

get anything done. They know that is a really tough sell. They know the only chance to make it work is by slow-walking bills they actually support.

Democrats don't actually want to be on record opposing our troops before Memorial Day, so they support the bill in public then bog it down in private and cover with one embarrassing excuse after the next: We haven't read it. It was written in secret. The dog ate it. It is just embarrassing.

As the chairman of the Armed Services Committee said, "We need to move forward with this legislation. We need to move forward with it now, for the sake of our men and women who are serving and defending this Nation and putting their lives on the line." He is right.

So here is an idea. How about Democrats skip talking about doing their jobs at a press conference and actually do their jobs instead? They can follow the lead of this Republican majority—a majority that continues to do its job—and show how important things can be accomplished for the American people as a result. So no more needless delays, no more embarrassing excuses, and no more blocking benefits for the men and women of our military. Let's work together to get this done. We have already seen what is possible in the Republican-led Senate when we do.

THE REPUBLICAN-LED SENATE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, so much has changed since the American people elected a new Republican majority to get the Senate back to work. Americans have told us to break through the gridlock and get the Senate focused on real solutions again. We have, and we are.

This doesn't mean our colleagues across the aisle will always cooperate; we have certainly seen an unfortunate example of that this particular week. But what is clear is how the underlying fundamentals have changed: Committees are now functioning; legislative processes are now working; we now continue to get important things done for the people who sent us here.

It all started with a simple philosophy: Give Senators and the people they represent more of a say in the legislative process, and they will take more of a stake in the legislative outcome, regardless of party. So we did, and the results have been encouraging. This is how we have been able to transform gridlock into progress and dysfunction into solutions.

To give an example of what I mean, we recently took as many rollcall votes on one bill, the Energy Policy Modernization Act, as the Senate took in all—all—of 2014 under the previous majority. It is remarkable how far we have come in such a short time.

Consider what we were able to achieve for our constituents in 2015 alone. Some said Congress could never break old traditions of short-term fixes and patches and punts, but we repeat-

edly proved them wrong with meaningful and substantial reforms instead.

That is certainly true of the new education reform law we passed. It replaced No Child Left Behind with "the largest devolution of federal control to the states in a quarter-century." It is a hugely important reform that empowers parents and prevents Washington from imposing Common Core. That is a notable conservative achievement.

The same could be said of the decisive action we took to enact permanent tax relief for families and small businesses or to bring an end to a job-killing energy embargo from the 1970s or to place on President Obama's desk a bill that would finally end ObamaCare's cycle of broken promises and pain for the middle class.

We secured pay raises for our troops, help for our veterans, and hope for the victims of human trafficking. We passed a landmark cyber security law that will help safeguard America's personal information. We achieved the most significant transportation solution in years, one that will finally allow us to rebuild roads, bridges, and crumbling infrastructure without raising taxes by a penny.

We got a lot done for the American people in 2015. We are continuing to get a lot done for the American people in 2016.

In just a few months, the Republican-led Senate has passed legislation providing real solutions on a range of issues: Addressing the prescription opioid and heroin epidemic that is ravaging our country with critical, comprehensive legislation; modernizing American energy with the first broad energy bill since the Bush administration; improving airport security and consumer protections with the most pro-passenger, pro-security FAA reauthorization in years; deterring North Korea's growing aggression with comprehensive sanctions; keeping the Internet open and accessible by permanently banning government from taxing your access to the Internet; supporting American manufacturing by reducing tariffs that make it harder for American businesses to compete and to grow; defending American innovation and entrepreneurship protections against the theft of intellectual property; and just this week, combating sexual assault and human trafficking with new protections for victims and enhanced tools for law enforcement.

These are just some of the things we have been able to accomplish the past few months alone. But we are not finished. None of this would have been possible without functioning committees and capable leaders to guide them. Those chairs often choose to focus on ideas where Republicans and Democrats can agree, not just where the two parties disagree, and we have gotten some really important legislation passed as a result.

We have seen some truly notable anecdotes, too, like the fact that the Finance Committee has approved more

bills to date in the 114th Congress "than any single Congress since 1980"; like the fact that we got the appropriations process started this year at the earliest point in the modern budgeting era—in other words, in about 40 years; like the fact that we passed the first of these three appropriations bills at the earliest point in the modern budgeting era as well.

It is good to see the appropriations process finally getting back on track after so many years of dysfunction. It is incredibly important for the Senate, it is definitely healthy for the democratic process, and it will certainly allow us to address a variety of funding issues in a more thoughtful and deliberative way.

Take Zika, for instance. Combating the spread of the Zika virus has been a priority for both parties, so Republicans and Democrats deliberated and forged a compromise in committee. Senators debated that compromise out here on the floor and voted to pass it. Now Members of the Senate and the House are preparing the process of going to conference so we can get this measure down to the President. That is how you get good legislation to the President. That is what is known as doing your job around here.

Of course, it will not be easy to get the appropriations process back on track completely after so many years of dysfunction, but we are committed to doing all we can. We have clearly demonstrated strong and steady progress already, and that is something that benefits both parties. It means more Members get a say. It means more scrutiny is brought to bear on the funds that are spent. It means more regular order and more of a Senate that functions even better for everyone.

I am proud of all we have accomplished in such a short time. We have put the Senate back to work, we have continued to get our jobs done, and that has allowed us to pass important legislation for the American people who, after all, sent us all here.

I thank Senators from both sides who have worked with us to restore this Chamber to a place of higher purpose. I know there is more we can accomplish together, so let's keep working to ensure that we do.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

ISSUES BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is not necessary to go into great detail about the past, but it is important to talk about the past so we understand what is going on now and what the future holds.

The biggest change coming from the Republican majority is what the Democratic minority has done. We have cooperated. We are not in the business of

filibustering everything. During the first 6 years of the Obama administration, the Republicans initiated more than 600 filibusters. They filibustered everything. As an example, we tried to do the Energy bill for 5 years. Each time we tried, it was brought to a standstill by the Republicans.

We have a Republican bill that we worked on. It is the same bill we did with Senator SHAHEEN in the past with some additions to it. What happened to that bill is that it has gone to the dark hole in the House. They have stripped everything out of it that we had done. It is gone. We have done our utmost to cooperate.

For my friend to talk about this Republican Senate that has done so much, he would have tremendous difficulty finding any one thing that we didn't try to do—any one thing. I talked about energy. It doesn't matter what it was, it was filibustered—I repeat—more than 600 times. The record will never be broken, I hope, as it has been a real detriment to our country and the U.S. Senate. For my friend to come and talk about how great the Senate is, is really absurd.

I don't know if he is taking the pages from Donald Trump—if you say enough that is wrong, people will say: Well, maybe it is not that bad. This Republican Senate is a do-nothing Senate. He talked about opioid legislation. There isn't anyone—not anyone from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, any of the public health agencies around the country—who thinks what happened in the Senate helped them. Why? Because there is no money. They shuffled things around. There is no money. Opioid legislation needs money. They have refused to fund it.

I don't know how long it has been, but it has been at least 4 months since the people of Flint, MI, came to the realization that they had been poisoned—their children had been poisoned with lead. We tried so many different ways to get the Republicans to help that beleaguered city, but, no, not a chance. The people of Flint, MI, are still drinking and bathing with bottled water. The children are still suffering the awfulness of lead. It is so detrimental to little brains.

He talks about the Zika virus. How sad that he would think that giving no money to this program is a good deal. I will talk about that in a little more detail. The Zika virus is extremely serious. It could affect as many as 39 of our United States. There is no money. The President has said, and I will say right now, we should not go on recess while there is no money for Zika. The way things are set up under his great plan, the Zika virus will be funded sometime this fall. The mosquitoes will be dead or gone home—wherever that home is—by that time, and the American people will be infected.

There was a mistake made by his staff dealing with renewable tax credits, which is so important to the Presiding Officer's State and other States,

and there have been efforts made to correct that mistake. That hasn't been done yet.

The House of Representatives, led by the Republicans, can't pass a simple budget. This great Senate that he talks about couldn't pass a budget. We don't have a budget. We have no district court nominations. We have emergencies all over the country because there are too many people in trouble who want to litigate, and there are no judges to do that. No, we are not going to move on judges because Barack Obama, in their mind, is an illegitimate President, and they have created Donald Trump—what has happened the last 7½ years, the Republicans opposing anything that President Obama tried to do. They have created Donald Trump. They are not only failing us on district court nominations, circuit court nominations, we have a Supreme Court that has been bare. We don't have a full complement of Supreme Court Justices. For my friend to stand here and say we are doing our job is absurd.

If he wants to talk about the Defense authorization bill, we will be happy to do that. Here is a quote from MITCH MCCONNELL, which is basically what today's vote on the Defense authorization bill is all about: "The Defense authorization bill requires 4 to 5 weeks to debate." That is what he said. Now he is changing his tune. I am not saying it is 4 to 5 weeks, but this bill is almost 2,000 pages, which we received the night before last at 5 o'clock. Shouldn't Members and their staff be able to read these 2,000 pages before we dive into litigating and offering amendments?

I will say, again, the chairman of the committee, the senior Senator from Arizona, has said: I am going to violate the budget agreement we have by bringing in \$18 billion more for defense. The budget agreement says he can't do that unless you equally fund non-defense. Shouldn't we take a look at that? Shouldn't we take a look at a 2,000-page bill—actually, 1,660 pages, not counting the annex that came on board Wednesday night as part of the bill? Shouldn't we take a look at that? There are all kinds of earmarks, little goodies in that bill. We need to take a look at it. Is there anything wrong with that? I don't think so.

We look forward to considering this legislation. We did much better than the Republicans. If you want to go back, another little insight into history—they not only fought going onto the bill, once we went on it, they wouldn't let us get off the bill. That is not where we are coming from.

We have a lot of things to do. We have to do TSCA. I hope he would find time in his busy schedule, his great accomplishments, to work on a bill we have been trying to complete. I worked on this bill for the first time 28 years ago in the Senate. I was chairman of the subcommittee in the Senate. I did my best to take on the chemical indus-

try, and I am sorry to report they won and America lost, but now we have an opportunity to have the American people winning for a change. What is the holdup in doing that bill? It is a conference report.

Four weeks ago, I stood on the floor and said we shouldn't go on break without having giving President Obama the \$1.9 billion he needs to fight the Zika virus. Four weeks later—we are still off next week—we are not going to worry about those pesky mosquitoes. The Senate is going to recess for another week. We are going to come back for 4 weeks and then we are out for 7 weeks. This great plan of my friend, the Republican leader, is somewhat misleading. Anything he has been able to get done and tried to boast about are things they held us up from doing for 6 years.

Last Friday President Obama said we should not leave today without having given public health officials the resources they need to combat the spread of Zika in the United States. Researchers, doctors, and health officials—not only in the United States, all over the world—need this money. This money will be spent in America, but there will be a lot of effects around the world. There will be a lot of problems in Central and South America that we will be able to help. If we do it the right way, they can develop a vaccine at NIH, the Centers for Disease Control. They can't do it without money. Again, there is no money. They shift things around. They say they have a plan. Don't worry about Ebola, which was 18 months ago—a ravaging fear in the American people. It is still there, once that disease pops up again, that condition pops up again in Africa, because it infects Americans who are there. But they have taken most of the money from Ebola, and the House is going to take all of it in this great plan he has. They need this money. They need it to prepare for this public health threat, which is here.

To leave now without putting an emergency spending bill on the President's desk is the height of irresponsibility. No matter how you boast about that, that is a fact.

As was reported by the Washington Post this morning, the New England Journal of Medicine released findings from the study of the Zika virus. Here is what they found: Women infected with Zika early in their pregnancies may have as high as a 13-percent chance of having a baby with microcephaly. What is that? The brain doesn't grow. The skull caves in. It is a devastating birth defect, involving very small heads and incomplete development of the brain.

Mosquitoes have caused problems in the world for generations—many generations—but we have never had a report that the mosquito would transmit a virus that would cause 13 percent of pregnant women to have these deformed babies.

The Republican leader only needs to keep the Senate in session next week

so we can pass a stand-alone Zika funding bill that gives our country what it needs now, not this fall. We need to act before local transmission starts occurring in the continental United States. That is going to be soon. Late this fall will not do the trick. This fall is too late. It is time to act, not take a break. The Republican leader should not send the Senate out of session until we have done all we can to protect the American people from the threat of this horrible virus.

It doesn't take into consideration the other things we are just leaving: Flint, MI, opioids. There are so many things we are walking away from in this institution.

OBAMACARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am so happy to have my friend talk about ObamaCare. I am happy to have him talk about that because he is making himself not look very good, and that is a gross understatement. Yesterday the Commonwealth Fund released its fourth survey of ObamaCare. Here is what they found: Since the enactment of the Affordable Care Act, 28 million people have gained coverage either through marketplaces or Medicaid. In the last 3 years, the number of uninsured Americans have been reduced by 13 million people. Those are 13 million more people who have insurance now than they had 3 years ago, and 82 percent of American adults enrolled in private plans or government coverage said they were satisfied with their plans.

Those numbers are further evidence the Affordable Care Act is helping the American people. It is getting people insured, many for the first time in their lives. Yesterday a woman came to me and said: Thank goodness. I—a diabetic—have been able to buy insurance because of ObamaCare.

It is giving families important subsidies so they can afford the plan they need, and it is providing options, allowing Americans to cater their health insurance plans to their needs. Much has been made recently about premiums. My friend has made a big deal about premiums, especially by Republicans looking for any opening to spread misinformation, falsehoods. They love to come and talk about ObamaCare, how horrible it is for the American people. Allow me to set the record straight again. At this point, we are all looking at proposed increases. This, of course, is preliminary information.

Let's consider Arkansas as an example. I picked Arkansas because one of the Senators from Arkansas is usually presiding, and I want him to hear this. Three out of the four companies that offer policies on Arkansas' health insurance marketplace proposed high premium increases for their enrollees. All of these increases were hikes of at least 10 percent. Fortunately, for the people of Arkansas, the Affordable Care Act helps. For starters, the vast major-

ity of enrollees in Arkansas are protected from premium increases. Why? Because ObamaCare tax credits actually cap health insurance premiums for 85 percent of consumers. In Arkansas, 87 percent of consumers receive tax credits that help make coverage affordable; 62 percent of Arkansas enrollees had the option to select plans as low as \$75 per month after tax credits. There are other ObamaCare provisions that safeguard against these rates that are out of line. Thanks to a provision within the law, State leaders have the resources to conduct a thorough review of the proposed rate increases. In Arkansas' case, the State received \$9.2 million to study proposed premium increases. Now it is up to Arkansas' Governor and insurance commissioner to do the job and examine their rate proposals. State leaders have until August 23 to approve final rates for the 2017 exchange plans.

The Arkansas insurance commissioner, Allen Kerr, already made it clear that he and the Governor are opposed to the hikes. Governor Hutchinson is a well known, fine man. I served with his brother and him in Congress. His brother was in the Senate.

Allen Kerr said:

Governor Hutchinson and I do not believe there is substantive justification for these rate increases. For that reason, we expect to take action to deny the requested rate increases until there is sufficient justification to properly consider any rate increase.

Before we passed the Affordable Care Act, Americans in the individual insurance market were hit with double-digit health premium increases every year without any exception. Back then, if the insurance company said you need to pay more, you either paid up or lost your insurance. Consumers had no recourse. And they were charged more because they had an illness the previous year. They were charged more for all kinds of reasons. And insurance companies could deny covering certain conditions all together—one is if you were a woman.

Now that Americans have ObamaCare in their corner, insurers can no longer charge more because you are sick or deny coverage to someone who has a certain illness. All conditions are covered, period. When insurance companies want premium increases, States have resources to fight back just like Arkansas, and when consumers decide that a plan is no longer working, they can—and should—shop around. In fact, everyone should do all they can to ensure that they are getting the best deal possible. That is what these marketplaces are for—to give the American people options.

The Republican leader should be embarrassed by what he said this morning. For all this misinformation said on the Senate floor almost every day, the truth can't be hidden: The Affordable Care Act is keeping Americans insured and providing them options to find health coverage that meets their needs.

I say to my friend the Republican leader, that is why today America has the lowest uninsured rate in the history of the country. The uninsured rate is at 9.1 percent. That is the lowest rate ever. The facts are undeniable. The Affordable Care Act is working.

Will the Chair announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROUNDS). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 2943, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 469, S. 2943, a bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2017 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

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

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

WASTEFUL SPENDING

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I am back here for the 44th edition of "Waste of the Week." I am starting to enjoy this, and I hope someone else is, but what we don't enjoy is the fact that the government is wasting taxpayer money. We have been documenting this for 44 weeks now, and we have come up with a significant total that is approaching \$200 billion of waste.

People get up every morning, go to work—put in a hard-day's work if they have a job—try to save money so they can get the mortgage paid each month, get the insurance covered, get the gas tank filled up in the car, and hopefully save a little money for their kids' education. But every time they get a paycheck at the end of the week, they look at it and see deductions for this, that, and everything, such as State taxes, Federal taxes, sales taxes, excise taxes, such as the tax at the pump, and on and on it goes. You can't go to a grocery store, clothing store, or any retail store without getting a tax slapped on everything you buy. That money comes to Washington as a Federal tax, and at the very least, the taxpayer is due