

since the 1980s. It shows how far our relationship has come in recent decades. Mutual misgivings have given way to mutual benefits in both the economic and security spheres. We are now key trading partners. We are the two largest democracies in the world. Our relationship is an important one, and there are more benefits that can be shared from future cooperation.

Today's address by Prime Minister Modi provides an important opportunity for all involved—an opportunity to hear his perspective on India's economic growth and how he feels we can strengthen the strategic partnership between our countries, an opportunity to learn more about his ideas for pursuing areas of common ground and advancing shared interests, and an opportunity to better understand his view of the challenges currently facing India and his outlook for overcoming them.

We welcome Prime Minister Modi. We are interested in learning more about his vision, both for India and for the country's continued partnership with the United States in the years ahead.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority leader is recognized.

WELCOMING THE PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I join the Republican leader in welcoming the Prime Minister from India to America.

Mr. President, in my office I have a wonderful memento of my first meetings with Indians. I went to school at Utah State University in Logan, UT. It was so cold. My wife and I lived off campus, and we would drive a couple miles up a hill to the Utah State campus. Along the way, I would see Indian students walking to school. They were engineering students and agricultural students at the college. I would give them rides. I did that for a couple of years.

When it came time for me to graduate, one of the Indians I had gotten to know asked if Landra and I would be willing to stay over an extra day and they would make us a traditional Indian feast. We did that. It was a feast. They were dressed in their Indian garb. They had worked a lot on that food. It was the first Indian food we had eaten. We have eaten a lot of it since. It was a wonderful, warm occasion that we will always remember.

They gave us some presents, and with five children and moving quite a bit, most of those presents are history. I don't know what they were. But one that I have always protected is a little bone-carved statue of Gandhi that they gave me. He is in his regular clothes that we see him in. He has a staff in his hand like he had most of the time. It is finely carved. You can pull that staff out even today. It is a miracle that it

made it through my five children, but I have done everything I could to protect it. Now I have it in my office in a little glass enclosure, and I show my Indian guests that meaningful memento of mine.

The other reason I am going to have the opportunity in an hour or so to meet with the Prime Minister with Senator McCONNELL, the Speaker, and Leader PELOSI—I hope I have the opportunity to tell him of my fondness for Indians but especially those named Modi because the spokesperson's name from the group of Indians that I met was Modi. I have come to the realization in recent years that that was his last name. Everybody called him Modi. He was an engineer. He moved to New Jersey, and we kept in touch.

I am happy that the Prime Minister is going to be able to address our Nation in the House of Representatives, and I am sure his people look forward to that.

Again, I tell everyone here about my warmness for India, this great democracy. The second largest Muslim population in the world is in India. So it is a friend that we have, and we must maintain that friendship.

ZIKA VIRUS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I just left a meeting, a stunningly important meeting where every one of the guests were prominent, but the two I want to refer to briefly are Dr. Frieden, head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Dr. Fauci, head of one of the health institutes at the National Institutes of Health, Infectious Diseases, among other things. What they told us was very frightening. As we speak, there are three confirmed cases of babies born in the United States with the Zika virus. Of course, they are all very sick. The life expectancy is not very long.

They said in unison how vitally important it is and has been for months to get them some money so they can do the research needed to stop the spread of this virus. They have borrowed money from malaria research, TB research—all terribly difficult problems we are having in the world and the United States—to take care of the immediate funding for research on Zika. They have taken huge amounts of money—more than half a billion dollars—out of the Ebola fund, which is still a very serious problem. There are active cases as we speak.

This is not an effort we can just walk away from. This money has been needed for a long time, and it is sad that the Presidential request of \$1.9 billion has been opposed.

The senior Senator from Florida was at the meeting today talking about how every day there are new cases in Florida. Yesterday there were five new ones. We needed to do something on that yesterday, not wait until the fall, as has been suggested by my Republican colleagues.

DONALD TRUMP AND FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Senate Republicans are waiting with gleeful anticipation for Donald Trump to fill the vacancy on the Supreme Court. Donald Trump, who last week attacked a Federal judge because of his Mexican heritage—even though the judge was born in Indiana—said that District Judge Curiel shouldn't be allowed to preside on his case because of his ethnicity. Donald Trump, moments later, said that he would feel the same way if the judge were Muslim.

This is the man—Donald Trump—for whom Senate Republicans are blocking a supremely qualified nominee for the Supreme Court, a man by the name of Merrick Garland. This is the man—Donald Trump—for whom Republicans are abdicating their constitutional responsibility. This is the man—Donald Trump—whom Senate Republicans want to determine the makeup of the Supreme Court for at least the next generation.

The Senate Republicans are united in blocking Judge Merrick Garland's nomination to the Supreme Court. Republicans are united in refusing to provide their advice and consent to President Obama's nominee to the Supreme Court. The Republicans are united in doing it for Donald Trump. They say so. They should be ashamed.

It is hard to imagine anything more humiliating than holding a Supreme Court seat open so that Donald Trump can fill that seat. Is this why my Republican colleagues entered public service—to march in lockstep behind a man who spews hate and attacks the basic rule of law in America?

The Republican leader says: "We know that Donald Trump will make the right kind of Supreme Court appointments."

This is sad for the Republican Party. If my Republican colleagues aren't embarrassed, they aren't thinking very well.

President Obama has nominated a moderate, experienced, brilliant jurist to the Supreme Court, but instead of giving Judge Garland the impartial treatment he deserves, Republicans are refusing to do their jobs. And for what? So Donald Trump, a man who routinely insults Republican Senators to their faces, among others, denigrates Senator McCain's heroism, says people's heritage makes them unable to perform their jobs, and all the terrible stuff about women, handicapped people—we want this man to appoint someone to the Supreme Court? The Republicans should come to their senses. It is time to drop the charade and give Garland a fair hearing and a vote.

AMENDMENT NO. 4549

Mr. REID. Mr. President, on another subject, Americans share many common values, and one of the most fundamental is this: If you make a commitment, you should keep it. If you reach

an agreement, abide by it. Simply put, a promise is a promise. Unfortunately, the pending amendment from the chairman of the Armed Services Committee would undermine this basic tenet.

Last year, Democrats and Republicans made an agreement. Democrats were committed to helping the middle class. Republicans were focused only on the Pentagon. Ultimately, we reached a compromise that was based on the principle of parity. We want to help the military, and they should be helped, but there should also be help for programs that are also important for our national security that are not the Pentagon. We provided additional resources to the Pentagon, as I said, but we also provided the same level of help for the middle class. That included improving our security through efforts of domestic agencies like the FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, Department of Homeland Security, and others. That was our agreement, but now some Republicans want to break their word. Senate Republicans are demanding billions more from the Pentagon but refuse to provide an extra penny for the middle class, and that is wrong. It is completely inconsistent with last year's agreement, and it is blind to the many serious needs here at home that Republicans continue to ignore, and Zika is one. That is why I support the amendment offered by the distinguished Senator from Rhode Island, JACK REED, along with the leader we have on the Appropriations Committee, BARBARA MIKULSKI.

The Reed-Mikulski amendment would provide the same extra support for our middle class that Senator MCCAIN is demanding for the Pentagon, and it recognizes that our security depends on more than just the Defense Department. The Reed amendment includes more funding to address the dangerous Zika virus and fight the scourge of opioids. It also would help mitigate lead contamination, which is long overdue, in Flint, MI.

This amendment strengthens domestic security through support of the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security. It will improve airport security and community policing, and it will address the threat of cyber crime and terrorism.

The amendment by the Senator from Rhode Island and the Senator from Maryland will create jobs and address our Nation's crumbling infrastructure. It will not only improve our transportation system but medical facilities for our veterans and our National Park System.

The Reed amendment is also an investment in our future. The legislation will promote science and innovation through support for the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, among others, and it will support education.

I urge my colleagues to support this important proposal which will make America a better and stronger country.

The bottom line is this: A promise is a promise. The middle class needs help at least as much as the Pentagon. Republicans should keep their promise to hard-working American families.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2943) 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.

Pending:

McCain amendment No. 4229, to address unfunded priorities of the Armed Forces.

Reed/Mikulski amendment No. 4549 (to amendment No. 4229), to authorize parity for defense and nondefense spending pursuant to the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

AMENDMENT NO. 4549

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise to discuss my amendment, which will provide partial relief from the caps imposed by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 on both the defense and nondefense portions of the budget for fiscal year 2017. The chairman has offered an amendment that will provide relief for the Department of Defense activities. My amendment will provide a comparable amount of relief for activities that are beyond the Department of Defense but critical to our national security and critical to our national economy.

It is long past time to replace the senseless sequester with a balanced approach that keeps America safe and strong at home and abroad. Senator MCCAIN and I both believe that sequestration has to be eliminated. What I would suggest is that it has to be done in a balanced way. It has to keep the intent of the Bipartisan Budget Act and the Budget Control Act by treating defense and nondefense spending equally.

Let me also be clear. The bill before us provides the amount outlined under current law as well as the budget request of the Secretary of Defense who, along with the Service Secretaries and Chiefs, has testified in support of this amount. They certainly would like more, but they have testified that for this year these resources are at least adequate. Now they have also made it very clear that if we do go into sequestration in the next year, it would be absolutely devastating to the Depart-

ment of Defense. As a result, we share—the chairman and I—the same commitment to ensuring that sequestration is eliminated and we move to a more rational budget process.

These military professionals would like to have the certainty of year-long funding at the committee level reported at least. That certainly is extremely important. I don't think they want to roll the dice. They recognize that this lengthy fight for parity could last all the way through this year. I believe what they would like to see us do is what they said in their testimony. We can operate under the budget as proposed by the President, as recognized in the underlying budget committee mark, and that will give us the certainty we need.

The bill reported out of the Senate Armed Services Committee includes \$523.9 billion in discretionary spending for defense base budget requirements and \$58.9 billion for overseas contingency operations, or OCO account. It includes \$19.3 billion for Department of Energy-related activities resulting in a top-line funding level of approximately \$602 billion for discretionary national defense spending.

While these funding levels adhere to the spending limits mandated by the Bipartisan Budget Act, or BBA, concerns have rightly been raised that the Department may require additional resources to carry out the missions it has been assigned and to adequately maintain the readiness of our military forces. As my colleagues are aware, when the Senate considered the BBA last fall, it established the discretionary funding level for defense spending for fiscal year 2017. That agreement passed this Chamber with support from Senators from both political parties. Furthermore, the BBA split the increase in discretionary spending evenly between the defense and nondefense categories.

It is important to remember that we have repeatedly made incremental changes to the discretionary budget caps for both defense and nondefense accounts. We have done so in order to provide some budgetary certainty to the Department of Defense and our domestic agencies. These spending caps were first revised with the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013, and most recently with the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015.

In each instance, bipartisan majorities in Congress voted to increase the spending caps and provide additional resources, evenly split between defense and nondefense accounts. Unfortunately, providing relief to the budget caps for defense spending, as the underlying amendment by the chairman proposes, while taking no action on nondefense spending, would renege on those bipartisan agreements and the sense of common purpose that motivated us in the last several adjustments to the Sequestration Act.

In contrast, my amendment, would keep the pressure on for a permanent