

who are poor and may not have health insurance without Medicaid, and of course to individuals with disabilities. So we have a long way to go to prove that we are keeping that promise.

Mr. President, I will conclude with some thoughts about the Children's Health Insurance Program. We all know this is not only a bipartisan program but a very successful program. From 1997, when it was enacted, to the year 2012, the uninsured rate for children fell by half—from 14 percent to 7 percent—across the country, a remarkable achievement. It means we are not there yet because we still have 7 percent who are uninsured, but that is a substantial step forward and a substantial measure of progress for the country.

This program, the Children's Health Insurance Program, along with Medicaid, is helping to reduce disparity in health coverage affecting low-income children across the country. Without legislative action to extend funding beyond September 30 of this year, over 10 million children across America are at risk of losing their comprehensive, affordable—I will say that again, comprehensive and affordable quality care, including, by one estimate, 270,000 children in Pennsylvania. About 2 million of the children currently enrolled in CHIP would likely end up uninsured while the others would face higher premiums and higher out-of-pocket costs. We should do the right thing and make sure we have funding in place for 4 years for the Children's Health Insurance Program, not just 2 years.

Unfortunately, what we are hearing from the proposal sent to us from the House is that the 4-year commitment is only 2 years. So we have a lot of work to do. I believe the right thing to do on CHIP is to enact what Senate Democrats have proposed—a 4-year so-called clean extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program as soon as possible, and that is S. 522. That would be the right thing to do.

We can give speeches and talk a lot about how we all support kids, and it is nice to say that and it is nice to vote once in a while for programs and strategies that help kids, but I believe the test is a lot tougher than that. The test will come on this budget vote—a test on whether we support children. If we are cutting Medicaid by hundreds of billions of dollars over the next 10 years, if we are cutting the SNAP program by tens of billions of dollars or more, maybe even higher than that over the next 10 years, and if we are not doing the right thing on children's health insurance—and I could go down a longer list—then we are not doing what we need to do for children. They don't have lobbyists, they don't give campaign contributions, they don't have power, and they may be voiceless, but we have an obligation in both parties and in both Houses to be their voice. But I am afraid we are headed down a road with a budget that harms children substantially, and I hope that

over the next couple of days we will make the right decisions for our children.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator withhold his request?

Mr. CASEY. I will.

F-35 JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I support the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. I believe this is a critical defense acquisition program which will greatly strengthen not only our national security, but that of our closest allies and partners.

The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter Program began more than 20 years ago. In an age where emerging technologies are introduced daily and where we have become accustomed to instant gratification, we sometimes grow impatient with how long it takes to achieve war-winning capabilities—and we should. Yet today, the F-35 stands on the threshold of being used effectively and decisively in operational missions.

During its journey, the Joint Strike Fighter Program Office has encountered its fair share of setbacks, and—at times—faulty leadership decisions by those in government as well as those in the private sector. From the Pentagon itself, we heard the accusation of “acquisition malpractice.”

The senior Senator from Arizona, JOHN MCCAIN, has repeatedly pointed out these shortfalls and missteps. I echo his frustrations.

In response to the accusations and grievances about the F-35 program, one could have just thrown one's hands up in frustration. Yet through the renewed determination of the F-35's Joint Strike Program Office under the leadership of Lt. Gen. Christopher Bogdan, what once was the poster child for acquisition reform has reached vital milestones and will soon be used by our combat forces.

During his tenure, General Bogdan has demanded and achieved greater performance and accountability among his own staff and his industry partners. He has established and is executing a corrective plan. With that said, there is still much more to do. The problems General Bogdan and the collective F-35 team are overcoming did not occur in an instant, nor will they be fixed in an instant.

Accordingly, today, I call on my colleagues to support the F-35 and provide the F-35 Program Office with the backing it needs to achieve critical future milestones.

In addition, the Congress must continue to challenge the Department, the F-35 Program Office, and the program's industrial partners to reduce not only each aircraft's initial purchase price, but the cost of using and maintaining this strike fighter in the decades that follow. As history teaches us, upwards of 80 percent of the total ownership costs of a weapon system resides not in the purchase price, but in its use and

resulting maintenance. This means the Department must pay critical attention now to the development and execution of a robust F-35 sustainment strategy to ensure long term costs are reduced.

We must also not forget the current purchase price of the F-35 exceeds \$110 million per aircraft. It is inevitable that the price of the F-35 will come down as the numbers of aircraft produced goes up. But the quest for price reduction must be central to our current and future efforts if we are to be able to procure the number of aircraft required to properly execute our deterrent strategies and, if necessary, war plans. Indeed, price will have a dramatic effect on the ability of our allies to purchase the F-35. Therefore, I challenge both the Department and our defense contractors to work toward achieving what many experts agree is an obtainable goal: a procurement price of less than \$80 million per aircraft, and as close to \$60 million per aircraft as possible. If we do this, the current program of record for more than 3,000 aircraft will naturally increase. My personal desire would be to see over 6,000 of these aircraft safeguarding our precious liberties and those of our allies.

This is an ambitious objective, but it is based upon achieving what is best for America and its allies. And I believe everyone in the Department of Defense, the F-35 Program Office, and, yes, the employees of our Nation's defense contractors have this as their central goal.

Therefore, I am reminded of a story from our history about the industrialist Collis Potter Huntington. He was one of the so-called “Big Four” of the western railroads during the late 1800s and built the Central Pacific Railroad as part of the first transcontinental railroad. He also led and developed other interstate lines such as the Southern Pacific Railroad and the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway, known simply as the C&O. As Huntington furthered the C&O's extension through the Virginia peninsula, he opened the pathway for West Virginia's coal industry to reach the coal piers in the harbor of Hampton Roads. Seeing a need for export shipping, he started the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company in 1886.

Huntington started a long tradition of superb shipbuilding, and he is also credited with giving the shipyard its motto. The motto simply states: “We will build good ships here. At a profit if we can. At a loss if we must. But always good ships.” This motto is emblazoned on a plaque and fixed to a granite monument at one of the entrances to the yard. This motto defined the mindset of generations of ship builders at the yard.

In 1968, the privately held Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company merged with another company. Thereafter, the “Good Ship” monument was removed due to its misalignment with the “new” company's goals.

As a testament to the character of the workers who built many of our Nation's great warships, the shipyard almost came to a standstill, leading to the monument's eventual return.

The "Good Ship" motto is a lesson for us all, but especially for the F-35 Program Office and its industry partners. We should all rally around a "Good Strike Fighter" motto. After all, these jets are being built for our men and women in uniform, to protect our rights and liberties as well as those of our allies.

The fighting spirit of the United States and her allies can enable the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter to emerge from its challenges like the mythical phoenix: reborn, regenerated and renewed. But for this to succeed, we must commit ourselves to excellence—in essence, the "Good Strike Fighter" motto. The war fighter, the American people, our allies and partners, and the whole free world are depending on it.

NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a copy of my remarks at the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

We're here today to review the president's fiscal year 2016 budget request for the National Nuclear Security Administration, which is a semi-autonomous agency within the Department of Energy that is responsible for managing our nuclear weapons stockpile, reducing global dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction, and providing the Navy with safe and effective nuclear propulsion.

This is the subcommittee's third hearing this year on the president's budget request, and I look forward to hearing our witnesses' testimony.

The NNSA, has an important national security mission, but faces many challenges. That's why we need to do what we were sent here to do—to govern.

Governing is about setting priorities, and we are going to have to make some hard decisions this year to make sure the highest priorities are funded.

The president's 2016 budget request for defense spending is about \$38 billion higher than what is allowed under the spending caps in the Budget Control Act.

In fact, if spending this year is consistent with the Budget Control Act, fully funding NNSA's budget request alone would require almost the entire increase in defense spending for all defense programs—including the Department of Defense.

We will work with Senator Cochran and Senator Mikulski to increase the subcommittee's defense spending allocation, but we're going to need your help to understand the NNSA's most urgent priorities, and that is why we are holding this hearing.

I'd like to focus my questions on three main areas, all with an eye toward setting priorities:

Keeping large construction projects on time and on budget; Senator Feinstein and I have worked pretty hard on that.

Effectively maintaining our nuclear weapons stockpile; and

Supporting our nuclear Navy.

The NNSA is responsible for three of the largest construction projects in the federal government: the Uranium Processing Facility in Tennessee; the MOX Fuel Fabrication Facility in South Carolina; and the Plutonium Facility in New Mexico.

Combined, these projects could cost as much as \$20 billion dollars to build, and over the past four years, Senator Feinstein and I have worked hard with the NNSA to keep costs from skyrocketing and to make sure hard-earned taxpayer dollars are spent wisely. We need to make sure these projects are on time and on budget.

Senator Feinstein and I have focused much of our oversight on the Uranium Processing Facility, because costs had increased every time we would get a status update.

Three years ago, we began holding regular meetings with the NNSA administrator and his team.

We said we wanted 90 percent design completed before we began construction and urged the NNSA to take aggressive steps to get costs under control.

The administrator asked Thom Mason, the laboratory director for Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee to head a Red Team to review the project. The result of that review may be a model for how to keep these kinds of projects on time and on budget.

The Red Team's report included 17 recommendations, nearly all of which the NNSA has now adopted, to keep the uranium facility within a \$6.5 billion budget with completion by 2025.

Based on these recommendations, the Uranium Facility will now consist of at least two buildings—one with high security and one with less security—with construction of these buildings to begin once their design is at 90 percent.

As I understand it, NNSA recently completed a portion of the site preparation for this project under budget by \$10 million. That's a good start, but there's a lot more work to be done.

I'm going to ask you more today about the uranium facility, particularly about your schedule for completing the design and when you anticipate construction can begin.

I also want to ask you about how you are applying the lessons we learned from the Red Team Review Team and to the other big construction projects, and look forward to any updates you can provide.

General Klotz, I know you plan to go to Tennessee tomorrow to see the progress on this project. I appreciate your hands-on approach to making sure this important project is delivered on time and on budget.

Another large portion of the budget request is the work NNSA is doing to maintain our nuclear weapons stockpile, and I want to make sure we are spending taxpayer dollars effectively.

The budget request includes \$1.3 billion to continue the four ongoing life extension programs, which fix or replace components in weapons systems to make sure they're safe and reliable.

These life extension programs are needed but they are very expensive, and I will ask you today whether you will be able to meet your production deadlines on time and on budget.

Naval Reactors is responsible for all aspects of the nuclear reactors that power submarines and aircraft carriers. Naval Reactors is currently designing a new reactor core that will not need to be refueled during the life of the ship.

This work will save taxpayers billions of dollars because we won't have to build two extra submarines to make up for those that

are not in service when they are being refueled.

The small nuclear reactors that Naval Reactors designs have had an impeccable safety record for more than 60 years; there has never been a reactor accident.

I also want to hear more about your plans for storing the Navy's used nuclear fuel.

We talked a lot in our hearing last week with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission about Yucca Mountain and storing used nuclear fuel from commercial reactors, and I'd like to hear from you how this issue impacts your operations.

With that, I would recognize Senator Feinstein to make her opening statement.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO LINDA HODGDON

• Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, today I congratulate New Hampshire commissioner of administrative services Linda Hodgdon on her retirement and to recognize her nearly 30 years of dedicated public service to New Hampshire and our Nation.

Commissioner Hodgdon has distinguished herself as an extraordinary public servant. Linda's administrative and analytic talent, commitment to the prudent use of tax dollars, and her exceptional work ethic resulted in her holding increasingly challenging and responsible positions throughout New Hampshire's State government. She started her service in 1985 as a financial analyst in the Governor's office, and has since served in various positions with the Department of Transportation, Department of Health and Human Services, as well as the Department of Justice. In 2008 she was appointed to serve as the commissioner of the Department of Administrative Services. Throughout her career serving the people of New Hampshire, Linda has earned a reputation for her exemplary commitment to fulfilling the fiduciary duty we all have to spend tax dollars wisely, and she has worked to boost efficiency and increase accountability.

On a personal note, I had the opportunity to work with Linda when she served as the director of administration for the New Hampshire Department of Justice from 2004 to 2006. During my tenure as attorney general I came to value and greatly appreciate Linda's work managing our budget and many other administrative functions within the office. Her skill, dedication, and hard work played an integral role in the success the office enjoyed. When Linda took on a task you knew it would be done thoroughly, professionally, and on time. Linda was a trusted member of my leadership team, who was greatly appreciated by all of the members of the office.

As Commissioner Hodgdon retires from public service, I commend her on a job well done. The government of the State of New Hampshire and the lives of the people of our State are better off because of her exemplary service. I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking