

Mr. President, 2017 was a historic year of partisan obstruction by our Democratic colleagues, even for uncontroversial judges who went on to unanimous or near-unanimous confirmation votes. Our colleagues across the aisle used every possible procedural roadblock to delay and drag their heels.

Now 2018 is, unfortunately, starting off the same way.

Mr. Campbell is a Marine Corps veteran and a well-respected lawyer. His record is not partisan. His nomination was reported out of the Judiciary Committee on a voice vote. I look forward to the Senate confirming him, albeit after our Democratic colleagues waste more of the Senate's time.

I implore our Democratic friends to turn the page on the needless obstruction and permit the Senate to function smoothly so that we can attend to more of the people's business.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on a final matter, in the next 11 days Congress needs to reach an agreement to fund the government.

It is imperative that this agreement provide adequate resources for our men and women in uniform. Last week, leadership on both sides of the aisle expressed hopes of working seriously and collaboratively on a solution that enables our Armed Forces to advance critical missions at home and abroad.

At the same time, our Democratic colleagues persist in the notion that we should increase defense spending only if we increase nondefense spending by the same amount. As we lay the facts on the table, this political talking point simply doesn't hold up.

By now, we all know that the Budget Control Act hit defense spending much harder than it hit domestic spending. Since fiscal year 2013, to be precise, discretionary defense spending has been cut by \$85 billion more than discretionary nondefense spending. This might sound like an abstract distinction, but it has very real, tangible consequences for our national security. These disproportionate cuts have reduced the readiness of American forces to meet and address emerging threats.

Our military leaders have explained this over and over and over again. Just months ago, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dunford, told our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee that over the last decade, "The U.S. military's competitive advantage against potential adversaries is eroding." He cited budgetary instability as a key reason.

At the same hearing, Secretary of Defense Mattis added: "No enemy in the field has done more to harm the readiness of our military than sequestration."

"No enemy," Secretary Mattis said, "in the field has done more to harm the readiness of our military than sequestration."

The men and women we trust to lead our military have made it abundantly clear that the status quo in defense funding, let alone the further instability that would result from our failure to reach an agreement, is handicapping our servicemembers.

In the next week and a half, let's put aside partisan rhetoric and start heeding the warnings of our nonpartisan military leaders. Let's give those who keep us safe the resources they need to do the job.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of William L. Campbell, Jr., of Tennessee, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Tennessee.

Mr. McCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon to mark a milestone no Senator can be proud of and a milestone every Senator should regret. That milestone is, it has now been 100 days since the Congress failed to extend full funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program. The Congress has always looked at this in a bipartisan way. This is for the millions of families, for kids who walk an economic tightrope with their families, the families who balance the rent bill against the fuel bill and the fuel bill against the grocery bill.

I have to say, there was plenty of time in the last Congress to carry out the priorities of the multinational corporations. The people who are well connected, the people who are powerful received permanent, substantial, really massive new tax breaks, and yet the 9

million kids, including 80,000 in my home State who count on CHIP to stay healthy—what they received was a patch. They received something temporary. They received something that didn't resemble the permanent, you-can-count-on-it tax relief the multinational corporations were celebrating at the end of the year. It is a sad statement about the priorities of the Congress at the end of last year and one I hope we will move now in the bipartisan tradition of this program to pass on a permanent basis.

The CHIP program was created in 1997 through a simple idea: No child, regardless of their income, family's status, or geography should go without quality, affordable healthcare. It serves families who make too much to qualify for Medicaid but also don't have access to affordable healthcare through their employer. A lot of these families go back and forth between CHIP and Medicaid, depending on whether a spouse is out of work.

CHIP covers all kinds of essential healthcare for kids from preventive services to dental checkups, to treatment for serious illnesses. For families across the country, that is peace of mind, that is the chance to go to bed at night knowing you aren't going to get crushed by big medical bills in the morning. It means you don't have to have those heartbreaking, right-before-bed conversations about what you are going to do for your sick child, and it doesn't mean you have to just plan on the unexpected emergencies with nowhere to turn. All of that is at risk because of the "negligence" of this Congress, and I use that word specifically.

I talked about the skewed priorities at the end of the year, but right now States are stretching their Children's Health Insurance Program dollars to the breaking point. They are trying to make sure kids stay covered, and what we are faced with is termination notices going out. We have to prevent those termination notices for these families. As I said, Congress put a patch on all this, contrasting this to the permanent relief of the multinationals, and the Congress sent a small amount of money to the States to keep them afloat, but make no mistake about it, it is not going to be long before bedlam sets in, once again, and there are real consequences for children and families.

Now, I also want to note that I have been working closely with Chairman HATCH for months now to get CHIP across the finish line. Chairman HATCH knows what it takes. He created this program with our friend Senator Rockefeller and the late, great Senator Kennedy. They demonstrated that kids' health was an issue that transcends ideological lines, and our country is the better for it today.

Chairman HATCH and I made an agreement in September that extends full funding for 5 years, affirms key protections for kids and their families, and gives States certainty they can

count on to plan their budgets. I note that the leader, Senator SCHUMER, is here. He has been very supportive of this bill. He sat next to me and Senator Rockefeller for years and is supportive of the children's health program.

The Hatch-Wyden bill passed with a strong bipartisan vote in the Finance Committee. Again, I am highlighting the priorities where there was time for the multinational corporations to get that permanent relief, but there wasn't any time to put the CHIP bill—one that had only one vote in opposition in the Finance Committee—on the Senate floor. In the House of Representatives, they weren't pursuing it like we did in the Finance Committee. They never could get past a purely partisan approach, out of line with CHIP's long, bipartisan history.

Now, obviously after months of delay, it is time to act, and I want to wrap up with a quick comment about what is going to happen if you don't move and move quickly. Just last week, the Congressional Budget Office announced that the cost of CHIP has plummeted from \$8.2 billion to \$800 million. That is because premiums in the individual market are set to skyrocket after the repeal of the Affordable Care Act's coverage requirement in the Republican tax bill. Many of the families who currently count on CHIP will have to get their kids' healthcare on the private market at a higher cost. As if Congress needed more reasons to act, the budget office has demonstrated what is now at stake for kids and their families who are counting on quick action for affordable healthcare.

There is a long history, as I have noted, of the Senate working on the Children's Health Insurance Program in a bipartisan way. We started building on that tradition in the Finance Committee with virtual unanimity. Somehow at the end of the last Congress—and your priorities can always be illustrated with what you find time to do—there was time at the end of the year for the agenda of the multinational corporations, but there wasn't time for the youngsters and their families who walk an economic tightrope and depend every night, when they turn the lights out, on making sure there is a way to pay for healthcare if there is an emergency in the morning.

I want it understood that we are working day in and day out now to quickly make sure kids and their families get the certainty and predictability they deserve. They deserve the kind of certainty the powerful got with the tax bill at the end of the year.

So we are going to be on this floor until this critical legislation is passed. It needs to be passed quickly.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, my dear friend and I got to Congress in

1980, and I thank him very much for his leadership on the CHIP issue, as on so many other issues that pass through the Finance Committee, where he has done a terrific job. His caring for kids is unmatched, and he is a great asset to his State of Oregon, to this body, and to our country.

We have 2 weeks until funding for the government runs out. Alongside our talks about extending government funding, we have also been engaged in serious bipartisan negotiations on a number of issues that should coincide with that deadline. We have to lift spending cuts, pass disaster aid, a healthcare package, reach an agreement to enshrine DACA protections alongside additional border security, and of course there is the issue of 702 as well.

Those negotiations, though difficult, have been proceeding quite well. In fact, the four congressional leaders met with representatives from the White House last Thursday and had an encouraging meeting. Unfortunately, following that meeting, the White House issued a series of unreasonable demands entirely outside the scope of our ongoing negotiations about DACA and border security. It is part of a pattern of behavior on the part of this White House during sensitive bipartisan negotiations.

Over the past year, the White House has much more frequently been a disruptive force rather than a unifying force. To throw down a list from the hard-line wing of the White House at the last minute is not a very fortuitous or smart thing to do.

I hope we can keep on the track that we were on because the issues we are facing are mounting, and a major deal requires dedicated, bipartisan effort. Democrats are going to keep working toward a global agreement with our Republican colleagues, one that lifts the spending caps for defense and urgent domestic priorities in tandem, that sends our men and women in uniform the support they need, and that puts a downpayment on tackling the pressing issues here at home, such as combating the opioid epidemic, improving veterans' healthcare, and shoring up pension plans. These are every bit as important as helping our troops.

Our troops are extremely important, but we are a great country, and we don't have to say: To help the troops, we can't help the victims of opioid addiction. To help the troops, we can't help the veterans who once were troops themselves. To help the troops, we can't help working Americans keep the pensions they paid into year after year. All these folks want is to retire to a life of some degree of dignity.

When the majority leader said this morning that he is not for parity, he is saying we can't do both. He is telling victims of opioid addiction, many of whom are soldiers who have PTSD, and he is telling pensioners—some miners in his own State—and he is telling veterans who have to wait in line for

healthcare that this country can't do both, that we can't protect our military, give them the funds they need, and deal with our domestic needs.

When Donald Trump ran, he said that we have to pay more attention to America. What the majority leader is saying is that is not the case. So let no one be fooled. When the majority leader says he is not for parity, he is not for helping opioid folks to the extent they need, he is not for helping veterans to the extent they need, and he is not for helping pensioners to the extent they need. We Democrats are there for both—helping the military and helping these folks here.

Over the weekend, I was in White Plains, which is a suburb of New York City. I stood with a mother who lost her son to an opioid overdose. A mother should never have to bury her son, especially Stephanie Keegan, whose son Daniel was a veteran who served our country bravely in Afghanistan. He did very well in school but had a duty to country. He was in the intelligence unit for a while, he was so brilliant. But he came home, as some do, nerves shattered by war, struggling with a severe case of PTSD. Stephanie told me that her beautiful, brilliant son Daniel—I saw his picture; an all-American boy, if ever there were one—her son Daniel waited 16 months for treatment by the VA and died 2 weeks before his first appointment.

"There are so many things that can be done to change this situation," Mrs. Keegan said. She is right. We can make a real investment in combating the scourge of opioid addiction, putting real resources into treatment and recovery, as well as interdiction. We can make a real investment in improving healthcare at our veterans hospitals so kids like Daniel don't have to wait almost a year and a half before they get the treatment they desperately need.

And what about hard-working Americans who need pensions? Retirement is one of the things Americans worry about most these days. For years, Teamsters and miners and carpenters paid into pension plans week after week, month after month, year after year. They took a little less salary in their negotiations because they wanted to know that when it was time to retire, they could retire with some degree of dignity. No one is going to get rich on these pensions, but at least they are there and provide a little bit of a nest egg for people in their golden years. As they put the money in week after week, month after month, year after year, they were told: You may not become rich when you retire, you may not be able to buy luxuries, but at least you will have a life of dignity.

Now those pensions may be stolen from millions in America, in this country. These folks contributed to and earned every penny of their pensions. Are we going to shrug our shoulders and say: We can't do that. Most Americans want us to do that; they don't want it to be an either-or situation.