

(C) produce high-quality applicants;
 (D) support timely decisions;
 (E) uphold appointments based on merit system principles; and
 (F) promote competitive job offers.

(5) In implementing the "New Beginnings" performance management and workforce incentive system, section 1113 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 requires the Secretary to comply with veterans' preference requirements.

(6) Among the criteria for the "New Beginnings" performance management and workforce incentive system authorized by section 1113 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010, the Secretary is required to—

(A) adhere to merit principles;
 (B) include a means for ensuring employee involvement (for bargaining unit employees, through their exclusive representatives) in the design and implementation of the performance management and workforce incentive system;

(C) provide for adequate training and retraining for supervisors, managers, and employees in the implementation and operation of the performance management and workforce incentive system;

(D) develop a comprehensive management succession program to provide training to employees to develop managers for the Department and a program to provide training to supervisors on actions, options, and strategies a supervisor may use in administering the performance management and workforce incentive system;

(E) include effective transparency and accountability measures and safeguards to ensure that the management of the performance management and workforce incentive system is fair, credible, and equitable, including appropriate independent reasonableness reviews, internal assessments, and employee surveys;

(F) utilize the annual strategic workforce plan required by section 115b of title 10, United States Code; and

(G) ensure that adequate resources are allocated for the design, implementation, and administration of the performance management and workforce incentive system.

(7) Section 1113 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 also requires the Secretary to develop a program of training—to be completed by a supervisor every three years—on the actions, options, and strategies a supervisor may use in—

(A) developing and discussing relevant goals and objectives with employees, communicating and discussing progress relative to performance goals and objectives, and conducting performance appraisals;

(B) mentoring and motivating employees, and improving employee performance and productivity;

(C) fostering a work environment characterized by fairness, respect, equal opportunity, and attention to the quality of the work of employees;

(D) effectively managing employees with unacceptable performance;

(E) addressing reports of a hostile work environment, reprisal, or harassment of or by another supervisor or employee; and

(F) allowing experienced supervisors to mentor new supervisors by sharing knowledge and advice in areas such as communication, critical thinking, responsibility, flexibility, motivating employees, teamwork, leadership, and professional development, and pointing out strengths and areas of development.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the Secretary of Defense should proceed with the collaborative work with employee representatives on the "New Beginnings" performance management and

workforce incentive system and begin implementation of the new system at the earliest possible date.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that privileges of the floor be granted to Larry Babin, my military fellow, who is also a major in the Army, during the pendency of the National Defense Authorization Act.

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

ORDERS FOR TUESDAY, JUNE 9, 2015

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10 a.m., Tuesday, June 9; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; that following leader remarks, the Senate be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, and that the time be equally divided, with the majority controlling the first half and the Democrats controlling the final half; further, that following morning business, the Senate resume consideration of H.R. 1735; 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. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned, following the remarks of Senator BLUMENTHAL, who I am told will appear shortly.

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

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

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I appreciate the courtesy of the Presiding Officer in the Chamber in allowing me to speak this late in the day about issues that are vital to our national defense, which will be addressed tomorrow and during the course of the

week in votes on the National Defense Authorization Act.

The task before the Senate in the National Defense Authorization Act is nothing less than to craft a sustainable, long-term strategy to defend America. In fact, it is to sustain our global leadership in a time of shifting alliances, significant challenges, and emerging threats, while bringing a long-term balance and sustainability to our military.

This defense measure is a solid start, but it must be made stronger to better meet the needs of our military men and women and our Nation as we enter this supremely perilous time. The danger to America has never been greater. Our foes have never been more insidious and pernicious, and many of the States opposing us have never been more willing to take measures that fundamentally contravene not only our security but our sense of moral right and wrong.

I approach the National Defense Authorization Act with this principle in mind. Neither the United States nor our troops, nor anyone involved in our national defense should ever face a fair fight. Our men and women in uniform should never be challenged in the air, on the sea or on land with a fair fight. It should be one-sided and in our favor. That is the basic principle. We must be superior in our military Armed Forces.

I am grateful to the chairman of our committee, Senator MCCAIN of Arizona, an extraordinarily distinguished veteran and a partner in a number of amendments to this measure, and to the ranking member Senator JACK REED, also a public servant of extraordinary distinction and a veteran. I am grateful for their leadership in bringing us to this point on a bill that attracted bipartisan support—overwhelming support—on the Armed Services Committee, where I am privileged to serve.

The provisions in this bill will enable us to remain the strongest country militarily in the world. At the end of the day, our values, our way of life, and our democracy give us our real strength, but the military is necessary to defend those values and our quality and way of life. The military defends our values and traditions and our fundamental rights and liberties, which we worked hard last week to uphold in the USA FREEDOM Act.

I have filed a number of amendments that underscore the need for continuing improvement in this bill. They are forward-looking amendments. One of them would modernize the National Guard's helicopter fleet by providing vital capabilities for the military as well as the sustainability and growth for Connecticut's dedicated defense industry.

To protect our heroes in uniform, I have also proposed an amendment that would provide stronger legal tools against predatory lending and other abuses targeting our military men and women nearby the very bases they are stationed.

Mr. President, I refer my colleagues to these two amendments, Nos. 1820 and 1564.

I also joined Ranking Member REED in cosponsoring his amendment, which will set forth a responsible and sustainable budget strategy by ending sequestration in our military budget and allowing us to ensure that all of our Nation's key security priorities are addressed.

Tomorrow, this body will vote on that amendment. It is a critical vote. It allows us to choose sides as to whether we will put close to \$40 billion, in effect, on our national debt rather than in our budget or on our credit card rather than find a sustainable means to pay for it. Each of us will have to decide whether we want to end sequestration, which I am committed to ending, or instead whether we will continue sequestration—and the very real harm it imposes on our nation by putting an extra \$40 billion in the overseas contingent operations account known as OCO. Sequestration cannot be allowed to become a permanent fixture. We must work together in a bipartisan manner to end it.

In my time in the U.S. Senate, I have fought for our national defense funding because I believe our troops in harm's way deserve our full, uncompromising, unyielding, and unstinting support. We owe them the best equipment, the best training and supplies, as well as the best institutional support and health care that the world has to offer because they are the best fighting force that our world has ever seen. They fight for a nation that is the best, strongest, and greatest in the history of the world—not only in its military strength but in its fundamental values and freedom that allow us to speak as we wish in this very Chamber, to criticize authority, to speak truth to those in power, to debate, to come together, as we did this past weekend to worship and gather together and say whatever we please and think as we wish.

I hope we will address this vital interest in making sure we provide a sustainable source of funding by ending sequestration rather than relying on the overseas contingency operation account, which is a form of borrowing. It increases the deficit; it doesn't reduce it. It diminishes stable and sustainable funding; it doesn't enhance it. It simply provides more uncertainty rather than a long-term strategy.

This measure, which I support, enhances our security by providing for the construction of Virginia-class submarines—that are necessary. In fact, the NDAA provides \$800 million in additional funding over what the President requested, and it endorses equipping all future attack submarines with an enhanced payload capability.

Naval warfare, and particularly undersea warfare, is as relevant and important now as it ever was, and these submarines will do much to enhance our readiness, our nuclear deterrence, our special operations, and our surveil-

lance. They are the stealthiest, strongest weapons platform under the sea ever known to man. Likewise, the research and development in the Ohio replacement program will continue to go forward.

The bill provides for \$1 billion for six additional Joint Strike Fighter aircraft for the Marine Corps—this is profoundly significant—as well as \$17 million in new military construction for the Connecticut National Guard.

There are other measures, but apart from the hard work is an important step for fairness and keeping faith and dealing fairly with our men and women in uniform. This legislation provides for a 1.3 percent pay raise and \$85 million to be directed toward improving financial literacy among our servicemembers. That is really the very least we can do.

Our military men and women do not do this for the pay or the financial compensation, but for their families' sake, we need to deal with them fairly and keep faith with them. In my role as ranking member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, I have paid special attention to ensuring that this bill helps to ease the transition of military personnel into civilian life by establishing a new "RECORD of Service" card upon their separation that will help prevent identity theft and financial fraud. I urge the DOD, as does the Armed Services Committee, to discontinue its use of Social Security numbers on military records. It will help prevent identity theft and the kinds of breaches that put our servicemen and their families at risk financially, just as they are often at risk physically in combat.

The bill also directs DOD to stem the tide of opioid prescription drug abuse, and it helps military retirees get smoking cessation assistance. I would go further and provide for stronger measures to deal with over-prescription through education programs and drug formularies that provide alternatives, and that is one of the amendments I will offer.

Finally, two principal amendments I propose are an amendment to provide additional helicopters for the Army National Guard, which I will speak on now and seek to make pending at a later point, and an amendment improving consumer protections for military personnel and their families, which is currently pending.

First, we can greatly strengthen this bill by making a commitment to our National Guard to provide additional helicopters. The UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter is one of the most versatile and heavily used aviation capabilities in the Army National Guard, as well as by all the states in which they serve. The UH-60A is the oldest model Black Hawk in service and is currently flown almost exclusively by the Army National Guard.

We can strengthen this bill by fulfilling our commitment to the National Guard in providing 15 additional UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters that

are the workhorse of our warriors who serve in our National Guard, warriors who have distinguished themselves not only in combat but also in emergencies and disasters at home. These helicopters will help them serve at home and abroad, which is one of the reasons that acquiring more of these helicopters, M model Black Hawks, are one of the priorities of the National Guard Association.

I have listened to the National Guard leaders in Connecticut, and I have listened to distinguished warriors and veterans of the National Guard from around the country, and I know these UH-60 Black Hawks are the workhorses. They are important in medium-lift capability to the National Guard in support of homeland defense and response to emergencies. The UH-60A models now lack onboard capabilities—modern capabilities that would enable them to be deployed overseas in hostile environments without significant upgrades to others parts of their configuration. They need that upgrade to be configured properly. The new aircraft would flow to states all across the country and ensure the National Guard is ready to deploy both at home and abroad.

Under the Army's current budget projections, the Army National Guard will not replace their aging UH-60A Black Hawk helicopters until 2025. We need to do better, we need to do it more promptly, and that is why I am proposing amendment No. 1820.

The amendment is fully paid for by an offset from the Foreign Currency Fund. The upside of a strengthening American dollar is that the Army can put more funds towards buying American helicopters and spend less in foreign currency expenses.

The other principal amendment, which I have made pending to the bill, improves the consumer protections afforded to our servicemembers and their families by the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act. On the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, penalties, quite bluntly, are too low, and that is why I wish to thank my colleagues Ranking Member REED as well as Senators DURBIN, MURRAY, and WHITEHOUSE, all of whom have been working tirelessly and have joined me in proposing stronger protections in the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act by doubling the penalties and making them as high as \$110,000 for a first violation and \$220,000 for a second or subsequent violation. This legislation provides deterrents, punishment, and a stop to this kind of financial abuse that may take place, literally, within sight of military bases.

Recently, the Department of Justice used this authority to obtain a civil penalty against Capital One and Sallie Mae. We have seen financial abuse by Capital One, when it foreclosed improperly on servicemembers' homes. These practices can include these kinds of abuses involving foreclosure and other kinds of exploitation which Sallie Mae, unfortunately, engaged in. "Federal

law protects our servicemembers from having to repay loans under terms that are unaffordable or unfair." Student lender Sallie Mae sidestepped requirements by charging excessive rates to borrowers who filed documents proving they were members of the U.S. military. For over a decade Sallie Mae violated SCRA by failing to provide over 60,000 military servicemembers with the 6 percent interest rate cap they were entitled to on their student loans. This type of conduct is more than just inappropriate, it is inexcusable, and it will not be tolerated.

In addition, my colleagues have been working to make other important improvements to the SCRA. For example, Senator REED has worked tirelessly to ensure servicemembers can terminate leases on rental properties without early termination fees if they are assigned to, or relocate to, government quarters. Senator WHITEHOUSE has sought to make permanent a one-year post service protection from foreclosure for returning servicemembers

and Senator DURBIN has been fighting to make sure our servicemembers with student loan debt can take advantage of the protections of the SCRA. I appreciate my colleagues tireless advocacy and look forward to working together to advance these important provisions.

I ask my colleagues to join me in voting for Senator REED's amendment tomorrow. We face critical decisions ahead. This measure has extraordinary merit. We must keep faith with those who serve, and I hope we will when we vote this week on the National Defense Authorization Act.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 6:44 p.m., adjourned until Tuesday, June 9, 2015, at 10 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

MARY L. KENDALL, OF MINNESOTA, TO BE INSPECTOR GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, VICE EARL E. DEVANEY, RESIGNED.

EUROPEAN BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

SCOTT ALLEN, OF MARYLAND, TO BE UNITED STATES DIRECTOR OF THE EUROPEAN BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT, VICE JAMES LAGARDE HUDSON, RESIGNED.

WITHDRAWAL

Executive Message transmitted by the President to the Senate on June 8, 2015 withdrawing from further Senate consideration the following nomination:

ERICKA M. MILLER, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, VICE EDUARDO M. OCHOA, WHICH WAS SENT TO THE SENATE ON MARCH 4, 2015.