

the Senate floor, and I thank Senators CORKER and MENENDEZ for their help.

As I think most Members of this body know, I have been an active participant in the Helsinki Commission. I am the democratic leader, working with Senator WICKER. The Helsinki Commission is known for its participation in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, but I think it is best known because we put a spotlight on human rights issues. We try to live up to that motto “never again.” We try to say we will not let violations of basic human rights go unchallenged.

So on this 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and Birkenau, which are the iconic symbols today of the Holocaust, let’s rededicate ourselves to making sure that “never again” becomes a reality.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise first to thank my colleague from Maryland for his eloquent words on the Holocaust and the survivors of the Holocaust and the compelling voices that came out of those death camps.

In addition, my colleague has always been a champion for human rights, whether it is on the Helsinki Commission, whether it is his advocacy to let Soviet Jews get out of the Soviet Union. Where people are repressed or facing attacks or persecution, he has always been on their side, and also actually meeting with the Holocaust survivors in our own community to bring a lot of attention to what we can do and to actually putting money in the Federal checkbook.

With all that effort at survival and making it to the United States, the survivors of the Holocaust, who were children then and would now be in their eighties and nineties—imagine that—should not live in poverty, they should not fear institutionalization, and they should not fear destitution. So I thank my colleague for his advocacy, and I look forward to working with him on this and also say “never again.”

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY FUNDING

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I come to the floor as the ranking member of the Appropriations Committee, and I come to ask my colleagues to bring to the floor and pass a clean Homeland Security appropriations bill for fiscal year 2015.

This isn’t just Senator BARB MIKULSKI calling for this but also the former heads of Homeland Security under President Bush and also under President Obama. The very first head of that agency, Gov. Tom Ridge, along with Mr. Chertoff and Janet Napolitano, have written to HARRY REID and MITCH McCONNELL and said: Please, as former Secretaries of Homeland Security, we write to you today to respect-

fully request that you consider decoupling critical legislation to fund the Department of Homeland Security for fiscal year 2015 from a legislative response to President Obama’s actions on immigration.

They feel that:

... by tethering a bill to fund DHS in FY 2015 to a legislative response to the President’s executive actions on immigration . . .

—it could lead to a shutdown of Homeland Security.

We don’t want a shutdown.

I won’t go through the entire letter. They conclude with:

It is imperative that we ensure that DHS is ready, willing, and able to protect the American people. To that end, we urge you not to risk the funding for the operations that protect every American and to pass a clean DHS funding bill.

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

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

Hon. MITCH McCONNELL,
U.S. Senate Majority Leader,
Washington, DC.

Hon. HARRY REID,
U.S. Senate Minority Leader,
Washington, DC.

As former U.S. Secretaries of Homeland Security, we write to you today to respectfully request that you consider decoupling critical legislation to fund the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 from a legislative response to President Obama’s executive actions on immigration.

As the recent terrorist attacks in Paris and the cyber-attacks on a major American corporation and on the U.S. Military’s Central Command remind us, the threats facing the U.S. are very real. The national security role that DHS plays, and by extension the funding that allows it to carry out its vital national security mission, is critical to ensuring that our nation is safe from harm. Funding for the DHS is used to protect our ports and our borders; to secure our air travel and cargo; to protect the federal government and our nation’s information, technology, and infrastructure from cyber-attacks; to fund essential law enforcement activities; to guard against violent extremists; to mobilize response networks after emergencies; and to ensure the safety of the president and national leaders.

Moreover, we appreciate that Congress possesses the authority to authorize and appropriate funds expended by the federal government. We do not question your desire to have a larger debate about the nation’s immigration laws. However, we cannot emphasize enough that the DHS’s responsibilities are much broader than its responsibility to oversee the federal immigration agencies and to protect our borders. And funding for the entire agency should not be put in jeopardy by the debate about immigration. The President has said very publicly that he will “oppose any legislative effort to undermine the executive actions that he” has taken on immigration. Therefore, by tethering a bill to fund DHS in FY 2015 to a legislative response to the President’s executive actions on immigration, the likelihood of a Department of Homeland Security shutdown increases.

It is imperative that we ensure that DHS is ready, willing, and able to protect the American people. To that end, we urge you not to risk funding for the operations that protect every American and to pass a clean DHS funding bill.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL CHERTOFF.

TOM RIDGE.

JANET NAPOLITANO.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, the Department of Homeland Security was established right after the terrible attack on the United States of America on September 11, 2001.

The Department of Homeland Security is a big agency, but protecting the homeland is a big job, and DHS employees are on the job every day: the Coast Guard safeguarding our waterways; Secret Service, not only protecting the President, the First Family, the Vice President, but also doing other important tasks; the Border Patrol and ICE—Immigration and Customs Enforcement—securing our borders against smugglers, traffickers, and other illegal immigrants; cyber warriors—people protecting us against bio and nuclear threats, and then also working with the first responders; FEMA—everything to protecting us in the event of an attack on the homeland, to having readiness and response and shelters and so on, to helping us now in hurricanes and blizzards such as we are facing in the northeast. It all helps State and local responders to have the resources they need to be able to respond at the local level.

The Firefighters Grant Program is so beloved in our communities where, through competitive exercise, they can go for grants to buy respiratory equipment, the new firetrucks and so on that they need. In my community, they can’t come up with this equipment on just fish fries and pancake breakfasts. We need a government on our side. Unfortunately, the Department of Homeland Security funding runs out on February 27.

Now let me give the background.

When we came back in September, facing the fact we had to have a continuing resolution to get us through the fiscal year and the election cycle, the Congress passed legislation, and then on December 13 when we did the omnibus, we passed an omnibus bill for every single agency with the exception of Homeland Security. So every single agency, from the Department of Defense to the Department of Health and Human Services, Education, the weather services, all of these important programs, NIH, were funded through the fiscal year. But we put Homeland Security on a CR because there was an intense and actually very prickly concern over the President’s Executive action on immigration. So rather than hold up the whole funding of the United States of America over temper tantrum politics over Obama’s Executive action on immigration, we went to a CR, a continuing resolution, on Homeland Security. The Homeland Security was to take us to February 27, where wiser heads—and now complete control by the Republican Party—would be able to move this for full funding.

So where are we? Well, during that time in December, as the chair of the

Committee on Appropriations, with my vice chairman Senator RICHARD SHELBY, Senator DAN COATS, and the Subcommittee on Homeland Security, Senator DAN COATS and Senator Mary Landrieu, we came up with a fiscal framework. So did the House. They came up with it. So the very money that we put into the CR and the clean bill that Senator SHAHEEN—now the ranking member—and I had, has the funding for Homeland Security that Homeland Security says it needs and we have arrived at on a bipartisan basis.

If in fact we are allowed to bring up a clean bill, we have agreed on the money. There is no dispute over the money. We have looked very carefully at it. We worked on a bipartisan basis. We worked on a bicameral basis. We are ready to go. What will slow us down is if we get into an intense debate on immigration and riders to try to stop the activities of President Obama.

I strongly recommend to my colleagues: Do not play politics with the security of the United States of America. We were all horror stricken at what happened in Paris. We are repulsed at what is going on with ISIL. We are very concerned about lone-wolf attacks. We worry—and the chair of the authorizing committee on Homeland Security in the House has said: They are coming here, they are coming here, they are on their way. We have got to be ready. Well, one of the ways we have got to be ready is to make sure the resources in Homeland Security are funded and that they are not worried about a shutdown, showdown, slamdown politics over a fight on immigration.

Should we have a discussion on immigration? You bet. Should we even have an outright robust debate on it? I am all for it. But leave Homeland Security alone. Pass the money bill. If you disagree with the money, argue over that. But if you want to fight over immigration policy, that is another debate for another day in another way.

The Nation faces growing threats where Americans are endangered at home and abroad. Terrorists are threatening us with bombs and guns, and lone wolves in Ottawa, organized radicals in Paris, cyber criminals with backing from nation states and organized crime.

In terms of the Secret Service, we have the need to reform the Secret Service. We have fence jumpers at the White House, drones landing on the White House lawn.

In the face of these threats, the Republican majority's response is to hold the funding of Homeland Security up to pick a fight with the President over immigration. Uncertainty undermines security. Let's give the Agency certainty of funding.

We are 4 months into the fiscal year. Another continuing funding resolution would be the fifth continuing resolution. That is no way to run an agency so big, so complicated.

Senator COATS and Senator Landrieu and our House colleagues worked so well to come up with the bill. They provide resources for DHS, with the total funding of \$39.7 billion, an increase of over \$400 million above the fiscal year 2014. We could pass that today. We could pass it on Monday, we could pass it on Tuesday.

All of my Democratic colleagues and I wrote a letter to Senator McCONNELL asking him to schedule an immediate vote on a clean vote on Homeland Security. Well, let's see where we go on that.

What we have here, the clean bill offered by Senator SHAHEEN—now the ranking member on the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Appropriations—and I have a compromise funding bill that gives certainty to the people who work on the front lines to secure the Nation, whether it is securing the border, whether it is building capacity to meet agricultural and biological threats, whether it is replacing aging nuclear detection equipment, also helping our Coast Guard build their national security cutter so the Coast Guard can protect us against drug runners, pirates, terrorists.

More than any other specific increase, enacting a clean Homeland Security bill shows the Congress and the Nation value. We do value security, and we value the men and women who work every day to provide us with that security. Uncertainty jeopardizes security. We value them.

I urge my colleagues to put their money where their mouths are to enact a clean homeland security bill, and not to get into this whole debate with immigration.

I look forward—as we wrap up the debate on the Keystone Pipeline, we then take up Homeland Security and we take up a clean bill.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. BOOZMAN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator withhold?

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I would say to the Senator from Arkansas, my time was delayed. I hope I have not slowed the Senator down this morning. I didn't realize you were here.

Mr. BOOZMAN. No, No. I thank the Senator. Everything is fine. We appreciate the Senator, as always.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

HONORING LIEUTENANT COLONEL STEVE GRAY, RETIRED

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I wish to take a few moments to honor a true champion of veterans, retired Lt. Col. Steve Gray, who is set to retire from public service at the end of this month after nearly 16 years of helping his fellow veterans in Arkansas.

Since I came to Washington 13 years ago, Steve has served on my staff advocating for the needs of servicemembers and veterans across the Nation.

He has been a trusted aide whose reputation in Arkansas's veterans community is second to none. His passion and advocacy has resulted in better service offerings at veterans facilities across Arkansas. It is reflected in the lives that he has helped make better by solving an individual's problems at the VA.

If Steve was able to track down military medals a veteran earned but never received, those medals weren't just dropped in the mail. Steve would criss-cross the State, personally delivering them, dressed in his Air Force blues, and present them with the stories of the veteran's time in service.

A veteran himself, Steve served honorably in the Air Force as a tactical air controller, with assignments as director of operations and commander in Virginia, Vietnam, California, Utah, Florida, Colorado, Kansas, and Iceland.

He also served as national director for the National Guard recruiting, retention, and advertising at the Pentagon. His final assignment before retiring with the rank of lieutenant colonel was in Germany where he served as an adviser to the commander and chief of the Air Force in Europe.

Along with the work he does in an official capacity, Steve is active in a number of veterans service organizations, including the American Legion and the Wounded Warrior Program.

He has served as vice president of the Arkansas Council of Military Officers Association of America.

I am excited for Steve as he embarks on the next chapter of his life, but we are losing a fantastic advocate for Arkansas veterans. However, I know that my staff will continue to provide the best possible service to Arkansas's veterans as we have the blueprint on how to do it right, thanks to Steve. He has literally set the gold standard on how to deliver for veterans.

I know also that in retirement Steve does not mean to fade from sight. Steve is not the slowing-down type of personality. Certainly he will take some time to travel with his wife Sharon in their retired life. But along with the relaxation, Steve has grand plans to travel the country singing at veterans retirement homes, and he intends to stay active with the Arkansas Veterans Coalition. This is his calling, his passion, and I am quite certain Steve will continue to work with the veterans community for years to come.

Thank you, Steve, for your service in uniform, your dedication to your fellow veterans, and most of all thank you for your friendship.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROUND). The senior Senator from South Dakota.

HELPING THE MIDDLE CLASS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, last week President Obama came over to Congress to deliver his annual State of the Union Address. His speech focused heavily on something Republicans have