

previous order, following the remarks of Senator COLLINS and Senator SULLIVAN.

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

The Senator from Maine.

NATIONAL DEFENSE
AUTHORIZATION ACT

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise this evening in support of the fiscal year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act, which provides our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines with the critical resources they require to meet our critical national security missions.

Let me begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to both the chairman, Senator MCCAIN, and the ranking member, Senator REED, for tackling many of the complex and challenging issues facing our Nation and our military.

During my time in the Senate, I have never been more concerned about global instability and the threats posed to our country by radical Islamic extremists. We must work together to ensure our collective defense and this bill puts us on the path to doing so.

The legislation affirms the strategic importance of our Navy and shipbuilding programs by fully funding the DDG 1000 Program and authorizing \$400 million in incremental funding authority toward an additional DDG 51 beyond those included in the current multiyear procurement contract. This additional ship is very much needed by our Navy and it would fulfill the terms of a 2002 swap agreement between the two major shipbuilders regarding the construction of large surface combatants. Both my colleague Senator ANGUS KING and I advocated for these critical provisions.

I am so proud of the highly skilled and hard-working men and women of Bath Iron Works in my State who construct these ships for the Navy. The DDG 1000 is the lead ship of its class. It will bolster our ability to project power. It promises to deliver a wide array of cutting-edge innovations such as stealth technology, electric propulsion, and a smaller crew size.

Our destroyers are the workhorses of the Navy. Recently, the Bath-built USS *Farragut*, which I was honored to christen almost 10 years ago, was dispatched to the Strait of Hormuz after Iranian naval forces harassed commercial vessels transiting the area. The USS *Farragut* escorted U.S.-flagged ships through the Strait, projecting American power and sending a strong signal to enemies and allies alike that the U.S. Navy is prepared and ready to respond to acts of aggression.

Our Navy fleet provides the robust forward presence our Nation requires to respond not only to acts of aggression but to humanitarian disasters as well as to protect critical trade groups that facilitate global commerce and security. The power of presence cannot be taken for granted or ignored, which is why the investments in our Navy

that are authorized by this bill are so critical. We simply need more ships to be where we want to be in the world when we want to be and need to be there. The Navy's plan shows that unless we make the investments that are needed, our fleet will continue to shrink and, thus, jeopardize our national security.

This bill also maintains investments in our public shipyards, which are another set of strategic facilities in our national security arsenal.

Recently, I had the honor of hosting our Secretary of Labor, Thomas Perez, in Maine. We visited and were so impressed by the very successful apprenticeship program at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, ME. The shipyard in Kittery is one of only four remaining public naval shipyards, and it is renowned for its skilled and dedicated workforce that is helping our Nation transition from the *Los Angeles* Class to the *Virginia* Class submarines.

This bill also provides the resources necessary to help our allies and partners around the world. When Hamas fired more than 3,000 rockets into Israel last summer, the value of U.S.-Israeli cooperative missile defense programs became crystal clear.

During those countless attacks, it was the Iron Dome missile defense system developed in Israel, with cooperation and assistance from the United States, that saved countless civilian lives.

In addition, this bill continues to improve and strengthen the military's response to sexual assault. How well I remember at an Armed Services subcommittee hearing a decade ago when I first raised the issue of sexual assault in the military, and how dismissive the reply was of GEN George Casey. Fortunately, that attitude has changed, and in the last 2 years, significant reforms have been implemented to help combat these crimes and improve services and care for the survivors of sexual assault.

Still, the work of translating the military's stated policy of zero tolerance into reality remains unfinished business. Key provisions in this year's bill build upon the past reforms we have made by improving the protections for victims of sexual assault, enhancing confidential reporting options, and expanding the authority of special victims' counsel to assist the survivors of sexual assault. The Department of Defense must, however, do more to eliminate, once and for all, retaliation against the victims of sexual assault who come forward to report these crimes.

To further support our men and women in uniform, this bill rejects a provision proposed by the administration that would consolidate TRICARE and limit care options for servicemembers and their families. This bill preserves the U.S. Family Health Plan, which serves as a model of high-quality and cost-effective care. This program has been extremely successful and popular among enrollees in Maine. I have

been impressed with the work I have seen them do in case management of chronic diseases such as diabetes.

This bill also directs the Pentagon to rein in or eliminate unnecessary, wasteful spending. It cuts headquarters and administrative costs by 7.5 percent in the year 2016. In this time of budget constraints, we owe it to taxpayers to assess every efficiency and use every cost-saving measure, while also continuing to ensure the security of our Nation.

Finally, I wish to thank the committee for making the right decision in rejecting the President's proposal to authorize a new base realignment and closure round in 2016. I have been through BRAC rounds, and they have required significant costs and have failed to deliver on the promised savings, as has been documented by the Government Accountability Office—GAO.

This bill would also better tailor the HUBZone Program to meet the needs of communities affected by the closure of U.S. military installations through the previous BRAC process. The provisions included in the bill are drawn from the HUBZone Expansion Act that I authored with my colleague Senator KING.

I urge support of this highly significant legislation. I am pleased to have worked with the members of the committee on which I have served for so many years. Again, I congratulate the leaders of the committee and the members of the committee for their excellent work.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT AND THE ECONOMY

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I rise in support of the National Defense Authorization Act. This is a bipartisan bill that will provide our servicemembers with the funding they need to continue to keep our country safe.

Over the last 5 months, we have had numerous senior military officials, senior military officers, and foreign policy experts talk to the Senate Armed Services Committee on which I serve about the significant challenges that our country faces. The senior Senator from Arizona talked about this very eloquently today on the floor about ISIL, a resurgent Russia, North Korea with nuclear weapons, and this NDAA bill that we are now debating on the floor focuses on addressing these challenges. It also makes important modernizations to our investments with regard to military weapons, cuts bureaucratic redtape at the Pentagon, and ensures that our Armed Forces remain the most agile and lethal in the world. It upholds our commitments to our servicemembers, to their families, to military retirees, and to their families.

It is remarkable that right now, as we debate this bill—this critically important bill on the Senate floor—the

President of the United States has already come out and said he is going to likely veto it if it is in its current form. He is going to veto the NDAA. Think about that. One of the most important things we are doing to take care of our troops, and the President is threatening a veto. Now, during the markup of this bill, many Members on the other side of the aisle—our colleagues—also threatened to work on the amendments but to not vote for the bill. They were all going to vote against the bill. But we stood firm—the chairman and other members of the committee—and said: This is not the kind of bill we play politics with. This is not the kind of bill we try to make political points on. This is a bill that funds our troops, that funds the defense of our Nation. Guess what happened. They got the message. Only four members of the Senate Armed Services Committee voted against this bill. It was a very bipartisan bill coming out of the committee, and I certainly hope, when this bill passes the U.S. Senate and moves to conference with the House and then moves to the President's desk, that he does not play politics with our troops; that he removes his threat to veto one of the most important pieces of legislation that we will work on this year.

I wish to thank the senior Senator from Arizona, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, for his critical leadership in ushering this bill out of the Senate Armed Services Committee. I had the distinct honor of traveling with Senator McCAIN recently to Asia, including to Vietnam, where his service has inspired countless millions of Americans as well as the people of Vietnam. I saw that firsthand. It was humbling. It was an honor to be there with him, Senator REED, and Senator ERNST on a trip I will certainly remember for a lifetime.

Now, we all took an oath a few months ago to pledge solemnly to “defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic.” We took that oath right here on this floor. That is what the NDAA does. It gives our servicemembers what they need to fight and defend our great Nation. That is why 53 NDAA's have consecutively passed the Congress.

It hasn't been about partisanship. This bill has moved through the Congress every year for over half a century because it is so important. So again, I would say it would be remarkable if the President of the United States would veto this, particularly given the threats that we see to our Nation.

I want to talk about those rising threats and one of the biggest ones that doesn't get enough attention. We have heard from the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and from both sides of the aisle about what those threats are facing our Nation: ISIS, Iran, Russia, China. These are rising threats, no doubt. But there is a rising threat to our national security

that almost never gets talked about, and in some ways it is the biggest threat that our Nation faces.

I am talking about our economy. I am talking about the need for a strong economy. Our economy is one of the most critical elements of our national security. A strong robust economy is our best defense. We have the greatest military in the world, no doubt—the most professional military force in the world, no doubt. We have built this up over decades. But we built this up and we have it because for decades we have had a strong economy. For decades we have had the most innovative, robust economy in the world.

A strong economy is our best weapon against those who would do us harm. A strong economy means more peace, more security, and more prosperity. When America is strong, when it is working, when it is producing, when our economy is robust, the world is safer. Our strength sends a signal to the world. It allows us to set the narrative, to set the rules. It allows us to become the beacon that this country has been for generations.

Right now, we don't have this critical component of our national security, a strong economy. We do not have this. As a matter of fact, our economy is getting weaker, not stronger. The verdict is in. Economists from all across the country, of all political persuasions, agree that the recovery from the last recession has been one of the slowest economic recoveries this country has ever had. We have not had a slower recovery in well over 50 years. The American Enterprise Institute has called this recovery “glacially and painfully slow by historic standards.” Even the Center for American Progress, a very liberal think tank, has said that “this has been a poor recovery in every regard.”

That was last year. This year it is worse. The gross domestic product, which is the value of everything this country produces, last quarter shrank. Let me repeat that. We didn't grow. We didn't grow by 1 percent, 2 percent. The economy of the United States shrank by almost 1 percent. We contracted. It is the third time the economy has shrunk since 2009.

We don't even have a recovery. We don't have a recovery. Right now we have no growth. That means Americans have less money in their pockets. It means wages haven't kept up with inflation. It means the gap between the richest and the poorest is growing. We must get back to higher growth rates. We must get back to traditional levels of American growth. We must get back to an economy that makes us stronger globally and produces hope and opportunity at home.

It wasn't too long ago that we expected in this country at least 4 percent annual GDP growth. That is a very normal, traditional level of American growth. When President Reagan was in office, the average growth rate was about 4.8 percent. During Presi-

dent Clinton and the first term of President Bush it was 3.5 to 4 percent GDP growth.

(Mr. PERDUE assumed the Chair.)

My colleague from Louisiana, who was just presiding, wrote a recent excellent article in the Wall Street Journal.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that article be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Wall Street Journal, Apr. 30, 2015]
DISMAL GROWTH NEEDS THE 3.5% SOLUTION
THE STEPS TO SPURRING THE ECONOMY INCLUDE
ALLOWING OIL EXPORTS AND NOT TAXING REPATRIATED OVERSEAS PROFITS

(By Bill Cassidy and Louis Woodhill)

On Wednesday the Commerce Department announced that first-quarter growth of gross domestic product was a dismal 0.2%. Following fourth-quarter GDP growth in 2014 of an anemic 2.2%, the already sluggish economy has slowed almost to a halt.

America is facing a harsh reality. The recovery that began in 2009 is the weakest in postwar history. Millions have dropped out of the labor force, frustrated by lack of opportunity. Lower-income workers are underemployed, middle-incomes have not advanced as in the past, and government dependency has increased. As budget battles rage in Congress, ignored is what really matters: rapid, sustained economic growth.

The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that the U.S. economy will grow by a meager 2.3% over the next decade, and its estimate has declined in the past six months. At this growth rate, Americans face a future of stagnation, inequality and despair.

Here's why: From 1790 to 2014, U.S. GDP in real dollars grew at an average annual rate of 3.73%. Had America grown at the CBO's “economic speed limit” of 2.3% for its entire history, GDP would be \$780 billion today instead of more than \$17 trillion. And GDP per capita would be \$2,433, lower than Papua New Guinea's.

Looked at differently, had GDP grown from 2001 to 2014 at the 3.87% annual rate of 1993–2000, the federal government would have had a \$500 billion surplus in 2014 instead of a \$500 billion deficit. And that's with the same excessive government spending.

The last time the federal budget balanced was 2001 when there was a \$128 billion surplus. This was not achieved with spending cuts and tax increases; instead it came after four years of rapid growth—4.45% on average from 1997 to 2000. Helping fuel the economy was a capital-gains tax cut that took effect on Jan. 1, 1997.

The low growth rate during the Obama administration, averaging 1.36%, is not an accident. If the cost of regulations are recognized as taxation by other means, President Obama's first six years of taxes and regulations (and threats of more of both) have undermined confidence among entrepreneurs, small business owners, and the investors that would back them with capital. For the first time in memory, the number of business entities in America is actually falling, according to the Census Bureau.

An example of what not to do is the EPA's proposed ozone rule, which the National Association of Manufacturers predicts will reduce GDP by \$140 billion a year, destroy 1.4 million jobs per year and cost each household \$830 per year. All for health-benefits claims that public-health experts find questionable.

It's important to be realistic about the future, but 2.3% growth is fatalistic, not realistic.

President Obama and the Congress should be agreeing on what it takes to achieve 3.5% growth. Looking at Social Security Trustees' reports, 3.5% is the rate of growth required to ensure the solvency of Social Security and Medicare, with no tax increases and no benefit cuts.

There are tangible steps we can take toward a pro-growth economy. One step is to reform the uncompetitive corporate tax code, as recommended by President Obama's Bipartisan Debt Commission, among others, including the repatriation of overseas profits without any additional taxation. Increase oil and natural gas exports, which the National Association of Manufacturers estimates would raise 2020 GDP by as much as 1%, while reducing unemployment by 0.5% due to an increase in manufacturing jobs. Rein in the EPA's animus for fossil fuels. Replace ObamaCare with a plan that lowers, rather than raises, the cost of employment, and which does not incentivize businesses to lay off low-wage workers or cut their hours.

Congress should devise a plan for 3.5% economic growth. This isn't wishful thinking. High growth is historically normal for the United States. It is the present imperative, it is the only way forward.

Mr. SULLIVAN. The title is "Dismal Growth Needs the 3.5% Solution." He noted that from 1790 to 2014, almost the entire history of our great Nation, this country grew annually at 3.7 percent GDP growth—3.7 percent. The Obama administration's annual growth rate has been 1.3 percent. Think about that—1.3 percent.

According to the former CBO Director, the difference between 2.5 percent and 3.5 percent growth—just 1 percent GDP growth difference—will have a huge impact on American families. We would be able to produce nationally 2.5 million more jobs and the average income in terms of wages would be \$9,000 higher—\$9,000 higher. Think about what you could do with that amount of money. Think about what American families could do with that amount of money, just by going 1 percent higher in our growth rate.

Our distinguished colleague from Pennsylvania recently mentioned that in order to double the standard of living for a family—to double their income—at 3 percent growth, you can do that in 24 years, or a generation. That is why every generation of Americans has benefitted and done better than the previous one, because we have grown at 3, 3.5, 4 percent growth rate. We are doubling our standard of living. At 1 percent growth, which is the Obama growth rate, it takes 72 years to double your standard of living—72 years. That is the trajectory we are on.

What is most disturbing about this is that this is a huge issue for the country. You don't read about it in the press. Heck, last quarter we shrunk. The economy of the United States, the greatest economy in the world, shrunk, and there was barely a press report about it. It has become what people are now referring to as the new normal. Traditional levels of American growth at 3.5, 4 or 4.5 percent GDP growth—nope, in the Obama era that is a thing of the past. We are in the new normal era, with 1.5 percent GDP growth—maybe 2, if we are lucky.

We need to change that. We need to get the traditional levels of American growth. What is most amazing is that the administration seems to be just shrugging its shoulders. Oh, we contracted last quarter? That is no big deal. A 1.5 percent to 2 percent GDP growth for the entire Obama administration record—that is fine.

But it is a big deal, and it is not fine. We need to change this.

Since 2009, the White House has blamed everything from former George W. Bush to the weather to climate change to Europe's health to growth problems in Africa for these slow growth rates. But have you ever heard the President say: It might be the policies of my own administration. It might be the fact that we are overregulating every element of this great economy of ours. They need to stop blaming and start fixing this economy.

We need to get our country moving again. We have so many comparative advantages to other countries—so many. We have the greatest universities in the world right here in America—the greatest universities in the world compared to any other country. We have agriculture, farmers who feed the world. We have a high-tech sector that is the envy of the world. We have a capital markets sector that commercializes great ideas quicker than any place in the world. We have natural resources—oil, gas, minerals—that are the envy of the world. We are producing more natural gas than any place in the world right now. We are producing more oil than Saudi Arabia right now because our private sector has innovation, ingenuity, hard work. We have tremendous advantages that almost any other country would envy.

What we need to do now is unleash this country's might, unleash the great potential that is the American economy. We need to refuel America. When we grow our economy, we will protect our country.

We need regulatory reform. Right now the cost of regulations to our economy according to the President's own Small Business Administration is close to \$2 trillion a year. That is almost \$15,000 per American family. Think about that—\$15,000 per family is keeping us down. We need a competitive tax system. We need to unleash the might of our private sector through cutting redtape and making sure that we are open for business, not strangling businesses with redtape from Washington.

I want to emphasize these issues because we have been talking about the NDAA, the national defense of our country, for the past few days on the Senate floor, and we are going to be talking about these important issues next week as well. And they are critical issues, but this is a critical issue. If we can't grow our economy, if we can't get back to traditional levels of American growth, we are going to continue to have challenges. But if we can do this, if we can grow consistently by

4.5 or 5 percent in GDP growth, that is the best way to address our challenges, our deficit, our \$18 trillion debt, our national security and the funding of our military. We need to focus more on the economy.

This administration has failed the American people on these issues. We need to unleash the might of this great economy of ours, and we will keep our country safe by doing so.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY,
JUNE 8, 2015, AT 3 P.M.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 3 p.m. on Monday.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 6:08 p.m., adjourned until Monday, June 8, 2015, at 3 p.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

IN THE AIR FORCE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be general

GEN. DARREN W. MCDEW

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be lieutenant general

MAJ. GEN. RONALD F. LEWIS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be general

LT. GEN. ROBERT B. ABRAMS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT AS THE CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMY AND APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 601 AND 6033:

To be general

GEN. MARK A. MILLEY

IN THE NAVY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT AS CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS AND APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 601 AND 5033:

To be admiral

ADM. JOHN M. RICHARDSON

IN THE MARINE CORPS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE SERVING AS THE CHIEF DEFENSE COUNSEL FOR MILITARY COMMISSIONS UNDER THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION, ARTICLE II, SECTION 2, CLAUSE 2, AND THE NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014, SECTION 1037:

To be brigadier general

COL. JOHN G. BAKER

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major

FRANCIS J. RACIOPPI, JR.

IN THE NAVY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624: