

admiration and respect for police officers everywhere.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr. REID. Madam President, I join the Republican leader in recognizing the contributions of law enforcement officers all around this country. I am sorry that they have such a tough job, and I don't think we appreciate them enough. So I appreciate what the Republican leader said. In Nevada, we too have had our share of these awful instances where these men and women are killed needlessly.

ZIKA VIRUS AND NOMINATION OF MERRICK GARLAND

Mr. REID. Madam President, what we know today is that the Zika virus was first discovered in 1947 in Uganda. It was first detected in monkeys, but in 1947 they also learned that the mosquito was now carrying this same virus the monkeys had. Initially, we didn't know or hear much about Zika. But we have heard plenty now, and we are going to hear a lot more.

Researchers named the virus Zika because that is where the mosquito carrying the virus was discovered, in the Zika Forest of Uganda, as I mentioned. The Ugandan term "zika" means "overgrown." So these mosquitoes with this virus were discovered in an overgrown forest in Uganda. Now, seven decades later, Zika is an international emergency, and countries are scrambling to address the problems created by this mosquito that bites. What I have learned is that there is more than one type of mosquito; there are two.

Already Zika-carrying mosquitoes have transmitted the disease to American citizens in Puerto Rico and other United States territories. Soon, mosquitoes carrying this virus will be biting and infecting people in the continental United States. That is not hyperbole. It is going to happen. Zika-carrying mosquitoes won't be limited to the gulf coast.

Madam President, look at this map. You can't see it very well on this, but you can see the discoloration here, the original coloring that we have. We have the blue, and we have the orange and the gray. Now, I was really surprised. I thought this would really be in the subtropical climates here in the United States, in the southern part of our country. I thought that is where it would be, but you can see that is not the case.

Nevada is here, and Las Vegas is here. There are over 2 million people living there. It is all over the United

States. Boulder, CO, is up here. Puerto Rico and Hawaii are here.

This map is from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and it shows the estimated range of the two types of Zika-carrying mosquitoes. Areas of this map, as I have indicated, are three in color and cover 39 States. Most of these States, as I have indicated, don't have subtropical weather. Nevada, Colorado, Wisconsin, Ohio, Kentucky, New Hampshire, and Maine are listed.

Health officials are desperate to stop Zika, this devastating virus that has been around so long but it was not known to carry all the many problems it now carries. It causes birth defects and other deadly conditions.

Last week, a report on NPR described what Zika does to the brain as it begins to grow. This is one condition:

As the brain . . . starts to grow, it creates pressure, which pushes on the skull and causes it to grow. But if something stops brain growth—such as [the Zika] virus—pressure on the skull drops. And the skull can collapse down onto the brain.

Two weeks ago we had people come to explain this to my caucus, and they described these skulls that just collapse. But Zika isn't only linked to birth defects. As I have indicated, the virus is also associated with a nervous system disorder that can result in paralysis, among other problems.

Yet, in spite of all the devastating impacts of Zika, I am sorry to say, the Republicans in Congress don't see this virus as an urgent issue. Months ago, President Obama requested almost \$2 billion to fight Zika, and for the same months the Republicans have refused to give the money America needs to fight this crisis.

The best time to deal with any crisis is before it is here, but Republicans have dragged their feet. We should have passed an emergency spending bill months ago—months ago. We need to address Zika in the territories and give States and local governments the resources they are begging for.

Last Thursday, appropriators filed an amendment that would provide \$1.1 billion in Zika funding. That simply is not enough. This isn't about negotiating an arbitrary number made up by lawmakers. Our public health officials have made it clear they need that money.

Senate Republicans are giving our government half of what it needs to fight this ravaging virus. This is beyond reckless. House Republicans are even doing less. The chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations last week said that Republicans are working on a Zika funding measure, but what House Republicans are proposing is even less than about half of the already low \$1.1 billion amendment from Senate appropriators.

Republicans are trying to haggle as if this is some sort of bidding war. That is not how Congress should react to a potentially disastrous health crisis. We know what is going on in Puerto Rico.

We know. Because of Republicans' refusal to lift a finger to help fight the Zika crisis, the administration was forced to use Ebola funds in order to fight Zika now. They had to take about \$510 million that was set aside specifically for Ebola.

Two years ago, America was afraid of Ebola. Ebola is still a killer, and we invested in supporting public health infrastructures to prevent future outbreaks like the one we saw, as I indicated, 2 years ago. We need to replenish these monies so we can continue to work on vaccines and other things, but Republicans are standing in the way.

It is really a sad commentary on Republicans that when asked for emergency funding to protect millions of Americans, they respond by offering half of what is needed. This is in a spending bill, and then we have to go to the House and have a conference. In the meantime, people are begging for this money. Republicans should be ashamed that we aren't doing everything in our power to protect the American people from this virus now. We should have an emergency spending bill on the floor now. If it were a flood or a fire that occurred, we would have been here. It is just too bad because this is a crisis that is already here. It is not an emerging crisis. It is here.

Madam President, last week, the Republican leader came to the floor and here is what he said: "We have elections in this country right on time, and that is not an excuse not to do our work."

Again: "We have elections in this country right on time, and that is not an excuse not to do our work."

That is what Senator MCCONNELL said. So I say to my friend from Kentucky: I agree. Elections are no excuse not to do our work. So Senate Republicans should do their job and give Supreme Court nominee Merrick Garland a hearing and a vote.

There is clearly no question that Merrick Garland is experienced and qualified to be a nominee. He is the nominee, and he has the expertise to go along with what a Supreme Court nominee should have. Throughout his decades as a prosecutor and judge, Mr. Garland has proven himself to be committed to the rule of law and following it. That is more than I can say for my Republican colleagues who, by refusing to consider this nominee, are rejecting their constitutional duties.

The Republican leader needs to practice what he preaches. He says that elections shouldn't interfere with our Senate duties. He should prove it. The Republican Senators should prove that. Put aside Presidential elections, put aside Donald Trump, put aside all the phony excuses, and give Merrick Garland the consideration he deserves. Study Judge Garland's questionnaire; it is here. Analyze his record; it is here. Give him a hearing and send his nomination to the floor now.

As the Republican leader put it, "We have elections in this country right on

time, and that is not an excuse not to do our work.” That is absolutely right. I would ask the Republicans to do their job.

Madam President, on the Zika matter, I would add the following: “The news from the House virtually guarantees that the Republican Congress will provide too little aid, too late to address the looming Zika crisis.”

The way things are going around here, the appropriations bills are not going to be finished until right before the end of this fiscal year, late September. The crisis will long have arrived and we will be talking about cases that exist in the continental United States. It is wrong to wait.

I don't see anyone here on the floor, so I would ask the Chair to announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 4:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The assistant Democratic leader.

ZIKA VIRUS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, 3 months ago President Barack Obama asked this Congress for funding to address a public health emergency: combating the Zika Virus. I am pleased that this week, 14 weeks after his request, we are going to respond. We are not responding in full. The President asked for \$1.9 billion to address this serious public health challenge. We are not responding without some theatrics and posturing first, but we are going to vote on some amendments this week, and it is about time.

It has been 14 weeks since representatives from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health testified at the Senate Appropriations Committee on the dire need for immediate action to combat the Zika virus.

I visited the Centers for Disease Control about 14 weeks ago. By then, they had been able to verify that the tissue samples from miscarriages and other serious health problems coming in from Brazil were linked to the Zika Virus. So there was no question that these mosquitoes carrying this virus had serious public health consequences—so serious that the Centers for Disease Control dedicated 1,000 staffers to deal with this issue. That was about 12 or 14 weeks ago.

The President used his authority to come to Congress and say: We have a public health emergency; treat it like

it is an emergency. Here we are 14 weeks later getting around to discussing it.

When I think back in times of American history when Congress has been called on to respond to an emergency, there have been amazing examples where partisanship was set aside and people said: In the interest of America, we need to act and act now. Whether we are talking about mobilizing for a war, whether we are talking about responding to terrorism, we have done it. We can do it. This time we have failed. We have failed for 14 weeks. In that period of time, 1,200 Americans in 44 States, Washington, DC, and 3 U.S. territories, including over 110 pregnant women, have contracted Zika. Six more have contracted Guillain-Barre, an autoimmune disorder that can cause paralysis and death. Recently, the first Zika-caused death and the first Zika-related microcephaly cases were reported in Puerto Rico. In my State of Illinois, 16 people have tested positive for Zika, including at least 3 pregnant women.

Over the past few months, we have learned more about Zika and how dangerous it can be. We now know it is carried by two types of mosquitoes. We now know it is linked to serious neurological damage and birth defects in children. We now know it can be sexually transmitted. We also know that the mosquitoes carrying the Zika virus thrive in the warm summer months, which is why this action should have been taken long ago and must be taken this week.

The best way to fight a public health threat such as Zika is to have a strong, stable public health infrastructure in place. That is what the President asked for. That means reliable and stable funding year after year.

Our public health agencies have to be viewed as the first line of defense, just as we view the Pentagon as the first line of defense when it comes to military and terrorist threats. Our public health agencies are the first line of defense when we are speaking of Ebola, the Zika virus, and a variety of other challenges that could literally threaten the health and lives of innocent Americans.

We must ensure robust and stable funding for agencies like the Centers for Disease Control. These invasive problems can pop up at any time. We can't rally to each and every occurrence after it happens; we have to be prepared. The Centers for Disease Control is not only the best, it is the best in the world, but it cannot operate without adequate funding.

The National Institutes of Health is working on a vaccine right now to protect all of us from the Zika virus. That is the answer, but it takes time—a year. We should have been moving on it sooner.

We must provide critical resources to the Food and Drug Administration. Their reviewers are responsible for ensuring that any Zika treatments or

vaccines are safe and effective, and in order to ensure the safety of those vaccines and treatments, they have to be clinically tested.

For years we have heard congressional Republicans rail against Federal spending and even embrace the notion of a sequester—a blind across-the-board cut. Case in point: Over the past few months, we have heard Republicans protest, stall, and push back on providing funding to help combat the Zika virus. There have been a variety of excuses for their delay, but the outcome has always been the same: We have lost time in responding to this public health emergency.

For years, those of us on this side of the aisle have been arguing that this approach—one of starving funding and endless delays—is shortsighted and irresponsible. Yes, we must be good stewards of the taxpayers' dollars, but I would argue that there is no better use of the taxpayers' dollars than investments in public health—investments in the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control, and the Food and Drug Administration. These are investments that prepare our Nation for the unforeseen, such as Zika or Ebola, but they are also investments that help us prepare for the foreseen situations that Americans face every day, such as Alzheimer's, cancer, Parkinson's, and diabetes. That is why I introduced the American Cures Act—legislation that would provide our Federal health research agencies reliable and robust funding increases every year into the future.

We are not going to win a war against Zika, Ebola, Alzheimer's, or cancer if our response is tepid, delayed, watered down, or subject to the whims of political fate. Big budget cuts make a good talking point in a speech somewhere, but the results can be devastating.

I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues on the Senate Appropriations Committee to find a path forward to address the funding of these critical Federal health agencies. There is more to do, and we must do it together. If we don't do it together, we will pay a heavy price.

This week we will take up the issue. We will be voting on three Zika-related amendments this week. The first, offered by Senator NELSON of Florida, is one that I fully support. It would fulfill the President's request by providing the \$1.9 billion in needed funding to ensure an immediate and comprehensive response to Zika. We need to treat this public health emergency like a public health emergency. Senator NELSON's amendment would ensure that the CDC has the money they need to support States in conducting surveillance, vector control, emergency communications, and research. It would ensure that the National Institutes of Health has the money to develop this vaccine, and it would ensure that USAID has the money they need to build up a global health response to Zika.