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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's opening prayer will be offered by the guest chaplain, Rabbi Harold Kravitz from Minnetonka, MN.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Our God of all that is good, it is a privilege to be inside this Capitol Building, richly designed to inspire those who govern to achieve the loftiest goals possible for this Nation.

Guide the Senators who sit in this Chamber to do what the Book of Deuteronomy describes: "that which is right and good in the sight of the Eternal One."

We pray for all Americans, especially those who lack sufficient food to feed themselves and their families. This body has the power to change this reality, to do that which is right and good.

May the One who Provides Sustenance for All—Hazan et Hakol—bless this United States Senate with the wisdom and compassion to act on its responsibilities for those who are vulnerable and in need.

May all God's people in this land be able to live with dignity and share in the plenty with which this Nation is blessed.

Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the majority leader and I will yield to the Senator from Minnesota.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. FRANKEN. Thank you, Leader REID.

WELCOMING THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I rise today to thank Rabbi Harold Kravitz for offering the opening prayer today in the Senate and to praise him for all of his excellent work.

Rabbi Kravitz is rabbi at Adath Jeshurun in my State of Minnesota and is an important leader in our State. In addition to serving his congregation, Rabbi Kravitz is also a leader in the fight against hunger. He is outgoing chair of the board of MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, where he has been working to end hunger for all people regardless of their faith background.

One of the things most notable about Rabbi Kravitz is his commitment to bringing together people of all faiths to end hunger. I especially want to recognize Rabbi Kravitz's work in Minnesota to make school lunches free and available for all children.

No child should ever go hungry. We know kids won't do as well in school when they are hungry. It is also just wrong. That is why I have taken up the issue at the Federal level as well, to try to make this commonsense policy that Rabbi Kravitz has championed in MAZON as widespread as possible.

Rabbi Kravitz has done excellent work in Minnesota and as a national leader in the fight against hunger. Thank you for that, Rabbi, and thank you again for offering the opening prayer this morning.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

OBAMACARE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, sometimes the divide between the

White House and reality can be stark. That was evident yesterday when President Obama told us that Obamacare was "working" and that essentially "none" of the warnings of the law's failures and broken promises had come to pass. I imagine the families threatened with double-digit premium increases would beg to differ, as would the millions of families who received cancellation notices for the plans they had and wanted to keep. That is especially true considering something else the President said—that Obamacare "hasn't had an adverse effect on people who already had health insurance." That is what the President said, that Obamacare hasn't had an adverse effect on people who already had health insurance. President Obama actually said that. It may border on the absurd, but he did say it.

Perhaps the President will make even more bizarre claims today as he tries to bolster the image of a law that only 11 percent of Americans say is a success—only 11 percent of Americans say Obamacare is a success—or perhaps he will keep realities facing the middle class in mind. Instead of jousting with reality again, perhaps he will consider the concerns of constituents who write in literally every day to tell us how this law is hurting them. Maybe he will remember the Kentuckian who wrote to tell me this: "I cried myself to sleep."

"I cried myself to sleep," said this Kentuckian who wrote to me about this law. That is how she felt after losing health coverage with her employer and then being forced—forced—into an exchange plan she called "subpar" with a nearly \$5,000 deductible. How helpful to most middle-class people is a health insurance policy with a \$5,000 deductible? She said, "I work hard for every penny I earn, and this is completely unacceptable." It is also another example of a law that has failed, and the sooner President Obama can come to grips with that reality, the sooner we

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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can work together to replace the fear and anguish of Obamacare with the hope and promise of true health care reform.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on an entirely different matter, the Defense authorization legislation before the Senate would authorize the programs and funding that provide the kind of training and equipment our military needs in the face of aggressive threats such as ISIL. It would provide a well-deserved pay raise to the brave men and women who give us everything to keep us safe. It contains exactly the same level of funding—exactly the same level of funding—President Obama requested in his own budget: \$612 billion.

It is just the kind of legislation you would expect to receive strong bipartisan support. Up until now, it has. The NDAA is a bill we typically consider every year, and it is one that typically passes with bipartisan support. This year's House bill passed with votes from both parties, while the Senate version of the bill passed the Armed Services Committee by a huge bipartisan margin of 22 to 4. That was in the Senate Armed Services Committee, the vote on the bill we have before us. It should be sailing through the Senate for passage by a similar margin this week, but some in the Democratic leadership are now trying to hold it hostage for partisan reasons.

We live in an age when, as Henry Kissinger recently put it, "the United States has not faced a more diverse and complex array of crises since the end of the Second World War." Yet some Democratic leaders seem to think this is the moment to hold our national security hostage to the partisan demands for more spending on Washington bureaucracies, such as the IRS. They seem to think it is OK to hold our troops and their families to ransom if they can't plus-up unrelated bills, such as the one that funds their own congressional offices.

The Armed Services Committee chairman just penned an op-ed on the issue that I would ask my colleagues to read. It made many important points, including this one: There is bipartisan consensus that we cannot continue to hold defense funding at BCA levels after years of dangerous cuts. Military officials have told us that to do so could put American lives at risk, which means it is a scenario we should be working to avoid at all costs. But some Democratic leaders seem to view such a worrying scenario as little more than leverage to extract more spending for unrelated bureaucracies.

"It is the first duty of the federal government to protect the nation," Senator McCAIN wrote in his piece. "With global threats rising, it simply makes no sense to oppose a defense policy bill full of vital authorities that

our troops need for a reason that has nothing to do with national defense spending." He is right.

I ask unanimous consent that Senator McCAIN's op-ed be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

Here is what I am asking today. I am asking every sensible Democratic colleague to keep outside with the American people and pull these party leaders back from the edge. I am asking my friends across the aisle to join with us to support wounded warriors instead of more partisan brinkmanship, to give our troops a raise instead of giving gridlock a boost. And I am asking them to work with us to defeat the contingency funding amendment offered by the senior Senator from Rhode Island so that we can keep this bill intact and consistent with the budget resolution.

The new Congress has been on a roll in recent months, getting things done for the American people in a spirit of greater openness and cooperation. Let's keep the momentum going. Let's keep that spirit alive. If Senators have amendments, I would encourage them to work with Senator McCAIN to get them processed. But above all, let's ignore the partisan voices of the past and work together for more shared achievements instead. I think our troops and their families deserve no less.

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

[From Politico, June 9, 2015]

OBAMA IS WRONG TO HOLD DEFENSE FUNDING HOSTAGE

(By Sen. John McCain)

Congress has passed a National Defense Authorization Act, vital legislation providing the necessary funding and authorities for our military and the men and women who volunteer to defend the nation, for 53 consecutive years. This year's NDAA should be no different.

The NDAA delivers sweeping defense reforms that will enable our military to rise to the challenges of a more dangerous world. The legislation contains the most significant reforms in a generation to a broken acquisition system that takes too long and costs too much. It modernizes and improves our 70-year-old military retirement system, expanding benefits to the vast majority of service members excluded from the current system. The NDAA reforms Pentagon management to ensure precious defense dollars are focused on our war fighters, not on expanding bloated staffs, which have grown exponentially in recent years.

With \$10 billion in wasteful and excessive spending identified in the Pentagon's budget, the legislation invests in crucial military capabilities for our war fighters. The bill accelerates Navy shipbuilding and adds fighter aircraft to address shortfalls across the services. As adversaries threaten our military technological advantage, the bill looks to the future and invests in new breakthrough technologies, including directed energy and unmanned combat aircraft.

Despite these critical reforms, President Barack Obama is threatening to veto the NDAA and future defense spending bills for reasons totally unrelated to national security.

The Budget Control Act, which set in motion dangerous defense cuts, establishes caps

on defense and nondefense discretionary spending. There is bipartisan consensus on the dangerous impact these spending caps would have on defense. All of the military service chiefs testified this year that funding defense at the level of the BCA caps would put American lives at risk.

Rather than seeking to avoid this scenario at all costs, the president is using it as leverage to extract increases in nondefense spending. As his veto threat made clear, the president "will not fix defense without fixing non-defense spending."

Such intransigence shows a disturbing misalignment of White House priorities. It is the first duty of the federal government to protect the nation. With global threats rising, it simply makes no sense to oppose a defense policy bill full of vital authorities that our troops need for a reason that has nothing to do with national defense spending.

The NDAA fully supports Obama's budget request of \$612 billion for national defense, which is \$38 billion above the spending caps established by the Budget Control Act. In other words, this legislation gives the president every dollar of budget authority he requested. The difference is that NDAA follows the Senate Budget Resolution and funds that \$38 billion increase through Overseas Contingency Operations funds.

Parrotting White House rhetoric, some Senate Democrats have been spreading misinformation about OCO funding, saying this funding is inappropriate or somehow limited in its ability to support our military. This is nonsense. The NDAA purposefully placed the additional \$38 billion of OCO funding in the same accounts and activities for which the president himself requested OCO money.

To be clear, using OCO to pay for our national defense is not my preference. But given the choice between OCO money and no money, I choose OCO, and multiple senior military leaders testified before the Armed Services Committee this year that they would make the same choice for one simple reason. This is \$38 billion of real money that our military desperately needs, and without which our top military leaders have said they cannot succeed.

It remains my highest priority as chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee to achieve a long-term, bipartisan solution that lifts the BCA caps once and for all. Obama says this is his goal as well. But the NDAA is a policy bill—not a spending bill—and cannot accomplish that goal. In the absence of such an agreement, I refuse to ask the brave young Americans in our military to defend this nation with insufficient resources that would place their lives in unnecessary danger. Holding the NDAA hostage to force that solution would be a deliberate and cynical failure to meet our constitutional duty to provide for the common defense.

It is simply incomprehensible that as America confronts the most diverse and complex array of crises around the world since the end of World War II, that a president would veto funding for our military to prove a political point. The NDAA before the Senate authorizes \$612 billion for national defense. This is the amount requested by the president and justified by his own national security strategy. For the sake of the men and women of our military and our national security, it's time the president learned how to say yes.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.