

for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, as the House considers the fiscal year 2018 National Defense Authorization Act this week, I would like to draw attention to one provision that was left out of the bill: the Military Hunger Prevention Act.

It is shameful that military families like lower ranking enlisted service-members with larger households are among the 42 million Americans suffering from food insecurity.

While up to 22,000 military households rely on SNAP, many military families are unable to receive modest benefits due to an unintended provision that counts certain housing allowances as income when determining eligibility for SNAP.

To address this issue, I have joined with my friend, Representative SUSAN DAVIS, on the bipartisan Military Hunger Prevention Act. I am disappointed that this commonsense technical fix was left out of this year's NDAA, and I plan to continue working with my colleagues and our advocacy partners like MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger to move this legislation forward.

We owe it to the families who have sacrificed so much for our country to do all that we can to end hunger now.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO HABITAT FOR HUMANITY OF LIVINGSTON COUNTY, MICHIGAN

(Mr. BISHOP of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BISHOP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an inspirational organization in my district, Habitat for Humanity of Livingston County, located in the Eighth District of Michigan.

This July, Livingston County's Habitat for Humanity is celebrating its 25th year of transforming lives by building quality homes.

Habitat for Humanity was incorporated within Livingston County in 1992, and since then, the organization is dedicated to many community and international service projects.

Over the past 25 years, Habitat for Humanity has made a positive impact on Livingston County, constructing and rehabilitating 18 homes for families in need within the community.

Livingston County's Habitat for Humanity also supports the services of Habitat International in its fight against homelessness across the world, providing monetary donations which funded and constructed an additional 15 homes worldwide.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to congratulate Livingston County's Habitat for Humanity for its 25 years of service. Thank you, Habitat for Humanity, for your commitment to the people you serve and to our entire Livingston County community.

REMARKS ON NORTH KOREA

(Mr. BANKS of Indiana asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BANKS of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, last week, as we celebrated our Nation's birthday, news broke that North Korea successfully launched its first intercontinental ballistic missile.

The missile's estimated range would put Alaska within reach. Like all Americans, I am deeply concerned by this development.

North Korea's possession of an estimated 20 nuclear warheads and chemical and biological weapons makes it an urgent and imminent threat to the United States.

While there are no easy options, our country must do more to deter the Kim regime. I strongly support building our missile defense programs, which is a priority in this year's National Defense Authorization Act, which the House is considering this week.

I also support increasing sanctions against China and Chinese companies that support the Kim regime. At this critical time, all options, including military action, must be on the table. The threat of a nuclear-armed North Korea is too serious to simply maintain the status quo.

PROVIDING FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2810, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2018

Mr. BYRNE. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 440 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 440

Resolved, That at any time after adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for further consideration of the bill (H.R. 2810) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2018 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

SEC. 2. (a) No further amendment to the bill, as amended, shall be in order except those printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution and amendments en bloc described in section 3 of this resolution.

(b) Each further amendment printed in the report of the Committee on Rules shall be considered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole.

(c) All points of order against the further amendments printed in the report of the Committee on Rules or amendments en bloc described in section 3 of this resolution are waived.

SEC. 3. It shall be in order at any time for the chair of the Committee on Armed Services or his designee to offer amendments en bloc consisting of amendments printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution not earlier disposed of. Amendments en bloc offered pursuant to this section shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services or their designees, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole.

SEC. 4. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment pursuant to this resolution the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such further amendments as may have been adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Alabama is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. BYRNE. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BYRNE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Alabama?

There was no objection.

Mr. BYRNE. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 440 provides for a complete consideration of H.R. 2810, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018. The rule allows for consideration of 122 amendments in addition to the amendments made in order by yesterday's rule.

This brings the total number of amendments made in order for full consideration to 210. When you add in the 275 amendments offered during the Armed Services Committee markup, we will, in total, have considered 485 amendments to this year's NDAA.

Just as important, there is a clear bipartisan split between the number of majority and the number of minority amendments made in order.

Mr. Speaker, this has been an incredibly open process that allowed Members of this body from both sides to have their input on this critical national security legislation.

Like other years, the NDAA is a great example of the House working through regular order in the authorizing process and getting the job done.

Thanks to this rule and the one we passed yesterday, the House will debate a number of issues where Members of this body have diverse views. From the future of GTMO to the future of the New START, the two NDAA rules provide for a robust debate on many important topics. That is a good thing, and I look forward to the debate.

Before I continue, I want to briefly thank the staff in both the Armed Services Committee and the Rules Committee for their hard work on this rule. Dealing with this large number of amendments takes a considerable amount of time, and I know I speak for the entire body, both the majority and minority, in expressing our gratitude for their time and work in helping the members of the Rules Committee come to this product.

Yesterday, I outlined my strong support for this year's NDAA, which will help keep the American people safe and secure, so I won't rehash all those points. But I want to share some numbers that highlight the readiness crisis facing our military. This crisis has been caused by cuts to defense spending. This bill authorizes funding for the military at \$688.3 billion, which is 16.8 percent of total Federal outlays and 3.4 percent of projected gross domestic product.

As a guiding point, 30 years ago, the fiscal year 1988 NDAA represented 27.3 percent of total Federal outlays. This year, 16 percent; back then, 27 percent. And 5.2 percent of projected GDP. This year, 3.4 percent; back then, 5.2 percent.

We are spending less proportionately today on our military, despite the fact that we face a wider range of threats across the globe. That should be troubling to every American.

Let's think about the threat environment we faced 30 years ago: the Soviet Union. That was about it. There was no ISIS or al-Qaida or other radical Islamic terrorist organizations threatening the United States 30 years ago. Iran was not an existential threat to the American people 30 years ago. North Korea wasn't developing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles 30 years ago. China was not on the radar as it relates to a military power 30 years ago. We weren't worried about cyber attacks or cyber espionage 30 years ago.

It is safe to say the world was a lot different 30 years ago, yet we were devoting a greater portion of our Federal budget to the military. We must make that same or an even greater commitment today. For too long, we, in Congress, have allowed our military to steadily atrophy, bringing us to a readiness crisis. Providing for our national defense is the most important job of this Congress, and this bill helps rebuild, repair, and reform our military.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support House Resolution 440 and the underlying bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Alabama for the customary 30 minutes, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. McGOVERN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, last night, the majority on the House Rules

Committee once again decided to exclude from debate 230 amendments to H.R. 2810, the National Defense Authorization Act. That means that half of the amendments submitted were rejected.

I can never understand why these amendments are denied the chance to be debated by the full House. When I first came to Capitol Hill as an aide to our former friend and colleague, Congressman Joe Moakley, the Defense Authorization bill would often take up to a week for debate. But even back then, it was one of the largest and most complex bills debated, and certainly one of the most important from a national security point of view.

The NDAA rule was also structured back then, but more in terms of the amount of time permitted for debate. And many amendments receive 1 hour, half an hour, 20 minutes, even 2 hours of debate. Why? Because they were about the important decisions and priorities facing our national defense policy at the time.

But that is not the case today. Amendments are lucky to get 10 minutes of debate equally divided if they are lucky enough to be debated at all. And the Defense bill takes up a total of maybe 2 days' worth of debate, if that. No wonder, no wonder Members are frustrated by this process.

This year, like every year for the past several years, important issues, especially on war and peace, were left on the chopping block by the Republicans.

They decided that the House should not debate two bipartisan amendments that would make sure that nothing in the NDAA could be construed as authorization to use force against the governments of North Korea or Syria.

The Republican majority decided it is okay to debate a bigoted amendment that prohibits medical treatment for transgender servicemembers who are in transition, but they will not let the House debate an amendment that just calls for a study, Mr. Speaker, on blood donations from gay men.

□ 1245

Mr. Speaker, did you know that there is a provision in the NDAA that sets up an entire new military service branch, the Space Corps? The Pentagon doesn't want it; the Air Force doesn't want it; they say it is premature, but an amendment by Mr. TURNER, a Republican, to require the Pentagon to report on the need to establish a Space Corps is not included in this rule. I guess the Republican leadership doesn't want the House to have a say and a debate on such a major change.

Mr. AMASH led a bipartisan amendment to block the sale of cluster munitions to Saudi Arabia. Last year, this amendment failed by just a handful of votes. I guess that is why the Republicans on the Rules Committee aren't about to let it come up for a debate and a vote this year.

When it comes to sending our uniformed women and men into war, into

danger, where their very lives are at risk, the Rules Committee decided that such amendments were not worth the House's time to debate.

Last night, Republicans on the Rules Committee denied the opportunity for debate on a bipartisan amendment offered by myself and Representatives WALTER JONES, BARBARA LEE, TOM MASSIE, JOHN GARAMENDI, DAN KILDEE, and PETER WELCH.

The amendment is very straightforward. If the President decides to increase the level of U.S. troops deployed in Afghanistan in fiscal year 2018, then he would report to Congress on the purpose and mission of those troops, how many were required, and how long they would be there, and then Congress would vote to approve or disapprove that escalation.

This would give the American people the voice they deserve when it comes to sending our men and women in uniform into battle.

Mr. Speaker, the President and General Mattis just decided to send an additional 4,000 troops to Afghanistan to fight the Taliban, on top of the 8,400 U.S. troops already there. That will bring the total number of American troops there to more than 12,000.

Now, if they should decide that they want even more troops in Afghanistan in fiscal year 2018, Congress should know why, and vote on it.

We can't keep giving the administration a blank check and allow America once again to go down the slippery slope of incremental escalation over the next year or two. Congress needs to step up to the plate and either approve or disapprove any renewed escalation in Afghanistan. Isn't that amendment worth debating?

We are in year 16 of the war in Afghanistan. It is the longest war in American history. Let me repeat that, Mr. Speaker. Afghanistan is the longest war in U.S. history. The costs are already in the hundreds of billions of dollars, and the human cost to our troops, our veterans, and their families have been enormous, yet Congress has not taken a single vote, has not taken a single stand on this war for 16 years. Most of the Members of this House weren't even here when that one and only vote was taken.

So in the absence of debating an updated AUMF for Afghanistan, the very least we can do is debate whether we will once again escalate our military footprint in Afghanistan, but the Republican leadership of this House doesn't agree.

Each year, the Republican leadership does everything it can to stop any debate on these wars, and this year is no different. They will allow some amendments on reports and a sense of Congress here and there, but any amendment of substance that requires Congress to act is denied.

Mr. Speaker, I want to advise my colleagues of one thing, and that is, we are not an advisory commission. We are a legislative body. We need to start doing our job.

