

bad, his record on foreign policy is even worse. A White House preview of the State of the Union touts the President's work to "redefine American leadership for the 21st century." During the President's last year in office the White House says: "We can show the world what is possible when America truly leads."

Republicans couldn't agree more that America should truly lead. The problem is that the President's first 7 years in office have generally been distinguished by a lack of leadership. Back in June, former President and fellow Democrat Jimmy Carter described President Obama's successes on the world stage as "minimal." He said: "On the world stage, just to be as objective about it as I can, I can't think of many nations in the world where we have a better relationship now than we did when he took over." Again, that was a quote from former Democratic President Jimmy Carter. Well, neither can I.

The White House claims that the President ended two wars. Yet it neglects to mention that since the United States withdrew from Iraq, large sections of the country have gone into chaos thanks to ISIS. The President's failure to enforce his redline in Syria when President Bashar al-Assad used chemical weapons on his own people and the President's lack of a strategy to defeat ISIS have contributed to a massive refugee crisis with no easy solution. Meanwhile, Assad remains in power, and ISIS continues to thrive.

With the terrorist attacks in Paris, ISIS officially expanded its theater of operations beyond the Middle East. As we witnessed in the case of the San Bernardino shooting, as long as ISIS continues to exist, its demented ideology will inspire disturbed individuals to commit acts of terror. The United States is in desperate need of a comprehensive strategy to confront the threat posed by ISIS. Yet the President has so far made no move to develop one.

On another foreign policy front, the President has repeatedly touted his nuclear deal with Iran as one of the major foreign policy achievements of his Presidency. Yet the agreement he signed actually improves Iran's long-term prospects for developing a bomb. In a clear violation of U.N. restrictions, Iran tested a ballistic missile, demonstrating once again that it has in no way curbed its aggressive behavior. Elsewhere, Russian aggression has increased on the President's watch. North Korea recently conducted yet another nuclear test.

The Obama administration has left the American people with a host of problems at home and abroad, but once again, it sounds like President Obama's State of the Union Address will fail to offer any substantial solutions. More than that, it sounds as if the President will largely ignore the problems, and that is unfortunate.

The President is missing an opportunity to offer substantial solutions

before turning the problems of his administration over to his successors. I don't want to give credence to those Obama administration accusations that the Republicans are all "doom and gloom." As I said, I believe the strength and spirit of the American people mean that the future of America is always bright. But realizing that future requires understanding and developing solutions to the problems facing our Nation, and that is something the President has been unwilling to do.

Republicans have worked hard over the past year to make our economy stronger, our government more efficient and accountable, and our Nation and our world safer and more secure. But there is a lot more work that needs to be done, and we need a partner in the White House who is willing to meet us half way. We hope the President will use the last year of his Presidency to work with us as we seek to address the challenges that are facing the American people.

I yield the floor.

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

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

FUNDING FOR BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, a few months ago my colleague from Missouri, Senator BLUNT, took the floor and spoke to two issues we have in common. I will speak to one of them in a moment—the flooding in the Midwest—but I wish to also address another one that he raised.

Senator BLUNT is in an extraordinary position, having been given an opportunity to handle the appropriations bill for the Department of Health and Human Services. Within the Health and Human Services appropriations bill is funding for most of the biomedical research by the Federal Government.

I have spoken to Senator BLUNT over the past year and even before about my strong feelings on this subject. I feel, as most Americans do, that our investment in biomedical research is a wise investment, potentially sparing people from disease and death that could follow an illness but also making an investment in America's innovative economy, creating opportunities for jobs and for expanded research and new products and pharmaceuticals. Senator BLUNT took that challenge to heart, and when he was faced with the appropriations bill for this Department, he made a special effort when it came to medical research. I am so happy that he did.

It was only a few years ago that we had automatic, across-the-board cuts called sequestration. It was dev-

astating. As a net result of that, many of the youngest and most promising researchers gave up on the field because they didn't think there was a commitment from Congress, from the President, and from the government to continue to expand biomedical research. We saw the median age of researchers climbing because younger researchers looked for other jobs. That is a horrible waste of talent and a squandering of an opportunity, I am sure, to find ways to make life more bearable and to cure diseases across America.

Several years ago, when I visited the NIH, the head of the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Francis Collins, told me that if we could have 5 percent real growth in biomedical research at the NIH for 10 years, he could light up the scoreboard. We were on the cusp of so many discoveries that this was an opportunity, if the investment were made, to really have some medical breakthroughs. I took that to heart and introduced a bill called the American Cures Act, and I am sure Senator BLUNT and many of my colleagues are tired of hearing about it. The notion is 10 percent by Congress; 5 percent real growth each year when it comes to the NIH.

As it turns out, this year we are knocking on the door of doing just that with the investment that was made by the appropriations bill. This investment is almost \$42 billion in biomedical research, \$32 billion in the National Institutes of Health, a 6.6-percent increase over last year; \$7 billion for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a 4.5-percent increase over fiscal year 2015.

There are two other areas of research opportunities in biomedical research: the Veterans Medical and Prosthetics Research Program and the Department of Defense Health Program. That is an appropriations bill I have something to do with, working with the chairman, Senator COCHRAN. Both of those programs received a 7-percent increase over the previous fiscal year. These increases at NIH, CDC, Veterans, and Defense are a real turnaround. They bring to an end a decades-long downward trend when it comes to biomedical research.

Senator BLUNT has said—and I have, too—this shouldn't be a one-hit wonder. We have to repeat that this year when it comes to the appropriations for the next fiscal year beginning October 1. We have to make sure we make our promise and keep it when it comes to biomedical research. If we do it, I know this level of funding is going to result in dramatic, positive developments.

There are so many areas we need help with. I can think of a few that are obvious, including Alzheimer's. An American is diagnosed with Alzheimer's once every 67 seconds. When my staff told me that, I didn't believe it. I said: Go back, recalculate, and tell me the real number. It turns out they were right. Once every 67 seconds, a person is diagnosed with Alzheimer's.

Last year we spent over \$200 billion in Medicare and Medicaid for Alzheimer's care. That is just a fraction of the total cost. Think about what individual families spent, what private insurance sources spent, the charitable care that was given to Alzheimer's patients. So when we talk about increasing the NIH budget by \$2 billion for 1 year, it is a tiny fraction. It is 1 percent of the amount we are spending on Alzheimer's.

If we could find a way to detect Alzheimer's earlier, delay its onset, reduce the period of time of suffering, or perhaps even find a cure, God willing, it would have a dramatic, positive impact on so many lives and families and on our bottom-line Federal budget. Take that argument about Alzheimer's and apply it as well to cancer. How many of our families and friends are suffering and fighting cancer right now? My wife and I were struck over the holidays by how many of our close friends are battling cancer at this moment. We know they are looking for hope. They are looking for drugs. They are looking for something that will break through and give them a chance at life. That is why I believe this biomedical research is so critical.

Let me add one postscript. Stopping with these agencies is not enough. I recently visited the Department of Energy. The new Secretary there, Ernest Moniz, and I were talking about biomedical research. He said that when it comes to the technology for imaging that is making such a difference in the world, it isn't just in biomedicine; it is in engineering and science as well, in the Department of Science, within the Department of Energy. So let's not be shortsighted. Let's have an open mind about innovation and creation.

Last week I was in Peoria, IL, an area I am proud to represent. I went to visit OSF Hospital there. I went to what is known as the Jump Center. We don't forget that name very easily. What they have done in the Jump Center is they have combined the University of Illinois Medical School and the University of Illinois Engineering Department in a common effort to bring new engineering and new technology to medicine and medical breakthroughs. What they are doing there is amazing—first, training doctors and medical professionals to do their job effectively without mistakes. That, of course, is the ultimate outcome we are looking for. Over their shoulders are engineers and technicians who are looking at these doctors doing their work, finding new applications for computers and engineering technology that can make their work easier and more effective.

They showed me a model of the human heart. It was a heart of an infant with serious heart problems. This model they gave me was the actual human heart reproduced of an infant who was facing surgery. They took the MRIs and the CAT scans, put them into a 3D copier, and produced this little heart that you could hold in your hand.

They were able to give that heart to the surgeon to look at before the surgery, and they opened it so that the surgeon could look inside that heart model—a model which tracked the reality of that infant—and know before the surgery what he would find.

It meant less time on the heart-lung machine, a more likely positive recovery. It was the use of technology in engineering to move us forward and to give that little baby a fighting chance. So I thank Senator BLUNT. I want to especially thank my colleague Senator PATTY MURRAY. She has been a terrific leader in this field, both on the appropriations and authorizing committees, and also Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER.

I think we have all come to conclude that regardless of how much time we have in the Senate, we should leave a mark that makes a difference. When it comes to biomedical research, this year's budget, which Senator BLUNT referred to, will make a difference. Now, let's make sure it is not a one-hit wonder. Let's make sure we do it again in next year's budget as well.

FLOODING IN THE MIDWEST

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I would also like to speak for a moment about the flooding situation in the Midwest, and, of course, in my colleagues' neighboring State of Missouri.

Last month, right in the midst of the holidays, rain storms swept through my State, covering it with 7 inches of rainfall in a very short period of time. The heavy rainfall caused water levels on the rivers to reach record highs. We were surprised. We expect this in the spring, not in December. Communities had to evacuate their homes for their own safety. Sadly, these storms were so severe they flooded roadways, claiming the lives of 10 people whose vehicles were swept away by the floods. Many of them did not realize how high the water actually was in these flash floods or how fast it was moving. They got caught in dangerous waters.

Two areas that were some of the worst impacted were Alexander and Randolph Counties on the Mississippi River—Monroe County, I might add as well. Last Wednesday I went to visit two towns in these areas, Olive Branch and Evansville, to talk to the residents. In Olive Branch I met with Alexander County board vice-chair Lamar Houston and spoke with State representative Brandon Phelps. Both have been working diligently to help the community recover.

I have some photographs which I think will tell the story. This a photograph from Olive Branch. You can see water completely surrounding the home and covering the nearby areas. The levee that protects the communities of Olive Branch, Hodges Park, and Unity was breached and overtopped by a record crest at the Mississippi River. These overtops caused miles of flood damage, impacting ag lands as well as homes and businesses.

Before flooding occurred, local law enforcement and emergency responders tried to evacuate everybody as quickly as possible. Thankfully, a lot of people heeded the call and went to find shelter with family and friends, but many residents I spoke with in these towns were still concerned about being able to recover from the flood and the damage.

One man from Olive Branch, Bruce Ford, said his auto repair shop was engulfed by water. He worries he could be out of business for months. Bruce is working night and day to clean out the debris and to move his equipment back in. He was not sure when his shop would be ready to open. Even worse, if the levee breaches again this spring, which it might, he worries that he will not have the means to fix it all over again in just a few months.

In Evansville—and this photo is taken in that area; this was taken on New Year's Eve crossing the Mississippi River at St. Louis. It shows the devastation on the Illinois side. As you can see, these buildings are nearly completely submerged in water, and for many areas around St. Louis the damage you see here is typical. When I went to visit Evansville, about an hour south from here, I met with residents who worked around the clock to sandbag homes and businesses to keep the Kaskaskia River out of their town.

I met with Evansville mayor Craig Valleroy, emergency management coordinator Nancy Shilling, who did a great job in making a presentation to me, and State Representative Jerry Costello, Jr.

I was given a tour around the waterfront and flooded areas. As is often the case with disasters like these, I was impressed with the local residents, first responders, local officials, and volunteers, who just stepped up and started filling sandbags. By building a wall of sandbags around downtown, Evansville residents were able to hold off the worst of the flooding.

Last week, I spoke with the Illinois Emergency Management Agency director, James Joseph, and the FEMA Regional Administrator, Andrew Velasquez, about the rain and flooding. The Governor declared 23 counties State disaster areas. State and local emergency responders were dispatched to affected areas. The State provided almost 1 million sandbags—997,000; 4,000 tons of sand; and 117 DOT trucks for flood mitigation.

As the water continues to recede in the coming days, local officials and the Illinois Emergency Management Agency are working together to assess the damages. I might say there is one issue that Senator KIRK and I have looked at over and over again. We are blessed in our State to have about 13 million people. The largest percentage of them are around the Chicagoland area, but we have a vast State beyond Chicago. That is where I hail from—downstate Illinois, with hundreds of miles of small town and rural areas.