

killing proposals, which will further burden hard-working American families, along with the tepid growth that we have seen here in our own economy—0.7 percent just this last quarter. The President's budget adds further insult to injury by adding to our national debt, which is already \$19 trillion.

Somebody is going to have to pay that back. In the meantime, what we will have to do is pay interest on that debt, which will continue to crowd out spending in other areas like national security where there is a national consensus. This is the number one priority for the American people.

Strangely, but unfortunately predictably, rather than deciding to work with Congress and to listen to the concerns that are raised by those hard-working American families, President Obama went ahead and submitted a budget with no apparent interest in finding any kind of common ground. It is a sad testament to his go-it-alone legacy, which has been more ideological than actually solution oriented.

We are here to try to solve problems, and the only way we do that is by working together to find consensus where we can. Understanding that there are people who serve in the Senate and the House from different points of view all across the ideological spectrum, it is only by working together—and that includes not just Congress but the President, too—that we can actually begin to help grow the economy to help create jobs, to help make America more secure.

Given the fact that the President has decided to take the tack he has, I hope that Congress will lead the charge against this request for irresponsible spending and try to help get our economy back on track, to begin the process of reducing our debt and strengthening the hand of the American family.

#### MENTAL HEALTH REFORM

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, on another note, I wish to spend a few minutes talking about a very important hearing that we will be having tomorrow in the Senate Judiciary Committee, something that I feel very passionately about, and that is finding a way forward on mental health reform. As shocking as it is, our jails and our streets have become places where people suffering from mental illness basically are left without treatment and without recourse.

Tomorrow I will have the honor of chairing that hearing where we will discuss the intersection of our mental health system such as it is and our criminal justice system, and hopefully we will be able to find a way forward to push toward real reform. The goal of the hearing is to better understand how to bring help and support for those who struggle with mental illness.

This is an area where we can and we must do better. Too often, after the fact, we find out that families faced with the choice of allowing their loved

ones' mental health to continue deteriorating, letting their illness spiral out of control until they become a danger to themselves or others—there are very few choices available to families whose loved ones are becoming more and more ill. True, they could go to court and seek a court order, seeking a temporary commitment to a mental institution, but that frequently exacerbates frayed relations among family members, and it stigmatizes the individual who is suffering from mental illness issues.

We need to give those families more and better choices on how to deal with their loved ones, hopefully to keep them from becoming a danger to themselves and to the community. Thanks to the marvels of modern medicine, for many people suffering from mental illness, if they will just follow doctors' orders and take the medication that has been prescribed for them—frequently under some doctor's supervision—many of them can get much better and become more productive in society.

One of our witnesses tomorrow will be Pete Earley who wrote a book called "Crazy." He is not talking about a person. He is talking about our so-called system of mental health treatment. Pete Earley wrote this book because, as an accomplished journalist and writer, he knew of no other way than to write about the issue to help his very own son who had encounter after encounter with the criminal justice system because he had untreated mental illness.

Sadly, the failure to adequately address mental health in the United States has led to a drastic increase in the number of mentally ill individuals being locked up in prisons and jails, still without adequate treatment. I don't think anyone would support the idea of turning our prisons and our jails into warehouses for the mentally ill, but that is what has happened by default.

We need to provide better choices to law enforcement officials, to families, and to the individuals who suffer from mental illness. So often many of them will self-medicate with drugs and alcohol, compounding their problems, creating more and more of this turnstile effect within the criminal justice system where no one ever gets better and the illness never gets treated.

As criminologists and mental health experts will tell you, locking up people with mental illness without treatment will make them only more dangerous and increase the risk of crisis, but unfortunately this is an all-too-common practice across our country.

This is a shocking number to me when I read it, but one estimate suggests there are as many as 400,000 current inmates in our prisons across America who suffer from some form of mental illness. That is because, at least in part, the United States has witnessed a rapid decline in psychiatric and mental health hospitals over the

past decades. The idea was that you couldn't institutionalize people so you had to let them out. Unfortunately, just letting them out without finding a way forward to help them deal with their mental illness resulted in many of them becoming homeless, living on our streets or in our jails and our prisons when they commit petty crimes such as trespassing and the like.

Since 1960, more than 90 percent of State psychiatric beds have been eliminated—90 percent. But prison is a poor and often very harmful replacement for a treatment facility. Our goal in the hearing tomorrow is to work toward another solution, one that would give families greater flexibility, including actual treatment options for the people they love.

A bill I introduced, the Mental Health and Safe Communities Act, offers one proven approach to treating mental illness. It borrows from a successful model of reform, put into place in my hometown in Bexar County, TX, more than a decade ago.

Let me say a word about borrowing from these successful local and State models as opposed to imposing a one-size-fits-all approach at the national level, not knowing whether it would actually work in this big and diverse country we live in. I believe that taking successful examples of best practices at the local and State level—those are the best subject matter for us to look at in terms of scaling these up on a national level where appropriate.

The Bexar County sheriff, Susan Pamerleau, a champion of mental health reform in San Antonio, will testify tomorrow about the San Antonio story. Bexar County's mental health program focuses on treatment of the mentally ill instead of just putting them behind bars and leaving them untreated. The results have been very impressive.

These reforms have reduced the size of our overcrowded jails, which has been a perennial problem. It has saved tax dollars, and it has improved the lives of people who otherwise would be put behind bars and left to their own devices.

I look forward to hearing from Sheriff Pamerleau tomorrow. I bet other members of the Senate Judiciary Committee and anyone else who cares to listen will learn a lot about how we can bring these reforms to the rest of the country.

Another part of this is to help equip law enforcement, teachers, judges, and people who work in the courts with the knowledge and skill set they need to spot mental illness early on. Wouldn't it be more helpful if teachers, parents, and counselors were empowered to help identify people who need help early on in school? Doesn't it make sense to train our law enforcement officials how to deal with a person suffering from a mental health crisis? Do you slap the cuffs on them? Do you get engaged in a violent confrontation? Or do you try to deescalate the incident in a way that is

safer for the law enforcement official as well as the person being confronted?

There are better ways for us to respond effectively at the early signs and help to train the people who are in the best position to identify people who need help early on. This legislation includes specialized training for those on the frontlines, such as law enforcement and judicial officials, so they are ready to respond and can react swiftly and safely should a mental health crisis erupt.

The truth is that this is a difficult issue and one that raises hard questions. But I am grateful to Chairman GRASSLEY of the Senate Judiciary Committee for not shying away from this topic but embracing it and having witnesses such as those we will have tomorrow who I think will open the eyes of many people to something they perhaps don't encounter in their daily lives because they don't go to our jails or our prisons or they don't have a loved one who suffers from mental illness. I think this will open a lot of eyes, and it will help us continue the conversation so we can find some common ground and work toward real solutions.

Reform is long overdue. All you need to do is visit our jails, as I have done in Harris County, Bexar County, and Dallas County, to see that too often our jails are occupied by people who—yes, they may have committed petty crimes, nonviolent crimes, but they really need some help. If we give them the help, they can turn their lives around and become more productive.

It will save taxpayers money, and I think it will be a much more humane and efficient system of dealing with people suffering with a mental health crisis. I am hopeful we can advance substantive legislation to help those struggling with mental illness and their families and, as a result, make our communities safer.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### NORTH KOREA SANCTIONS ENFORCEMENT BILL

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I rise to discuss the bill that will be coming before the Senate this week, the North Korea Sanctions Enforcement Act, which seeks to curb North Korea's unacceptable behavior through the implementation of targeted sanctions.

On January 6 of this year, North Korea tested a nuclear weapon in open violation of numerous U.N. resolutions. This is the fourth time North Korea has conducted a nuclear weapons test, and it is estimated the country may

have as many as 20 nuclear warheads in its arsenal.

Just this past weekend, while many Americans were getting ready to watch the Super Bowl, North Korea conducted a missile test, putting a satellite into orbit. This missile test, which has already been condemned by the U.N. Security Council, served as a demonstration of the threat posed by North Korea's long-range missile program. In fact, just a few hours later, the satellite launched by the North Korean missile passed over the site of the Super Bowl in Santa Clara, CA.

If equipped with a nuclear warhead, a missile similar to the one launched this weekend could potentially threaten the United States and our allies, and North Korea is actively seeking to market this same missile technology, as well as its nuclear weapons technology, to other rogue regimes.

North Korea's history of aggressive behavior is already well known and well documented. In March of 2010, a North Korean torpedo sank the South Korean naval vessel *Cheonan*, killing 46 sailors. In November of 2010, North Korea fired artillery on the island of Yeonpyeong, killing two soldiers and injuring an additional 15 soldiers and 2 civilians.

North Korea's dictator Kim Jong Un continues to spout threats against the United States and our allies. This past year, when South Korean citizens sent leaflets with unfiltered information into North Korea, the regime responded with threats to turn the whole of South Korea into a "sea of fire." After the January nuclear test, a North Korean spokesman said: "North Korean scientists are in high spirits." The statement went on to claim that North Korea detonated an H-bomb, which we now know to be untrue, and added that the bomb was "capable of wiping out the whole territory of the U.S. all at once." These threats are so common now that they barely make the news.

North Korea is not only a threat to the United States, it is also a threat to its own people. It is estimated that 150,000 to 200,000 North Koreans are imprisoned in concentration camps. We can confirm the existence of these camps from satellite photographs and firsthand accounts. These are not camps for what we would consider criminals but for individuals deemed disloyal to the regime. The "crime" of a single family member—which can be something as simple as accidentally tarnishing the photo of a member of North Korea's hereditary dictatorship—can lead to an entire North Korean family being sent away to a labor camp.

The brutality of these camps has been confirmed by those who have made it out. To date, more than 28,000 North Korean defectors have escaped and made it to South Korea. Tens of thousands more are still in China, often working as cheap laborers who become victims of human trafficking.

The stories of those who have escaped Kim Jong Un's regime carry a

common theme: starvation, imprisonment, torture, and the execution of family members. And this is everyday life for the people of North Korea.

The bill we are considering this week seeks to curb North Korea's aggressive behavior through the use of targeted sanctions. The bill restricts access to financial resources and raw materials that North Korea uses to support its nuclear weapons program and operate its political prison and forced labor camps. It levels mandatory sanctions against individuals who contribute to North Korea's ballistic missile development and targets luxury goods the regime uses to maintain the loyalty of party elites. It also puts in place sanctions against any entity determined to be enabling North Korea's ability to censor information, as well as those engaged in money laundering, narcotics trafficking, and counterfeiting. The bill also includes discretionary sanctions that the U.S. President could use to target entities assisting North Korea in misappropriating funds for the benefit of North Korean officials. The President would have to justify any waivers of these sanctions on a case-by-case basis. The bill also codifies into law the Presidential Executive orders issued in 2015 following the cyber attack on Sony Pictures.

This is a multifaceted bill designed to target North Korea's weapons programs, human rights abuses, and the finances of government elites. And it will do so with minimal impact on the lives of everyday North Koreans who continue to suffer at the hands of their own government.

Last week I introduced legislation addressing another threat posed by North Korea. As I stated before, North Korea is actively seeking to market its nuclear weapons technology to other rogue regimes. In fact, the Syrian nuclear reactor destroyed in 2007 is based on a North Korean design. My bill would ensure that North Korea can't sell its technology to another rogue regime—Iran.

Although President Obama's nuclear deal seeks to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, many of us remain skeptical. And with the North Korean regime strapped for cash, its nuclear weapons and missile technology are some of the few commodities it can offer, and it actively tries to market them to other rogue regimes.

My bill seeks to prevent Iran from becoming a potential customer for North Korea's nuclear weapons technology. Under my legislation, if Iran attempts to acquire nuclear weapons technology from North Korea, all sanctions waived or suspended as a result of the President's nuclear deal would be reinstated immediately. A nuclear armed Iran is unacceptable.

Regardless of what the President claims his Iran nuclear deal has achieved, we must remain vigilant and ensure that Iran keeps its end of the agreement and does not go after a nuclear weapon.