

in Paris. The fact that four Jews were killed at a kosher supermarket, it is just random.

It is dangerous for our government leaders to reach such a conclusion and for us to be operating as we make a determination of how to proceed next in the war on terror to reach the kind of conclusions the President, his spokespersons, and the State Department are reaching.

The Islamic State, the organization the perpetrators of the Paris attack claim allegiance to, has made a point to persecute various ethnic and religious minorities. The denial of anti-minority or anti-Semitic motivations in this case gives me hesitation about whether the President understands the true nature of the threat we now face. This comes in the context of a report that the administration is soon to present to Congress for approval an authorization for the use of military force against Islamic State fighters.

Authorizing a war is a decision that should be made with the fullest of information and the most complete understanding possible. The Obama administration should be doing everything it can to clearly describe the threat our country faces—in fact, that people around the globe face—and a strategy that will be employed under this potential authorization to use force. If we don't know who we are fighting, how can we have a strategy to prevent the death and destruction those enemies will cause? The stakes are way too high to operate under anything but a clear understanding of the significant challenges our country faces. It makes no sense to describe something different than reality.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S DENTAL HEALTH MONTH

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize February as National Children's Dental Health Month. Every year since 1981 we have acknowledged the importance of children's dental health and worked to ensure that all children have access to proper oral health. As former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop reminded us, "There is no health without oral health."

Today tooth decay is the single most common chronic childhood disease—5 times more common than asthma, 4 times more common than early childhood obesity, and 20 times more common than diabetes. Despite the fact that tooth decay can be prevented, nearly half of all 5-year-olds have experienced tooth decay.

Left untreated, tooth decay can not only destroy a child's teeth and health but also have a severe negative impact on a child's quality of life. Because children with severe tooth decay are frequently in constant pain, they are often unable to learn, play, or interact

with others. Recent studies have shown that children with poor oral health are nearly three times more likely to miss school due to dental pain, and children reporting recent toothaches are four times more likely to have lower grade point averages than peers without dental pain.

Good oral health is essential for our children to thrive. It is simply unacceptable that 16.5 million children are denied basic dental care each year. The health and well-being of every child depends on access to affordable care for all of his or her health needs, including dental services.

Tooth decay and oral health problems also disproportionately affect children from low-income families and minorities. According to the National Institutes of Health, about 80 percent of dental disease in children is concentrated in 25 percent of the population, and children from poor families face an inordinately high barrier in receiving dental care. To these children, the consequences of poor health care can be devastating.

Many have heard me speak before, including on the floor of the Senate, about the tragic loss of Deamonte Driver, a 12-year-old Prince George's County resident who died in February of 2007. Deamonte's death was particularly traumatic because it was entirely preventable. It is outrageous that only a few years ago a young boy died in our country because his family was unable to find a dentist to remove an infected tooth. By the time he was evaluated at the Children's Hospital emergency room, the infection had spread to Deamonte's brain. After multiple surgeries and a lengthy hospital stay, he passed away.

This was a tragic loss of life that was completely preventable, and a waste of terrible resources. A person's life, hundreds of thousands of dollars, and all it took was \$80 in dental care to save his life.

I recently heard another story that gives me both hope in the future and strength and resolve to guarantee that all Americans have access to proper dental care. Ronald shared his story at the 2-day Mission of Mercy Health Equity Festival at the University of Maryland, where he waited 15 hours at the charity clinic to have a tooth pulled that had been troubling him for 2 years. Prior to the charity clinic, Ronald had been living with two choices: endure increasingly worse pain or go into debt to pay for dental care. A working man, Ronald had spent \$800—his entire life savings—to get a tooth fixed in 2012, but it continued to bother him. He recently paid a dentist for relief. The dentist suggested a more expensive procedure, but Ronald was unable to pay the high cost. So it was just a bandaid, he said. Now he is behind with his landlord and trying to catch up.

Ronald talked, however, with great pride about his 9-year-old soccer-playing daughter, who waves away candy

and drinks water instead of soda. "I didn't know about oral health when I was her age," he said. Like many other children in Maryland, Ronald's daughter has access to dental care through our State's Children's Health Insurance Program. She has coverage for pediatric dental, she learns about oral health in her school, and she is taking steps to make sure she has proper oral health. She has coverage if she needs to see a dentist.

Thanks to CHIP, we now have the highest number in history of children who are insured with medical and dental insurance. CHIP provides affordable, comprehensive health coverage to more than 8 million children from working families—people who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but cannot afford private insurance. CHIP also provides funding for school-based health centers that are critical to providing dental services to at-risk children. I have visited these schools and have seen firsthand how effective they are in delivering dental care to our children. However, if Congress does not act to reauthorize funding for CHIP before September 30, the program's funding will run out and millions of children will again be at risk.

I am very proud that my State of Maryland has been recognized as a national leader in pediatric dental health. In the 2010 Pew Center report on the state of children's dental health, Maryland earned an A and was the only State to meet seven of the eight policy benchmarks for addressing children's dental health needs.

In addition, in the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, every plan except one includes pediatric dental coverage as part of the comprehensive medical plan, so families don't have to pay a separate premium for pediatric dental coverage and they don't have an additional out-of-pocket cost.

In the Affordable Care Act, we included pediatric dental as part of the essential benefits; therefore, every family now has access to affordable pediatric coverage. That is primarily offered to most of the people in our State through a universal policy, meaning that they don't have to pay a separate premium or copayment.

Dental diseases are chronic, progressive, and destructive over time. Yet too often oral health care is overlooked or ignored. We have made great progress, but there are still millions of children in our country without dental care. We must continue to work to ensure that all Americans have access to both medical and dental care, as no citizen of our country should ever have to choose between going into debt and receiving proper health care.

The health care system was not there for Ronald, but thanks to CHIP and the Affordable Care Act, it has the potential to help his daughter stay healthy for years to come.

Let's pledge to do more for our children, starting with a reauthorization of

the Children's Health Insurance Program—CHIP—including the guaranteed pediatric dental benefits.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY FUNDING

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, we are in a countdown of sorts right now, and it is one I am deeply concerned about. On February 27, the funding for the Department of Homeland Security of our country runs out, and that is 17 days from now. Only 17 days from now, our Border and Customs and air traffic controllers, air security, Coast Guard—all of those agencies and all of the people involved in protecting us from the terrorist threats all around us—will lose their funding in one way or the other if we don't act.

On Sunday morning in Michigan, we had a reminder of the threat that exists within our borders. A man crashed his truck into a U.S. Coast Guard station in Grand Haven on the west side of Michigan. Then he assaulted members of the Coast Guard, which is, by the way, a Department of Homeland Security facility and will be affected by what is going to happen. The man claimed to have explosives in his truck. Fortunately, that turned out not to be true. Still, local officials initially called it "an act of domestic terrorism."

Department of Homeland Security officials have been working alongside other Federal agencies and local law enforcement to investigate. My colleagues can imagine how people on the west side of Michigan are feeling right now and how members of the Coast Guard are feeling about this.

This is the work the men and women of the Department of Homeland Security do every day in every part of Michigan, in every part of our country, in every part of our cities, including the District of Columbia, and in the communities we all represent. Frankly, people are scratching their heads right now about what in the world is going on.

I appreciate the fact there are disagreements with the President regard-

ing immigration policy. Certainly, we can debate that. We can discuss it. The Republican leader can bring up the issue of immigration at any time on the floor of the Senate. But that should not be tied to whether we fund the Department of Homeland Security for our country. Homeland security funding should not be held hostage to what I view as the politics of the moment on immigration. We may have a disagreement in terms of immigration issues, but we should not have any disagreement about the need to fully fund the Department of Homeland Security.

We rely on the Department of Homeland Security to provide our transportation security at shipping ports and at all of our airports. We all go back and forth every single week. Millions of Americans are counting on the fact that people at our airports—people we see and people we don't see—are keeping us safe from attacks—the passengers, the cargo.

Michigan is a border State. We are the largest northern border crossing in the country for goods, services, and people coming back and forth from Detroit to Windsor. It is the men and women of the Department of Homeland Security—Border and Customs—who are keeping our borders safe every day.

We rely on the Department of Homeland Security to protect us against nuclear attacks, chemical attacks, and cyber attacks every day. In recent years, major American financial institutions have been attacked by hackers. I have been in a situation as a customer of a major company getting that notice in the mail about my credit card. Millions of Americans have been in that situation. We expect that we are going to make sure we are protecting people's information, their financial security, the financial security of businesses. That is what is done through the Department of Homeland Security.

Seventeen days from now, if we don't act to fully fund the Department of Homeland Security, we will see the funding for that Department stop.

Chinese hackers targeted the U.S. Transportation Department Command, which directs the global movement of U.S. military forces. Hackers have gone after America's transportation and communications infrastructure over and over again.

This is very serious. This is very serious. This is not about politics or differences of opinion with the United States or having some leverage by holding funding up in order to get something else that group of people

wants to get. This is about whether we are going to straight-up fund the security operations of our country. We have terrorists and terror threats all around us. Look at the globe—all around us. This is not the time to play politics with Homeland Security funding.

Last year we passed, with a huge majority, a bipartisan immigration bill. Immigration deserves a debate. There will be differences of opinion. I still think there is a broad bipartisan coalition to do comprehensive reform that makes sense for everyone, makes sense for America. But this is not the time to say: It is either my way or the highway. Either I get the changes I want or I will say to the President of the United States that he is wrong, that he is playing politics, whatever it is, and I am going to hold up the security of our country in order to do it.

I think most people in Washington are saying: What in the world is going on here? Terror threats are all around us, and we are 17 days away from a shutdown of the Department of Homeland Security. This makes absolutely no sense to me. Frankly, we can do better than that as an institution, as the U.S. Senate. We can do better in Congress than constantly having these roller coasters up and down and threats of government shutdowns. We have seen it before. We are now seeing the possibility of it again.

Seventeen days from now, if Homeland Security is shut down, if we aren't funding our border, cockpits, airport security, ports, the Coast Guard, and all the other things that keep us safe, there is going to be a big party. Do you know who is going to throw that party? The enemies of America. The terrorists who want very much to have the opportunity to attack our country. That makes absolutely no sense.

Let's come together this week before we leave. We are not in session next week. We can get this done. Let's just pass the Homeland Security budget and get on with important debates on other topics that we all care about. I hope we can do that and get this done as soon as possible.

I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 9:30 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 6:18 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, February 11, 2015, at 9:30 a.m.