-state competitors, Russia's military buildup is exceeded only by China's. Over the same period of the last 15 years, China's military spending has increased by 600 percent. Moreover, the bulk of the spending is directed quite clearly against the United States as China pursues its anti-access and area denial strategy. This strategy is designed to keep American forces outside the so-called first island chain and give China regional hegemony from the Korean Peninsula to the Indonesian archipelago. Thus, China is on a spending spree for more submarines, aircraft carriers, antiship ballistic missiles, and other air and naval systems.

The impact of China's rapid military expansion is clear. China has challenged Japan's control of the Senkaku Islands and purported to establish an exclusive air defense zone over the East China Sea. By expanding its activities in the Spratlys, China is precipitating a confrontation with the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Taiwan. Further, China's repressive actions against protesters in Hong Kong only serve to undermine Taiwanese support of reunification, which itself could spark fur-

ther Chinese aggression. All of this is to say nothing of China's cyber theft and economic espionage against American interests or its atrocious record on human rights.

While America has retreated, not only have our enemies been on the march, our allies, anxious for years about American resolve, now worry increasingly about American capabilities. With the enemy on their borders, many have begun to conclude they have no choice but to take matters into their own hands, sometimes in ways unhelpful to our interests.

Even our core NATO allies appear unsettled by our recent experiment with retreat. The French intervened in Mali to confront Islamic insurgents, but without adequate advance coordination, they quickly found themselves in need of emergency logistical support from our Air Force.

Turkey just announced a new missile defense system that will not be interoperable with NATO systems. Greece has a new governing coalition that is hinting at greater cooperation with Russia.

The picture is no better outside NATO. Japan has significantly increased its defense budget because of a rising China and may feel compelled to reinterpret its post-war constitutional ban on overseas "collective self-defense." Saudi Arabia just entered a nuclear pact with South Korea, likely a response to Iran's nuclear program. Similarly, the Persian Gulf States have increased defense spending by 44 percent in the last 2 years. While we should encourage our partners to carry their share of the defense load, the Sunni states are building up their defenses, not to help us, but because they fear we won't help them against Iran.

We should never take our allies for granted, but we also shouldn't take for granted the vast influence our security guarantees give us with our allies' behavior. Germany and Japan are not nuclear powers today because of our nuclear umbrella. Israel didn't retaliate against Hussein's Scud missile attacks in the gulf war, and thus we preserved the war coalition because we asked them for restraint and committed significant resources to hunting down Scud launchers. This kind of influence has been essential for American security throughout the postwar period, yet it has begun to wane as our allies doubt our commitment and our capabilities.

Make no mistake, our military capabilities have declined. In recent years, we have dramatically underfunded our military to the detriment of our security. To fully understand the military aspect of our experiment with retreat, some historical perspective is needed.

Defense spending reached its peak in 2008, when the base budget and wartime spending combined was \$760 billion. Incredible, the total defense budget plummeted by \$200 billion in the last year.

Today, defense spending is only 16 percent of all Federal spending, a his-

toric low rivaled only by the post-Cold War period. To give some context, during the Cold War, defense spending regularly accounted for 60 percent of Federal spending. But if we don't end the experiment of retreat, this President will leave office with a mere 12 percent of all Federal dollars spent on defense.

The picture is no prettier when cast in the light of our economy. In the early Cold War, defense spending was approximately 9 percent of gross domestic product. Today, it sits at a paltry 3.5 percent. But our defense budget isn't just about numbers and arithmetic. It is about our ability to accomplish the mission of defending our country from all threats.

The consequences of these cuts are real, concrete, and immediate. As former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta explained, these cuts to defense spending have put us on the path to the smallest Army since before World War II, the smallest Navy since World War, and the smallest Air Force ever. Let's look more closely at each service.

Our Army has shrunk by nearly 100,000 troops. The Army has lost 13 combat brigades, and only a third of the remaining brigades are fully ready to meet America's threats. Further, investments in modernization have fallen by 25 percent. If we continue on the current path, the Army will lose another 70,000 soldiers, and every modernization program designed to preserve the Army's technological advantage will be eviscerated.

The Navy, meanwhile, has had to cancel five ship deployments and significantly delay the deployment of a carrier strike group. The Navy's mission requires it to keep three carrier strike groups and amphibious readiness groups prepared to respond to a major crisis within 30 years, but the Navy can only fulfill a third of its mission because of cuts to maintenance and training.

Similarly, the Air Force is less than one-third of its size 25 years ago. Moreover, the Air Force depends upon modernization to preserve its technological edge, perhaps more than any other service, but current funding levels could require cancellation of airborne-refueling tankers and surveillance aircraft, set back fighter and nuclear weapons modernization, and shorten the life of tactical airlift and weapons recovery programs.

Nor are these impacts just immediate; they will be felt long into the future. Key programs, once divested, will be difficult to restart. Manufacturing competencies will be lost, the skilled-labor pool will shrink, and the defense manufacturing base will atrophy. Today's weapons systems and equipment will begin to age and break down. Our troops won't be able to train, and their weapons and equipment won't be ready to fight. In short, we will have a hollow force incapable of defending our national security.

What is to be done then? Our experiment with retreat must end. This Congress must again recognize that our national security is the first priority of this government. Our national security strategy must drive our military budget rather than the budget setting our strategy. The military budget must reflect the threats we face rather than the budget defining those threats.

In the face of these threats and after years of improvident defense cuts, we must significantly increase our defense spending. After hundreds of billions of dollars of these cuts, the base defense budget next year is set to be only \$498 billion. That is wholly inadequate. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter recently testified: "I want to be clear about this—parts of our nation's defense strategy cannot be executed under sequestration." All four of the military service chiefs, in addition, have testified that these cuts put American lives at risk.

The President has proposed a modest increase to \$534 billion, which is better than nothing. Senators JOHN MCCAIN and JACK REED have called for the full repeal of sequestration, which would raise the base defense budget to \$577 billion. I applaud and thank these veterans of both the Senate and our military for this correct and clear-eyed recommendation.

Yet I also want to highlight their support for the recommendation of the National Defense Panel, which estimated that base defense spending for fiscal year 2016 should be \$611 billion at a minimum.

The National Defense Panel was a bipartisan group of eminent national security experts convened by Congress to analyze the Quadrennial Defense Review. They unanimously concluded that then-Secretary of Defense Bob Gates' fiscal year 2012 budget was the proper starting point to analyze our current defense needs—for at least two reasons.

First, Secretary Gates had already initiated significant defense cuts and reforms totaling \$478 billion. It is hard to say, given those efforts, that his 2012 budget had left much fat in the Department of Defense.

Second, Secretary Gates and the Department assembled and submitted this budget in late January 2010 and early 2011, or just months before the Budget Control Act with its draconian defense cuts became law. That budget, therefore, was the last time the Defense Department was able to submit a threat- and strategy-based budget, instead of the budget-based strategies we have seen over the last 4 years.

This logic is compelling, even unsailable. Thus, I agree we should spend not merely \$611 billion on the base defense budget next year but substantially more than that. After all, as we have seen earlier, and as the National Defense Panel has noted, the world has become much more dangerous since 2011. Islamic terrorism, Iranian aggression, Russian revisionism, and Chinese

interventionism have all worsened—to say nothing of other challenges. The \$611 billion is necessary, but it is not sufficient.

What then should our defense budget be next year? I will readily admit we cannot be sure how much is needed above \$611 billion. As the National Defense Panel explained, "because of the highly constrained and unstable budget environment under which the Department has been working," the Quadrennial Review "is not adequate as a comprehensive long-term planning document." Thus, the panel recommends that Congress "should ask the Department for such a plan, which should be developed without undue emphasis on current budgetary restraints."

I endorse this recommendation. In the meantime, though, even if we can't specify a precise dollar amount, we can identify the critical needs on which to spend the additional money.

First, our military faces a readiness crisis from budget cuts and a decade of war. Our young soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines are the greatest weapons systems our country could ever have, but they need training—live-fire exercises, flight time, and so forth. Their weapons, equipment, and vehicles need maintenance and reset. If we faced a major crisis today, our troops would no doubt suffer more casualties and greater likelihood of mission failure. Of course, they know all of this, and morale suffers because of it.

Second and related, our military is shrinking rapidly to historically small levels. This decline must be reversed. Our Navy probably needs 350-plus ships, not a budget-dictated 260 ships. The Army needs to maintain its pre-9/11 end strength of 490,000 Active-Duty soldiers, as the Marine Corps needs 182,000 marines. The Air Force needs more aircraft of virtually every type—bomber, fighter, airlift, and surveillance. It is the deepest folly to reduce our military below its 1990s size as the world has grown considerably more dangerous since that quiet decade.

Third, we should increase research, development, and procurement funds to ensure our military retains its historic technological advantage, particularly as our adversaries gain more access to advanced, low-cost technologies. This should start with the essential tools of command and control: cyber space, space, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. The Air Force needs to modernize its bomber and mobility aircraft, in particular. The Navy needs to continue to improve its surface-ship and especially its submarine capabilities.

These critical priorities will no doubt be expensive, probably tens of billions of dollars more than the \$611 billion baseline suggested by the National Defense Panel. Because the massive cuts to our defense budget resulted in part from record deficits, the question arises, however: Can we afford all of this?

The answer is yes—without question and without doubt, yes. The facts here,

as we have seen, are indisputable. The defense budget has been slashed by hundreds of billions of dollars over the last 6 years. The defense budget is only 16 percent of all Federal spending, a historic low and heading much lower if we don't act. And using the broadest measure of affordability and national priorities, defense spending as a percentage of our economy, last year we spent only 3.5 percent of our national income on defense, which is approaching historic lows and may surpass them by 2019.

Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that our military needs \$700 billion in the coming year, an immediate increase of \$200 billion. To some, that may sound staggering and unrealistic, yet it would still be barely 4 percent of our economy—a full 1 percent lower than the 5 percent from which President Reagan started his buildup. If we increased spending merely to that level—which both President Reagan and a Democratic House considered dangerously low—we would spend \$885 billion on defense next year.

Furthermore, trying to balance the budget through defense cuts is both counterproductive and impossible. First, the threats we face will eventually catch up with us, as they did on September 11, and we will have no choice but to increase our defense budget. When we do, it will cost more to achieve the same end state of readiness and modernization than it would have without the intervening cuts. This was the lesson we learned in the 1980s after the severe cuts to defense in the 1970s.

Second, we need a healthy, growing economy to generate the government revenue necessary to fund our military and balance the budget. In our globalized world, our domestic prosperity depends heavily on the world economy, which, of course, requires stability and order. Who provides that stability and order? The U.S. military.

Finally, in the short term, ephemeral gains in deficit reduction from defense cuts merely mask the genuine driver of our long-term debt crisis: retirement and health care programs. The Budget Control Act ultimately failed to control these programs—a failure not only of promises made to our citizens but also because the deficit-reduction default became annual discretionary funding, particularly the defense budget. In the 4 years since, relative deficits have declined, alleviating the imperative to reform these programs yet doing nothing to solve their long-term insolvency and our debt crisis.

A better question to ask is: Can we afford to continue our experiment in retreat? I suggest we cannot. Imagine a world in which we continue our current trajectory, where America remains in retreat and our military loses even more of its edge. What would such a world look like?

It is not a pretty picture. Russia might soon possess the entire north shore of the Black Sea. An emboldened

Putin, sensing Western weakness for what it is, could be tempted to replay his Ukrainian playbook in Estonia or Latvia, forcing NATO into war or obsolescence.

China could escalate its island conflicts in the East and South China Seas. Without an adequate American response—or worse, with China denying American forces access to those seas—countries as diverse as South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines would feel compelled to conciliate or confront regional stability.

While North Korea already possesses nuclear weapons, Iran appears to be on the path to a nuclear bomb, whether it breaks or upholds a potential nuclear agreement. Not only might Iran use its weapon, but its nuclear umbrella would also embolden its drive for regional hegemony. Moreover, Iran could provide its terrorist proxies with nuclear materials.

And does anyone doubt that Saudi Arabia and other Sunni states will follow Iran down this path? Nuclear tripwires may soon ring the world's most volatile region, increasing the risk of nuclear war, as well as the possibility that Islamist insurgents might seize nuclear materials if they can topple the right government.

Islamic terrorists, meanwhile, will continue to rampage throughout Syria and Iraq, aspiring always for more attacks in Europe and on American soil. Emboldened by America's retreat and by their own battlefield successes, they will continue to attract thousands of hateful fighters from around the world, all eager for the chance to kill Americans.

All these are nightmare scenarios, but sadly not unrealistic ones. The alternative, however, is not war. No leader—whether a President, a general or platoon leader—wishes to put his troops in harm's way. War is an awful thing, and it takes an unimaginable toll on the men and women who fight it and their families.

But the best way to avoid war is to be willing and prepared to fight a war in the first place. That is the alternative: military strength and moral confidence in the defense of America's national security. Our enemies and allies alike must know that aggressors will pay an unspeakable price for challenging the United States.

The best way to impose that price is global military dominance. When it comes to war, narrow margins are not enough, for they are nothing more than an invitation to war. We must have such hegemonic strength that no sane adversary would ever imagine challenging the United States. "Good enough" is not and will never be good enough.

We can look to a very recent historic example to prove this point. Just 25 years ago, a dominant American military ended the Cold War without firing a shot. If we return to the dominance of that era, aggressive despots such as Vladimir Putin, rising powers such as

China, and state sponsors of terrorism such as Iran's Ayatollahs will think long and hard before crossing us. And while we may not deter terrorist groups such as the Islamic State, Al Qaeda, and Hezbollah, we will kill their adherents more effectively, while also sending a needed lesson to their sympathizers: Join and you too will die.

Bringing about this future by being prepared for war will no doubt take a lot of money. But what could be a higher priority than a safe and prosperous America, leading a stable and orderly world? What better use of precious taxpayer dollars? What more lessons from history do we need?

I began with Churchill's prescient words from 1933. Alas, the West did not take his advice, did not rearm and prepare to deter Nazi Germany. The predictable result was the German remilitarization of the Rhineland and the long march to war. Now let me close with his regretful words from 1936:

The era of procrastination, of half-measures, of soothing and baffling expedients, of delays, is coming to its close. In its place we are entering a period of consequences.

Churchill later called World War II the unnecessary war because it could have been stopped so easily with Western strength and confidence in the 1930s. I know many of you in this Chamber stand with me, and I humbly urge you all—Democrat and Republican alike—to join in rebuilding our common defense, so that we will not face our own unnecessary war, our own period of consequences.

I will now yield the floor, but I will never yield in the defense of America's national security on any front or at any time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

CONGRATULATING SENATOR COTTON

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, we just had an opportunity to hear from our new colleague from Arkansas, who has laid out the national security requirements of our country quite effectively. As someone who has served in the military himself in recent conflicts, he speaks with extra authority. I want to congratulate the junior Senator from Arkansas for an extraordinary initial speech and look forward to his leadership on all of these issues in the coming years.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, 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.

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

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

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, time is running out for us to extend the Children's Health Insurance Program, a program that began almost 20 years ago in this body and the other body and that right now is taking care of 10 million children—the children of parents who in most cases have full-time jobs that don't offer insurance and full-time jobs that don't pay enough so these families can buy insurance for their children.

We know that CHIP works. It works for parents, and it works for children. We know that if we don't act now, States will start rolling back the CHIP programs. Legislatures are adjourning almost as we speak. We need to provide States with certainty so they can budget for CHIP now and 4 years into the future.

Unfortunately, the deal currently being floated in the House would not fund CHIP for a full 4 years. Instead, if reports are true, it would permanently repeal the sustainable growth rate—the so-called doctors fix—while failing to provide much needed certainty to children's health care. I want to take care of doctors. I want to make sure this is done right because it affects doctors. It affects doctors' ability to deliver care. It affects those patients whom doctors serve. But how do we leave here taking care of the doctors permanently and shortchanging children, only giving them 2 years of health insurance? It is past time we fix SGR.

In 2001, when I was a member of the House, Congressman BILIRAKIS as the Republican chair of the Health Subcommittee of the Energy and Commerce Committee and I as the Democratic ranking member wrote the first SGR fix, so I have been fixing the SGR for a long time. But we shouldn't be focused in this body and that body on paying doctors at the cost of shortchanging our children. Our priority must be passing a full 4-year, clean extension of the current CHIP program, on which 130,000 children in my State depend—again, sons and daughters of working Oklahoma families and working Ohio families who are working in jobs where they simply don't get insurance and don't get paid enough that they can buy insurance. These 10 million children in our Nation depend on this.

A 4-year extension of CHIP will provide Congress, the administration, and our States with the necessary time to collect relevant data and information to fully analyze and prepare for the future of kids covered. Doing only 2 years is not just shortchanging these children and creating anxiety in their families, it is also truncating our ability, compromising our ability to really understand how to fully integrate CHIP into a health care system overall in the future. We should be providing certainty and stability for these families, not the cliché of kicking the can down the road in favor of a short-term fix. A