

What are we trying to do here? We are concerned that people in this country are now facing death from heroin and opioid overdoses. Every Governor in the United States of America has cried out to the Federal Government for help on heroin and opioid overdoses. We have heard on both sides of the aisle advocacy for a comprehensive approach. The problem affects every part of the country—urban and rural—and every socioeconomic category.

Now, our appropriations bill is ready with new spending in law enforcement, prevention, treatment, and education. But in the continuing resolution, we won't get these investments, and more families will suffer. Every leading authority on treatment says when you need it and you are ready to ask for it, you need to get it on the same day. Just as clinicians have to act with urgency, so do we.

What else won't a CR help? It won't help college affordability with full-year Pell grants. It won't bolster security funds for the FBI, for the Border Patrol, for embassy security.

Remember Benghazi? Whoa, when people loved to investigate rather than legislate, Benghazi was in the news. That was at the same time the Congress had cut—particularly, the House had cut—embassy security considerably. But in this bill, working with both sides of the aisle, we were able to come up with the appropriate money for embassy security, border control, and so on.

We also won't have the funds for infrastructure funding, particularly for roads, to improve our ports, and to make our railroads safer.

We won't meet the needs of children—children who are on the march, children who are in desperate need of help in Central America.

I know the other thing we have supported on both sides of the aisle is an innovation agenda, particularly in the area of the medical research of the National Institutes of Health. Hopefully, we are going to be debating the Cures Act, yet right now we have the ability to act with the funding for the National Institutes of Health research and also the great work done at the Department of Defense in research.

All year long I have come to the floor and talked about how appropriations can be used to solve problems, whether it was children exposed to lead in drinking water—the compelling story of Flint, MI. We need to really modernize our water supply. In my own hometown of Baltimore, infrastructure funding could be fantastic. If we replaced the Baltimore water system that was built over 100 years ago, we would improve public health, we would create jobs in Maryland, in Baltimore, and we would leave our communities in a better, safer place by getting the lead out. We need to get the lead out of our water supply, and we need to get the lead out of Congress.

We want to solve problems, create jobs, and protect America. A CR is not

the best way to do it. But if we are going to do a CR, it should be for the shortest time possible.

So let me be clear. Senate Democrats are willing to work across the aisle and across the dome. It is our Republican colleagues who need to think about this long and hard. I really urge that you not spend another half year spinning your wheels and not serving the American people, addressing security needs and compelling human needs.

As I get ready to finish my time in being the ranking member on the Committee on Appropriations, I would like to finish it by working constructively, collegially, and in the best interests of the United States of America to get a real bill across the finish line for the longest time possible. That will provide certainty to Federal agencies that are protecting America and protecting our border while we try to protect American jobs.

There is much ahead and that will lie ahead in the new term and with a new administration. We can act with certainty now for at least the funding for next year if we acted, and we acted with a long-term CR.

I could elaborate on more, but, please, let's do our job. Let's work together. There are still a few days where we could get this done the right way.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to conclude my remarks.

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

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND PRIORITIES FOR THE 115TH CONGRESS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, 2 years ago the American people entrusted Republicans with the Senate majority. At that time, things were in a bad way here in the Senate. Under Democratic control, the legislative process almost ground to a halt. Important bills weren't getting passed, and those that did get passed were frequently drafted behind closed doors, with Republicans and many rank-and-file Democrats shut out of the process, which, of course, means that the American people's voices were frequently shut out of the process.

When Republicans took control, we knew that getting the Senate working again had to be our first priority, and that is what we did. We opened up debate so Senators from both parties could make their voices heard. We started drafting legislation in committee again so that bills were the result of discussion and compromise instead of being dictated by Democratic Party leaders. And we got the Senate passing real, substantial legislation again—a balanced budget, appropriations bills, the first major Energy bill since the Bush administration, and the first significant education reform since 2002.

I am particularly proud of two bills that the committee I chair, the Commerce Committee, worked on—a Federal Aviation Administration bill with major airport security provisions and the first long-term Transportation bill since 2005.

The terrorist attacks in Brussels and Istanbul that occurred this year broadcast airport security challenges—particularly the soft target offered by large crowds in unsecured airport areas. Those were problems we had been working on in the Commerce Committee for months before the attacks, and in July we passed an FAA bill that addresses them and more. The bill we passed requires the TSA to look at ways to improve security checkpoints to make the passenger screening process more efficient and effective, and it significantly increases the security presence in unsecured areas in airports. It also improves vetting of airport employees to address the insider terrorist threat—the risk that an airport employee would give a terrorist access to secure areas. The Senate passed this bill in July, and the President signed it into law a couple days later. I am proud of this law, which is the kind of substantial legislation we should be passing for the American people.

I am also proud of the Transportation bill we passed, part of which came out of our committee. When Congress fails to provide certainty about the way transportation funding will be allocated, States and local governments are left without the certainty they need to authorize projects or to make long-term plans, important investments in infrastructure that support the economy are shelved, and jobs that depend upon transportation are put in jeopardy. The Transportation bill we passed changes all that. It reauthorizes transportation programs for the long term and provides 5 years of guaranteed funding. That means States and local governments will have the certainty they need to invest in big transportation projects and the jobs they create, and that, in turn, means a stronger economy and a more reliable, safe, and effective transportation system.

I am proud of what we were able to accomplish over the past 2 years, but there is a lot left to be done. Some of the most important measures we passed in the 114th Congress went nowhere, thanks to opposition from the Democrats and the White House—an ObamaCare repeal; legislation to overturn some of the Obama administration's most burdensome regulations; legislation to address the dangerous problem of so-called sanctuary cities, which refuse to work with Federal immigration officials to deport illegal immigrants convicted of crimes. I am hopeful that with a Republican President, we will be able to address these issues and many more in the 115th Congress.

Republicans have big plans for the 115th. If there is one thing this election

made clear, it is that the Obama economy is not working for American families. Republicans are committed to fixing that.

Growing our economy is going to be our No. 1 priority next Congress. There are a number of things we can do to get our economy healthy again. We can reform our Tax Code to reduce the burden on American families and businesses. Right now, our Nation has the highest corporate tax rate in the developed world. More and more, American companies are focusing their business operations overseas because the tax situation is so much better abroad. That means American jobs are going overseas with them. We have lost our competitive edge in an increasingly global economy. Instead of pushing corporations out of this country, we should bring our Nation's corporate tax rate in line with those of other countries to keep more jobs here in the United States.

Another big thing we can do is repeal some of the burdensome government regulations that are weighing down businesses. While some government regulations are necessary, every administration has to remember that regulations have consequences. The more resources individuals and businesses spend complying with unnecessary government regulations, the less they have to focus on the growth and innovation that drive our economy and create new opportunities for workers. The overregulation of the last 8 years has left businesses with few resources to dedicate to growing and creating jobs.

Another thing we need to do is address our national debt, which has nearly doubled over the past 8 years. All that debt is a drag on the economy. It slows growth and reduces economic opportunity. It is time to get our government back on a budget.

Another way we can help lift the burden on American families is by repealing and replacing ObamaCare. I don't need to tell anyone that the President's health care law is broken. The promise of lower premiums and affordable health care has given way to the reality of giant premium increases and massive deductibles. A Gallup poll released yesterday found that 80 percent of Americans want major changes to ObamaCare or want the law repealed and replaced completely. It is time to give the American people health care reform that actually works.

Another priority for the 115th Congress will be national security. Americans are rightly worried about the threat posed by terrorist groups like ISIS, which has spread violence and devastation not only in the Middle East but across Europe and beyond. Republicans are committed to defeating ISIS abroad and to keeping Americans safe here at home.

We are also committed to keeping Americans safe by securing our borders. We must have secure borders and policies that encourage legal immigration while discouraging illegal immigration.

There are other priorities we need to address: confirming a Supreme Court nominee who will judge based on the law and the Constitution; protecting religious liberty; and the list goes on.

Republicans are aware of the trust the American people have placed in us, and we are committed to earning it. We are going to spend the 115th Congress fighting for the American people's priorities. We have a real chance to get things done in the next Congress, and I look forward to working with my colleagues here in the Senate on both sides of the aisle to address the challenges that are facing our Nation.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to continue in morning business for 10 minutes.

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

Mr. LEAHY. I thank the distinguished Presiding Officer.

CONTINUING RESOLUTION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, for the past 2 years, the Republican Party has enjoyed solid majorities in both the House and Senate. They control the schedule and they control the process. They can decide which legislation to call up for debate, and frankly, for all intents and purposes, they can decide whether anything gets done around here.

A good example is the nomination of Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court. If he had been treated like all other Supreme Court nominees throughout the entire history of this country in a Presidential election year, he would have received a hearing and a vote, and he almost certainly would have been easily confirmed, just as he was when he was nominated to the DC Court of Appeals. Instead, the Republican leadership did not even give Judge Garland a hearing, much less a vote. Republican Senators refused to do their job. And there are countless examples of this.

It would behoove people in this country who complain about the "do nothing" Congress to remind themselves that Congress is controlled by Republicans in both the House and the Senate. They can make it possible for work to get done if they want to, or they can make it impossible. Their track record for the past 2 years speaks for itself. Instead of a Congress that sets the standard for the world's democracies, we have been treated to a lesson of how not to get things done.

The latest example is the fiscal 2017 appropriations bills. I went back and reviewed the record. For months, the Republican leadership extolled the virtues of regular order, and I totally agreed with them on that. They spoke with great optimism and confidence about passing appropriations bills—in-

dividual bills, not even an omnibus bill that has become the norm. I agreed with the Republican leadership. They said over and over that they were going to do their job this year and pass these bills, the way we used to. We on the Democratic side fully supported Republicans in that goal. We negotiated 12 individual appropriations bills that were reported, with 1 exception, with bipartisan majorities—in most cases, overwhelming majorities—by the Senate Appropriations Committee. That was 5 months ago.

Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM and I wrote the fiscal year 2017 State and foreign operations bill. As we always do, we wrote a balanced bill, and it was reported unanimously by the Appropriations Committee by a vote of 30 to 0. Our staffs have been meeting for weeks with their House counterparts to hammer out a conference agreement that the House and Senate can vote on and the President can sign. We could easily be finished by December 9, when the current funding resolution expires.

So what is the problem? It is simple. Donald Trump was elected President, and now the Republican leadership has a different idea. Forget all those uplifting speeches about passing appropriations bills. Forget about so-called regular order. Forget about doing our jobs. What is their new plan? Throw 10 months of work into the trash can. Now we will punt the ball down the field for another 4 months. After that, who knows? Maybe we will do it again and have a continuing resolution for the rest of the year. There is no way to predict.

For Members of Congress who may not be familiar with the intricate operations of Federal agencies and would prefer not to think about it, the idea of another 4-month continuing resolution may not be a big deal. For those of us on both sides of the aisle who do know, it is an example of government at its worst. Funding the government by continuing resolution means putting priorities and budgeting decisions on autopilot. It stops us having any kind of a voice in what our government does. It negates the hard work that has gone into reevaluating priorities from one year to the next. It negates the careful process of looking at Federal agencies account by account to make adjustments as warranted. It means largely making a carbon copy of an earlier appropriations bill or bills regardless of changed circumstances or compelling need to modify earlier priorities.

I can give all kinds of examples in the appropriations bills. Here are a few examples of what it means for the State and foreign operations bill, which comprises only 1 percent of the Federal budget.

A continuing resolution will provide \$433 million less than Senator GRAHAM's and my bill for economic development, governance, and security programs, such as the Power Africa Initiative. It will mean \$59 million less for