

and I believe this reform will lower the cost of care while enhancing competition.

#### DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AAA BOND RATING

(Ms. NORTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask the House to celebrate the District of Columbia, one of only eight big cities with a AAA bond rating. Indeed, only 22 of the States have a AAA bond rating.

This outsized performance should encourage Congress to recognize the D.C. budget autonomy law, which would improve D.C.'s credit profile even more.

Fully respecting D.C.'s budget autonomy also would mean lower taxes and less Federal funds the District needs from the Federal Government. I have already gotten the rating agencies to count as a positive to D.C.'s credit rating my annual provision in the D.C. appropriation exempting D.C. from the threat of shutdowns when the Federal Government shuts down.

Seven-hundred thousand D.C. residents pay the highest Federal taxes per capita in the United States. The rating agencies have awarded D.C. for "exemplary fiscal governance."

Mr. Speaker, I ask the House to do the same by recognizing D.C.'s budget autonomy over its own 100 percent local budget.

#### REQUEST TO ADDRESS THE HOUSE FOR ONE MINUTE

Mr. MCKINLEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to address the House for 1 minute.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GALLAGHER). The Chair will not entertain more than one 1-minute request per Member per day.

#### COMMONSENSE GUN LEGISLATION

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

Mr. SUOZZI. Mr. Speaker, on August 14, it will be 6 months since the Parkland shootings. It has been 5 years since the Sandy Hook shootings. It has been 25 years since the Long Island Railroad massacre. And it has been 37 years since President Reagan was shot.

We need commonsense gun legislation in this country, legislation that the vast majority of Americans support, legislation to plug some of the holes in our commercial background checks.

The good news is that high school students and college students in my district are calling attention to this very important issue. I have been meeting with them throughout the year. They come to me and tell me what it is like when there is a fire alarm in their district.

When I was a kid and there was a fire alarm at school, we would be excited to go outside and see our friends and talk to people. Instead, when they hear a fire alarm, they figure out: Where can I hide? Where can I go if this turns out to be a catastrophe?

These students deserve our attention from this body, Democrats and Republicans working together to try to address this very real problem in our country. I am committed to doing it. I hope my colleagues will as well.

□ 1845

#### REAUTHORIZATION OF THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow will be a great day. We will introduce the reauthorization of the historic Violence Against Women Act. We are excited about this introduction because so many women had an opportunity for almost a year and a half, close to 2 years, to discuss, to invest, to make suggestions, and to bring together this collaboration endorsed by the national task force, a bipartisan group of 35 organizations, from religious organizations, to Native American organizations, to organizations that have been on the front lines of protecting women or seeking to stop the violence against women.

We have expanded the rape prevention section, for the rising need for that section as it relates to the #MeToo movement, sexual assault, and sexual harassment.

We are excited by the confidentiality provisions that indicate that Federal and State agencies that are receiving grants must maintain the confidentiality of those who have been victims.

Mr. Speaker, we invite the entire House of Representatives to join us on this historic occasion and support the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, which will be introduced in the very near future, tomorrow.

#### NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF GOV- ERNING BY CONTINUING RESO- LUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the topic of this Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the body and my colleagues for joining me today in highlighting the negative impact that continuing resolutions have on our Nation's military, on our national security, and on how this Nation addresses the challenges in our military.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I would argue that, if you were to come up with a way not to run a government, if you were to come up with a way not to run a business, you would come up with a continuing resolution.

We know how problematic those continuing resolutions are for this Nation. They damage our military readiness. They damage us being able to make long-term decisions. They put our sailors, our marines, our soldiers, and our airmen at risk.

This is not the way for this Nation to do business. Yet, year after year after year, we find ourselves without appropriations bills being done on time. We find ourselves facing government shutdowns. We find ourselves passing continuing resolutions in order to continue government operations.

This is not the way for us to conduct this Nation's business. It is not what our military needs. It is not what we must do to make sure there is certainty in the future for what this Nation must do under Article I, Section 8 of our Constitution.

I have been asked by a number of folks why we need to spend these dollars on our Nation's military, especially to you, ROB WITTMAN, because you are a fiscal hawk. Tell us why the spending is necessary.

Well, I can say this: We have been through, now, almost 8 years of the continuing resolution facade that is brought to us under the guise of sequestration. The Budget Control Act of 2011 was supposed to be the avenue to make the tough decisions on spending in this body. Yet, that didn't happen. And here we are, facing these automatic budgets cuts every year for our Nation's military.

Instead of making those tough decisions or setting the sequester aside, we find ourselves in a situation where, each year, it is another continuing resolution.

I would argue that this is absolutely avoidable. It is avoidable by this body making decisions on time to get appropriations bills passed out of the House, get all those done prior to this body going home for August recess. I want to make sure that those things get done.

I have come to the realization, too, that this body has a variety of choices. It can make the choice to properly fund our Nation's military. It can make the choice to get appropriations bills done on time. It can make the choice to avoid this.

I would argue that, in order to become a more effective and efficient government, these choices have to be made. I would argue that it is actually Members of Congress who should suffer

the consequences if these decisions aren't made on time. That is, if all 12 appropriations bill aren't done out of the House, I think Members should have to stay in town until it is done. I think we shouldn't get to go home on August recess until all 12 appropriations bills are done.

Our men and women in the military are required to do the job on time, and it is a performance standard. They don't get to go on leave unless the mission is accomplished. It should be the same for Members of Congress.

It is also about making priority decisions, Mr. Speaker. Look at what this body has to do, and we absolutely have to perform our constitutional duty. We have to get appropriations bills done to fund our military. We have to make sure we do that in context of also addressing the deficit and the debt.

I would make arguments that we have seen that situation the last several years where it is a matter of priorities. It is a matter of looking at getting both things done, but doing that in a timeframe.

If you look at what a homeowner might face, let's say a homeowner owns a two-story home and they find themselves in this situation. They find themselves, as they drive up the driveway, knowing that their house has termites rife through the foundation, knowing that before they got home. But as they pull up in the driveway, they find that the second floor of their home is on fire.

Now, that homeowner, we know, is going to make a priority decision, like everybody else, and say: Well, what am I going to do? Am I going to put the second floor fire out, or am I going to address the termites?

Well, everybody knows they are going to put the fire out on the second floor. They are going to call the fire department. They are going to do everything they can to address the significance and the priority of the situation that they face in front of them. Then they will make sure that they call the pest exterminator to come in and get rid of the termites.

That is the same situation this Congress finds itself in, to make sure that we take care of the most pressing issue before us as a priority. That is funding our Nation's military, restoring readiness, stopping continuing resolutions, making decisions on appropriations on time, getting that done before the end of the fiscal year so we don't have to do a continuing resolution.

But it doesn't in any way, shape, or form change the scenario that we face with the termites in the foundation. The termites in the foundation of this Nation are our deficit and our debt, and those things, too, must be done. They are also a priority, just not quite as immediate as restoring military readiness, as bringing in the fire department to put out the second floor fire.

For us, the analogy to the fire department is us getting our job done on

time, because there is immediacy to that. There is that requirement that we take on the lack of military readiness in this Nation, the challenges that we face.

It is not coming just from this body, Mr. Speaker. It is coming from Secretary James Mattis. In January of this year, Secretary Mattis said this: As hard as the last 16 years have been, no enemy in the field has done more to harm the readiness of the U.S. military than the combined impact of the Budget Control Act's defense spending cuts and operating under continuing resolutions. Those two, added together, create the situation we find ourselves in today.

Mr. Speaker, don't think that our adversaries don't look at that and chuckle a little bit and say this is an entirely avoidable situation. This is a situation that the United States has put itself in, that Congress has put itself in. Don't think that our adversaries haven't taken advantage of that.

Don't think that China doesn't look at this and go: Wow, here is our chance to catch up. Here is our chance to put resources in the right places to gain on the technological front.

In addition to what they steal from us, they also take advantage of this disparity in what we are not doing to rebuild this Nation's military readiness and use this opportunity not only to catch up with us but, in many areas, to surpass us.

The same with Russia. While Russia's economy is much smaller, when we mark time, when we stop making progress in rebuilding our Nation's military, when we don't properly fund training, when we don't properly maintain the equipment that we have, it gives our adversaries an advantage. Don't think that Russia hasn't taken the same advantage of this situation to not only catch up and, in other areas, surpass us, even with the small economy that they have.

The same with North Korea, the same with Iran, the same with anybody out there that is looking to gain an advantage over the United States.

These continuing resolutions that have happened over the past 9 or 10 years have left us in that situation, where we have allowed training to atrophy. We have seen that manifest itself in military units not having the joint training opportunities that they need to have the skills necessary, so that, if we call them into action, they can go with the full scope of abilities to take on any challenge that they may face.

We have an obligation as a Nation to make sure that they have the best training and the best opportunities available, to make sure that they can face their adversaries, that they can fight to victory, and that they can come home safe. We owe them nothing less than that.

Continuing resolutions take resources away from that. They create uncertainty for military leaders to

know: Will I have the resources to put in place the training? Will I have the simple elements of training? Will I have the fuel? Will I have the ammunition to make sure that it is a meaningful training exercise?

Those things are lacking when you have a continuing resolution. The automatic budget cuts that come from sequester also add to that.

When you look at our military hardware and look at the time that it needs to be maintained to make sure it is in working order, so that when our men and women in the military need it, when we ask them to go into harm's way, they have systems that work, they have systems that function at the highest level to make sure that they are successful. If we skip maintenance availabilities, if we skip the time necessary, if we delay maintenance, we place risk right there in the hands of our soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen.

We have seen, over the past 10 years, our force structure rapidly diminishing. We see our force structure in the Navy going from 11 carriers down to nine carriers. That is going to happen over the next 30 years because we haven't made the commitment to make sure that we are building carriers faster than we are retiring them.

We also have to make sure that we are maintaining those ships. That, too, lends itself to problems—ships having to be in port longer when we do maintain them because more things have gone wrong, because we have missed maintenance opportunities.

Our attack submarine force structure is going to be reduced by 20 percent over the next 10 years while, at the same time, our adversaries are building more submarines. They have submarines with greater capabilities.

We are missing an opportunity there to do what we need to do as a Nation. I want to make sure that we are doing those things, and I am going to talk a little bit later on about the specifics about where just the Chinese are surpassing our capabilities there within the submarine realm. We have superiority in the undersea world, but it doesn't come automatically. It doesn't come without commitment. It doesn't come without investment.

Those things absolutely have to happen, Mr. Speaker, in the years to come and, I would argue, not just the years to come, in the days to come, as we look at the National Defense Authorization Act that, hopefully, will come up tomorrow in the conference report for this body to pass, as well as an appropriations bill that will come up that, hopefully, we will get passed here. If not, we will face more continuing resolutions.

Now, I know my colleagues who are here with me today express the same reservations about the impact of continuing resolutions. I am honored to have with us today the gentlewoman from Arizona (Mrs. LESKO), and I yield to the gentlewoman for her perspective

on what impacts continuing resolutions have on this Nation.

Mrs. LESKO. Mr. Speaker, I agree with the gentleman from Virginia. Continuing resolutions are a growing threat to our national security. Yet, for the past 17 years, Congress has forced the Department of Defense to begin the fiscal year under a continuing resolution 13 times.

□ 1900

Continuing resolutions are designed to temporarily fund the Federal Government if more time is needed to debate and finish remaining appropriations bills; however, they inhibit the Defense Department planning for the future. Not only do they harm us and our ability to deter and defend against emerging threats, but they also put our national security in a gridlock.

Supporting defense programs through prior year funding levels is wasteful and inefficient. Think about it. Are our family's or business' needs the exact same as they were last year? the year before that? Of course not, because as we grow and develop, our needs change.

The short-term fixes of continuing resolutions ultimately obstruct and hinder the military and its responsibility to secure our Nation. The consequences of shutdown politics will ultimately compromise the Department of Defense by inhibiting our military's ability to pursue long-term projects and reforms.

The Department of Defense relies upon multiyear contracts for fighter jets like the F-35, missile defense systems, and other advanced weapons. This is because contracts are usually the most cost-effective means to pay for military equipment.

At Luke Air Force Base, which is in my district, I have heard repeatedly how uncertainty in the defense budget and the restrictions that come from continuing resolutions have stalled the Air Force's F-35 fighter jet program. This is not acceptable. We must change how we do business and fund our single most important responsibility in Congress: our national defense.

We all agree that we must provide a common defense for our country, and we need to stop letting political grandstanding get in the way of that. We have worked too hard to begin rebuilding our military in a meaningful way to let shutdown politics put our Nation at risk.

While I am pleased and proud at what the House has done, that we have done our job and voted to approve both the National Defense Authorization Act and the Department of Defense Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2019, our work is not done. We must work with our counterparts in the Senate to ensure these bills are signed into law.

We cannot stop falling back on continuing resolutions to determine our military's defense budget. We must keep working for the men and women who put their lives at risk every day to defend our freedom.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Virginia, Representative WITTMAN, for his commitment to our military.

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Arizona, and I would like to ask that she maybe elaborate a little bit more.

I think the gentlewoman brings up a great point about the impact on the Air Force, with Luke Air Force Base being there in her district, and the impact on airmen, the impact on the job that they do. I would love to have her share a little bit more about the conversations that I know she has had a lot with members of the military back in her district, but especially there at Luke Air Force Base, maybe elaborate a little bit more on the specific impacts that they deal with on a daily basis there at Luke Air Force Base.

Mrs. LESKO. Mr. Speaker, yes, we have Luke Air Force Base in my district in Arizona. And it is not only a powerful base for the defense of our Nation; it is the largest training base for our fighter jets in the entire Nation. We have F-35s. Prior to that, we had F-16s.

Just like everything else, just like a family, we need to know what our budget is long term, because we need to train our fighter pilots. We need to know how many hours of funding we have to do that. We need to have a reliable amount of money that we can depend on in order to enter contracts.

So this whole continuing resolution thing, we really need to get past that.

I was the senate appropriations chairman in Arizona, and I heard over and over and over again from businesses that: We just need something to rely on. We need something that is steady.

And that is what we need. We need to pass a budget that really puts the defense of our country front and center because, after all, that is Congress' number one job.

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I agree fully with the gentlewoman from Arizona, and I thank her so much for being part of this Special Order this evening.

Mr. Speaker, I think there are a number of important points that the gentlewoman from Arizona brings up. And she talks about training. I think training is one of those elements that is absolutely essential for us to remember that that training doesn't happen by accident. It happens because of concerted efforts here in Congress, within the Pentagon, within the service branches, all the way down to the unit level to make sure that training takes place.

But it doesn't take place when there is uncertainty about funding, because what is the first thing in a budget that gets put on hold when it pertains to our service branches? When they look at uncertainty, what is the place where they have the maximum flexibility? It is training.

When you look at it, they have money that is already obligated in pro-

grams to do things like build ships, to build aircraft, but the one place where they can move money around is for training. I can tell you that that has a tremendous impact on units at the unit level, commanders trying to figure out: How am I going to make sure my units get the training?

As I spoke of earlier, it is not just about tactical training; it is about training at the strategic level. How do you interact with other service branches so, if you find yourselves in a major conflict, you can work across service branches to make sure you have the proficiency to be successful on that mission, to be successful in battle?

Those things are critical, and that doesn't come automatically. That comes with repeated training at the highest levels, and it comes with assurance that the resources are going to be there so our military leaders can plan for that. We want to make sure that that gets done on a timely basis.

I understand, too, that there is a lot of hesitancy in folks to say: Well, if we can't reach a conclusion on spending decisions, then the best thing to do is a continuing resolution.

I would argue that that is not the case. I would argue that this goes right down to the command level. It goes to our combatant commanders who have to deal with this every day.

Our combatant commanders are faced with threats that are on their doorstep every day, and there is no place where this threat is more apparent on a daily basis than what our Pacific Command faces with the aggression of the Chinese, with the aggression of North Korea there in the Pacific.

Admiral Harris, the previous Commander of PaCOM, I think said it extraordinarily well. He said this:

"The Pacific is the principal space where submarines are the most important warfighting capability we have. As far as Virginia-class submarines, it is the best thing we have. . . . My submarine requirement is not met in the Pacific Command, and I am just one of many combatant commanders that will tell you that. . . ."

That brings us back to the subject of submarines. Attack submarines, our ability to go undetected around the world to sense what our adversaries do and also to understand that that threat is real, we have, today, an advantage in the undersea world, but that advantage continues to wane because we are not making the progress in keeping up with building submarines in relation to retiring submarines. That, I think, is key, Mr. Speaker.

I want to point to this chart on the floor. I am going to walk there.

As we see from the chart, we see the U.S. fleet of attack submarines, and we see what happens when we come to 2029. We reach a low point, a low point where this Nation only has 42 attack submarines when we get to 2029.

You see the chart where our adversaries go. You see where the Chinese

go: a significant increase in submarines because they see the value of submarines; they see that attack submarines give them a strategic advantage in the Pacific.

It is pretty simple, folks. It is a geography lesson.

The Pacific is water, and in order to maintain strategic importance in that region, you have to control the under-sea domain. The Chinese understand that. We used to understand it, until now, when we see that our attack submarine force is going down to a low of 42 submarines. We don't get back to where we need to be to get anywhere close to the Chinese until 2050.

Now, what happens in the meantime when the Chinese now surpass us, have that strategic advantage? And I would argue, when the Chinese have that strategic advantage, it will embolden them. They will look at this as an opportunity to say: Wow. The United States is really not committed to a naval presence in this area of the world. We are not only going to express that naval dominance in our territorial waters, but we are going to even move out into the South China Sea, move into the Pacific, into the Indian Ocean, even the Atlantic Ocean.

We look at how they are spreading their influence and presence today. It is all over the world, folks. So our signal that we are sending to them, saying, "Hey, we are just not going to build submarines; we are going to retire them faster than we are building them," has an impact. And it gets exacerbated when we have continuing resolutions or we don't make the commitment necessary that comes with getting appropriations bills passed on time. This puts us at a strategic disadvantage.

If you add, now, attack submarines with ballistic missile submarines—which, by the way, we are starting down the road to build the replacement for our *Ohio*-class submarines that are the most important part of the nuclear triad, I believe, for this Nation—the delta gets even bigger, because it is going to be all we can do to build the replacement submarines for the *Ohio*-class.

But what is happening is that the Chinese are building even more ballistic missile submarines. So if you add attack submarines and ballistic missile submarines, you have a number somewhere around 70 total submarines in 2020 that the Chinese will have.

They, potentially, are building at a rate of five to six additional submarines each year, combined attack submarines and ballistic missile submarines, which would put them in the realm, by the time we get down in 2028, well above 100 total submarines, where we are going to be struggling with our reduction in submarines at 42 and just beginning to build the new ballistic missile submarine, and in an area where you hear from Admiral Harris the most requested asset in the United States military is the attack sub-

marine. It is where we have dominance. It is where we are yielding dominance with just the Chinese. That doesn't even include the Russians, who have developed a very advanced ballistic missile submarine, the Severodvinsk class, that is an extraordinarily capable submarine.

If we don't have attack submarines to keep up with their submarines, a nation that has a large stockpile in inventory of nuclear weapons that are deployed on submarines, then the question becomes: If you combine that with the Chinese, where does it leave this Nation? It leaves us with a strategic capability that is lacking in relation to our adversaries.

And, folks, if you look at times in the history of the world where there have been conflicts between major powers, those conflicts have been a result of a major imbalance between those powers.

If we allow this imbalance to continue because Congress goes down the road of continuing resolutions, which continues to erode the ability for us to deploy dollars to do things like build submarines, if we don't get past the sequester, which puts artificial reductions in our defense budget while, at the same time, our adversaries are increasing their efforts, we will find ourselves in that situation in the not too distant future where we say: How did we get here? How did we find ourselves in this strategic position where our adversaries now don't have to do a whole lot to surpass us, where we embolden our adversaries, where we put ourselves in the position where are adversaries say: It won't take much for us to take on the United States and do that successfully?

That, I think, is the key of what we have to address.

Mr. Speaker, I want to yield to my colleague from Pennsylvania for his perspective, because I think he has a very unique perspective not just on major powers, but specifically on where Russia plays in this.

We talked about China, but I want to yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania to get his perspective on how this major power imbalance affects the United States' security, affects our strategic ability to deter our adversaries, and I would like to recognize his perspective.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ROTHFUS).

□ 1915

Mr. ROTHFUS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Virginia for yielding. It wasn't too long ago that we had the gentleman visit our district in western Pennsylvania to talk to a number of folks in the defense industry, and I just applaud him for his very serious work on the Armed Services Committee.

He is good to highlight the situations that we come into when we see these continuing resolutions, the damage it does to our military, the need for long-

term planning, how we have threats around the world, both emerging threats that continue to evolve, but there are our old adversaries and not-so-old adversaries: Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, and global terror networks.

We could go on and on and on, but we have to have a military that is ready to respond. And we cannot be holding our military budget hostage to any other part of the Federal Government. It makes no sense.

Speaking of one of those adversaries, I want to talk a little bit about Russia, because Russia has been in the news so much lately. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about Russia and the threat it poses to us and our allies.

For the past 40 years or so, I would describe myself as a hawk when it comes to Russia. As such, I would like to welcome my friends from across the aisle who are finally starting to express their concerns about the Russian bear. The question I have is: What took so long?

Russia has been an adversary of the United States and the West for decades. I will spare the House a lengthy history lesson and then, instead, focus on the recent past. This is important because in conversations I have had back home, there are some constituents who are unaware of that history.

Next month will mark 10 years since Russia invaded the Republic of Georgia. In response to this, then-President George W. Bush condemned the action saying:

The territorial integrity and borders of Georgia must be respected, just as those of Russia or any other country.

Less than 7 months after the 2008 Georgia invasion, however, during the opening days of the Obama administration, then-Secretary of State Clinton presented a reset button to Russian's foreign minister, as if it was the prior administration's fault for Russia's aggression and consequent chilly relationship.

And mere months after hitting the reset button, we learned President Obama was shutting down a proposed missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic. Some reset.

Within the aura of this reset, a Russian bank paid Secretary Clinton's husband \$500,000 for a 1-hour speech in Moscow. That is some billable rate, even for a Yale Law School graduate.

At the same time, a Russian company was preparing to take a controlling interest in Uranium One, a corporation that held 20 percent of the U.S.'s uranium supply. That foreign acquisition required the approval of the Obama administration and Secretary Clinton. Approval was granted.

Ultimately, The New York Times reported that \$2.3 million of contributions from Uranium One connections flowed to the Clinton Foundation. But that has not seemed to draw concerns from the new Democrat Russia hawks from across the aisle.

Later, as Secretary Clinton wrapped up her State Department tenure in

2012, President Obama, not aware that a microphone was picking him up said to then-Russian President Medvedev:

This is my last election. After my election, I will have more flexibility.

And Medvedev responded:

I will relay that to Vladimir.

That would be Vladimir Putin. The flexibility was about missile defense. President Obama even mocked Mitt Romney in a 2012 Presidential debate after Romney identified Russia as our biggest geopolitical threat.

President Obama glibly responded to Romney: "And, the 1980s are now calling to ask for their foreign policy back . . ."

During President Obama's second term, we saw continued indifference towards Russia, Crimea, Eastern Ukraine, the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, Russian violations of the Reagan-Gorbachev Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, ceding Middle East influence that fueled the growth of ISIS, and failure to respond to Bashar al-Assad's use of chemical weapons, to name a few. And not once do I recall ever hearing a peep from my friends across the aisle, even after President Obama drew his infamous red line.

Let's compare the response to the shooting down of Korean Airlines Flight 007 to that of flight MH17. Brilliantly, U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick publicly prosecuted and convicted Russia at the United Nations for shooting down KAL Flight 007, which killed 269 innocent civilians, including Congressman Larry McDonald.

The KAL 007 shoot down dramatically increased our resolve to collapse the evil empire. However, the Obama administration never thoroughly prosecuted the case for Russia's culpability for the MH17 shoot down.

In the midst of all this, Russia was plotting to interfere in our elections. Ignoring the 1980s calling about the foreign policy, the Obama administration did not take the Russia threat seriously. They never picked up the voicemail that the 1980s left.

It was the last administration's failure to understand the threat that Russia posed that virtually paved the way for the aggressive Russia we see today. Throughout the Obama administration, Secretary Clinton and others failed to confront Russian hostility, the result of a reset button.

The reality is that Vladimir Putin wants to sow discord in the West. He would cause trouble to whoever was in the White House. Interestingly, when Putin said in Helsinki that he wanted Trump to win, it was amazing to see people accept his remarks without a hint of skepticism, even though Putin is a former KGB agent and a master of disinformation. Let me repeat that. Vladimir Putin is a former KGB agent and a master of disinformation.

It is President Trump that wants to arm Ukrainians. He is demanding that Germany stop buying gas from Russia.

He is advancing American energy development, as opposed to the Obama administration that sought to curtail it. And when Russia's puppet, Assad, used chemical weapons on his own people, President Trump responded with military force.

From that perspective, would Putin, the master of disinformation, really have preferred President Trump over President Clinton? The American people can draw their own conclusions. While my friends across the aisle seem to have awoken to the threat that Russia presents, going forward, I hope they remain as concerned about Russia and President Putin as they are about President Trump.

For starters, they could show up by helping to get to the bottom of the Uranium One scandal. Meanwhile, on our side of the aisle, we take Russia seriously and have done so for decades. We are providing military assistance to Ukraine. We are passing new Russian sanctions legislation on top of what we passed earlier this year. We are the ones countering Russia's influence in the Middle East and their ally, Iran.

When it comes to checking Russia, it is Republicans, not Democrats, who have the established record of doing so, and we will continue to do that for as long as Russian hostility exists.

I simply implore President Trump to be vigilant and clear and heed the concerns of my fellow Republican legislators who have engaged on Russian matters for years.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his work on this area.

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for outlining very in-depth the impact that Russia has on the United States, the responses that are needed to be strong against Russian aggression, against the things that they are trying to do to destabilize this Nation.

I appreciate the gentleman's leadership there in pointing that out and calling everyone to task to make sure that we, as a Nation, are acting to make sure we are doing the right things, to make sure, too, we point out past instances where there have been inconsistencies in how this issue has been addressed with previous administrations.

I deeply appreciate that. I think it is an important part of our discussion here today about what we have to do to counter those threats, the obligation this Nation has to counter those threats. The gentleman has laid it out very plainly, very succinctly, and very clearly for what the obligation of this Nation is, and calling upon our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to be as committed to countering Russia as we are on this side of the aisle. So I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also point out that it is not just the strategic impact that continuing resolutions and lack of on-time appropriations bills has on our Nation strategically. We pointed those out, the threats that are there, but also

the impact that it has at the individual level; the impact that it has on sailors, on soldiers, marines, and airmen.

We saw this past year in two ship collisions where 17 sailors died on board the USS *Fitzgerald* and the USS *McCain*. And we see that there was a contributory factor for the lack of training on those ships, the issues of material readiness on those ships that goes back to continuing resolutions and not adopting appropriations bills on time.

The uncertainty that comes with that and the lack of resources dedicated for proper training, for proper maintenance, did have a contributory effect there. It didn't create the sole impact necessary for those unfortunate incidents to occur, but it did contribute to those incidents.

In avoiding continuing resolutions, we can send a clear message to our men and women in the military, to their families, that this Nation is committed to their wellbeing; that this Nation is committed to them getting the mission done; that this Nation is committed to giving them the best; to give them the tools that they need to succeed; to give them the ability, when called upon, to fight to victory and come home safe.

We, as a Nation, owe them nothing less. And when we have continuing resolutions, or lack of adopting appropriations bills on time, we are not sending the message to them and their families that we are committed to reducing their risk. That is key for us to make sure that we get that done. And it is also a commitment that we have to taxpayers to assure them that we will spend money efficiently and effectively to defend this Nation.

Continuing resolutions are not effective or efficient ways to spend money. Not getting appropriations bills done on time do not allow long-term planning.

And let me tell you, our adversaries long-term plan. And they look at our lack of long-term commitment here as a vulnerability. And, indeed, it is. It is a vulnerability not only for our Nation, but it is a vulnerability that we see manifested in the risks that our sailors, soldiers, and marines face, and, ultimately, those who gave their lives in avoidable accidents on board those ships.

It is not just ships, Mr. Speaker. It is also aircraft. We have seen an inordinate number of aircraft crashes this year and last year that are associated with lack of maintenance on those aircraft, in some instances, tangentially associated with training. Those things are preventable. They are preventable if we adopt appropriations bills on time for our Nation's defense, and avoid continuing resolutions.

We must make sure that we get that job done on time. And I can tell you that it is not just Members that see it that way, but it is also the Speaker. In fact, PAUL RYAN was quoted just yesterday saying: "We really just want to get the military funded on time, on

budget, on schedule this year and that's the primary concern."

He pointed that out because that is the primary concern for what we are facing with getting appropriations bills done on time. That is the primary consideration in getting the National Defense Authorization Act conference report out of the House tomorrow so that it can get over to the Senate so that they can get it done on time.

If this gets done this year, Mr. Speaker, it will be the soonest it has been done in almost 30 years.

Why is this year the exception? This should be the rule. We should be getting these things done early, getting it done in time so that we can get an appropriations bill done prior to the end of the fiscal year. Those are obligations that this Nation has to make sure that we get that done on time.

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The NDAA has some very important elements in it this year that are critical to our Nation's military readiness, critical to our getting the job done for our men and women in the military, and critical to making sure that we can counter the threats that we know are there from our adversaries. It accelerates U.S. efforts to field conventional prompt strike capability before fiscal year '22. Those things are critical. That strike capability is the deterrence for our members of the military. Those things absolutely must happen, and this bill lets us get that done.

It also focuses on rebuilding the nuclear deterrence of our Nation. Nuclear deterrence is the way we keep our adversaries at bay; and when they look at us and don't see a commitment there that is expressed in getting appropriations bills done on time and having ourselves in these continuing resolutions debacles year after year after year, they look at it as a vulnerability.

It also allows us to improve our missile defense. An aging missile defense, one that in comparison to upgrades by our adversaries, put us in a terrible strategic position.

Also enhancing our space warfighting. The disparity that we have in space operations with our adversaries is mind-boggling. The only way that we close that delta is to make the commitment and put the resources in place on time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to put in perspective where we are today and the waste that occurs with a continuing resolution.

I will conclude my remarks with the comments of Secretary Richard Spencer that he outlined on our behavior that this body has put in place since 2011. He actually came before the House Armed Services Committee and said this, he said:

We have put \$4 billion in a trash can, poured lighter fluid on it, and burned it. \$4 billion is enough to buy a squadron of F-35s, two Arleigh Burke-class destroyers, 3,000 Harpoon missiles. It is enough money to buy

us additional capacity that we need today in order to counter the threats that we find ourselves facing around the world. Instead, it's lost because of inefficacy in the ways of the continuing resolution.

Mr. Speaker, this is an entirely avoidable situation, one that Congress year after year after year finds itself in a position to address, yet chooses not to. It is not just a single continuing resolution. Last year we found ourselves in a situation of having four continuing resolutions that took us 6 months into the budget year and then finally coming up with an appropriations bill that finished the year with 6 months of funding that was supposed to take place over 12 months.

So, Mr. Speaker, not only did you miss out on the certainty with the first 6 months of funding that was done by continuing resolutions, but now you take 12 months' worth of money and try to pack it into 6 months, and we wonder why there is inefficiency there. We wonder why money is pushed out the door in ways that waste money.

The Secretary of the Navy pointed it out and showed us the ills of our ways, and what we can do to avoid this, what we can do to make sure that resources will get to the right place, get there on time, can be efficiently deployed where there is certainty in what our military needs to plan for the long-term needs that this Nation has left unaddressed, for the long-term needs of rebuilding readiness.

It hasn't happened, Mr. Speaker, and it is entirely avoidable. We have that full ability in our grasp to make sure this doesn't happen again.

Again, if we were to come up with the worst way to run a business and with the worst way to run a government, it would be a continuing resolution. It is avoidable.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues that when the National Defense Authorization Act conference report comes up before this body that they vote "yes," that we do that this year in the quickest timeframe we have done in nearly 30 years.

And that when the Defense Appropriation bill comes before this body—after the Senate puts together whatever they will put together—that we must get the defense of this Nation funded prior to the end of the budget year.

If we do that, then the 17 billion additional dollars that we put towards helping our soldiers, our sailors, our marines to do the job we ask them to do will be there. To deter our adversaries around the world, the resources in order to accomplish that will be there. To do anything less is a disservice to this Nation. To do anything less is a disservice to the men and women who serve in our military. To do anything less is disrespectful to their commitment to our Nation, and the commitment that their families make to this Nation.

We can do better. We must do better. And we have an opportunity in the weeks to come to do better.

Mr. Speaker, I urge Members to show the same kind of commitment for this Nation's military through no continuing resolutions and through passing appropriations bills for our defense on time. That same commitment should be shown by us as the commitment by our brave men and women in uniform.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

#### FEDERAL EMPLOYEE UNIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GARRETT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include any extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia?

There was no objection.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to speak to two issues. One, is the dagger thrown at the heart of the right of Federal employees to organize. The second will be ICE raids that randomly rounded up residents of the District of Columbia without a warrant and without any cause.

Let me proceed first to the gang-up on Federal employees by the executive and Republicans in the House to undermine the rights of Federal unions to represent Federal employees.

We have seen Republicans for years try to weaken the rights of Federal employees. Certainly, we have seen them go at unions before. But this time, they have gone even further. The intention to destroy the right of a union to represent Federal employees is the clear intent of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle.

I shall explain why that intent is so obvious this evening. The American Federation of Government Employees had a rally today. Attending also were many other employee unions, but the AFGE led the rally because of the acute danger that the current work of the Republican House and the President present to the right to organize and to be represented.

Federal employees are represented in virtually every category of work by the AFGE. If we look at what the President and the House Republicans are doing, it is clear that they have declared war on their own Federal employees. They have done it by striking at the heart of the right to be represented by a Federal union.

I will explain how they have moved against that right, but, first, let me explain where that right comes from and why there is any such right at all.

You certainly don't have that kind of right in the business sector. You can't