

I look forward to President Trump signing these appropriations bills into law. They will help to keep our country first in science, technology, and supercomputing, and they will build the ports and waterways that create jobs.

This bill supports funding for several important agencies, including the Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Department of Energy, the National Nuclear Security Administration, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Bureau of Reclamation, and regional commissions, including the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Delta Regional Authority.

The amount of funding in the bill is also consistent with spending caps agreed to as part of the bipartisan budget agreement. It sets priorities while reducing unnecessary spending.

Let me start with the Army Corps of Engineers, which affects the lives of almost every American. Based upon the appropriations request we received, this is the most popular agency in the budget. The Corps maintains our inland waterways; it deepens and keeps our ports open; it looks after our recreational waters and lands; it manages our rivers to prevent flooding; it dams provide emission-free, renewable hydroelectric energy. The bill restores \$2.3 billion that was cut from the President's budget request, bringing the Corps' budget up to \$6.999 billion—a new record level of funding in a regular appropriations bill.

For the fifth consecutive year, the bill makes full use of the Inland Waterways Trust Fund revenues for water infrastructure projects, including up to \$117.7 million to continue construction of Chickamauga Lock in Chattanooga and \$2.125 million for dredging at Memphis Harbor McKellar Lake.

The bill also provides funding that exceeds the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, a spending target established by the Water Resources and Development Act of 2014. This is the fifth consecutive year that the bill has met or exceeded the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund spending targets, which is necessary to adequately fund our Nation's harbors, including Mobile Harbor in Alabama, Savannah Harbor in Georgia, Long Beach Harbor in California, and many others across the country.

For the Department of Energy, for the fourth consecutive year, we have included record funding levels in a regular appropriations bill for the following activities: No. 1, for the Department's Office of Science. This is the Nation's largest support of research in the physical sciences. It is funded at \$6.5 billion, a new record funding level. The Office of Science provides funding for our 17 national laboratories—I call them our secret weapons—including the Oak Ridge National Laboratory. No other country has anything like them.

Let's take supercomputing. The bill provides a total of \$1.6 billion for high performance computing, including \$935 million within the Office of Science and \$723 million within the National

Nuclear Security Administration. This includes \$6.76 million to deliver at least one exascale machine in 2021 to reassert U.S. leadership in the critical area of supercomputing.

This accomplishment is not the result of 1 year of funding, but of 10 years of bipartisan effort through three different administrations, Democrat and Republican, to try to make sure that the United States is first in the world in supercomputing. We continue to do that in this appropriations bill.

Nuclear power is our best source of inexpensive, carbon-free baseload power. It is important for national security and competitiveness. Nuclear power provides 20 percent of our Nation's electricity and more than half of our carbon-free electricity. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which oversees our 99 nuclear power reactors, is also funded in this bill. We wanted to make sure it is prepared to review applications for new reactors, particularly small modular reactors and advanced reactors, and to extend the licenses of existing nuclear reactors, if it is the safe thing to do.

The bill also provides \$47 million for research and development at the Department of Energy to support existing reactors, \$27 million for the Consortium for Advanced Simulation of Light Water Reactors, and \$30 million for the Transformational Challenge Reactor.

It advances efforts to clean up hazardous materials at Cold War-era sites. The bill provides \$7.2 billion to support cleanup efforts, which is \$578 million above the President's budget request.

A key pillar of our national defense is a strong nuclear deterrent. That is in this appropriations bill, as well, including \$11.1 billion for weapons activities within the NNSA, including nearly \$2 billion for six life extension programs, which fix or replace components in weapons systems to make sure they are safe and reliable. Congress must maintain a safe and effective nuclear weapons stockpile and keep big construction projects on time and on budget.

I want to compliment Senator FEINSTEIN, of California, my partner on the Energy and Water Subcommittee. We worked hard together on all aspects of this bill, but especially on keeping those big construction projects on time and on budget.

A principal reason the United States produces 24 percent of all the money in the world for just 5 percent of the people in the world is the extraordinary concentration of brain power in the United States supported by Federal dollars through our National Laboratories, the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, and other agencies. It is important that the American people know that the Republican majority in Congress worked together with Democrats to provide record levels of funding for science, research, and technology.

I would state to all of those who might not have noticed this quiet new

development that Congress is funding science and research at record levels, and if we continue to do so, we will make America more competitive and help spur innovation and create good-paying jobs.

A lot of hard work went into these negotiations over the last several months. Our staff members have worked over weekends and over vacations to make that happen, including the last few days. On my staff were Tyler Owens, Adam DeMella, Meyer Seligman, Jen Armstrong, Molly Marsh, and Rachel Littleton; on Senator FEINSTEIN's staff, Doug Clapp, Chris Hanson, Samantha Nelson; and on Senator SHELBY's staff, Shannon Hines, Jonathan Graffeo, and David Adkins. I am deeply grateful to them for their professionalism and their bipartisan work.

#### OPIOID LEGISLATION

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, now I would like to say a word about legislation that the majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, has described as landmark legislation, which I expect the Senate to move to early next week, and that is the legislation dealing with the most serious public health epidemic in America today, the opioid crisis.

We will be voting on the Opioid Crisis Response Act. This landmark legislation is the work of five different committees in the Senate. More than 70 Senators—half Republican, half Democrat—have provisions in this bill.

A big bill is hard to talk about, so let me just mention 10 key provisions: first, Senator PORTMAN's STOP Act to stop illegal drugs, including fentanyl, at the border coming through the mail; second, new nonaddictive painkillers, research and fast-track. I call this the holy grail of the opioids crisis because 100 million Americans hurt. They have pain; 25 million have chronic pain. They need help, and we need new non-addictive treatments to help them. Blister packs for opioids, such as a 3 to 5 days' supply—we authorized the FDA to require manufacturers to do that. More medication-assisted treatment, preventing doctor shopping by improving State prescription drug monitoring programs, and more behavioral and mental health providers. No. 7, support for comprehensive opioid recovery centers; No. 8, help for babies born in opioid withdrawal; No. 9, help for mothers with opioid use disorders, addicted to opioids; and No. 10, more early intervention with vulnerable children who have experienced trauma. Those are 10 of the 70 provisions that change the authorizing law, but in addition to that, we have placed unprecedented amounts of Federal dollars toward the opioid crisis.

In March, in the omnibus bill, Congress and the President directed \$4.7 billion toward the opioid crisis. Tomorrow, the conference committee considering the Labor, Health, and Human

Services, and Education Appropriations bill will meet. When that appropriations bill is approved, as we expect and hope it will be by the end of the month, that is another \$3.7 billion. So that is \$8.4 billion in the last few months that will have been directed toward the opioid crisis.

We have had seven hearings in our committee on opioids. On June 14, Becky Savage talked to us about two of her sons. She lost both of them after they accidentally overdosed on a combination of alcohol and opioids that they took in their own home after a graduation party.

At our hearing, Becky Savage said:

How could two boys who have always seemed to make good decisions in life make a choice that would ultimately cost them their lives? [H]ow did someone's prescription end up in the pocket of a teenager at a graduation party?

Nick and Jack were just two of the 33,000 Americans who died in 2015 from an opioid overdose, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. By 2016, the number had increased to 42,000 Americans. We suspect those numbers are even higher now. Last year, 1,776 Tennesseans died of a drug overdose, according to the Tennessee Department of Health, up from 1,630 the year before. We know that the opioid crisis is ravaging virtually every American community.

Becky Savage's story was just one of the heartbreaking stories the Senate HELP Committee heard last year in our seven hearings. Senator ISAKSON in Georgia told us of waking up to answer a phone call at 3 a.m. in December of 2016. His son John called to tell Senator ISAKSON that his grandson had passed away from an opioid overdose.

We heard Dr. Omar Abubaker, who lost his youngest son, Adam, 21 years old, after he overdosed on a mixture of heroin and benzodiazepines. At our hearing he said, "Since my son's death 3 years ago, more than 165,000 other parents in this country have experienced the same agony."

I imagine every Senator has heard heartbreaking stories of how the opioid crisis has impacted patients and children, doctors and nurses, entire communities in our States.

But at our hearings, we also heard stories of hope. Jessica Hulsey Nickel knows "firsthand the devastating impact that addiction can have on families," having lost both of her parents to addiction. Jessica has since dedicated her life to helping others battling the same disease.

Trish Tanner, the chief pharmacy officer at Ballad Health in Johnson City, TN, lost her nephew Dustin to an opioid overdose. As part of an executive fellowship program, she worked on a project on ways to reduce opioid prescribing, saying that "as Dustin's aunt and as a pharmacist, I have a duty and a desire to bring about change now."

To spread awareness and tell the story of losing her two sons, Becky Savage and her husband have created

the 525 Foundation in memory of Nick and Jack. When she testified before our committee, Becky told us that "you could have heard a pin drop in many of the auditoriums I speak in." After hearing her story, you could hear a pin drop in our committee room as well.

The challenge of solving the opioid crisis has been often been described as needing a moonshot. I wish we could do that. I wish we could appoint a single agency in Washington to solve this problem in every community in America, but what we have found is that will not work. Solving the opioid crisis might require the energy and resources of a moonshot, but ultimately it is not something that can be solved by a single agency here. What the Federal Government can do is create an environment so that everyone—Governors, mayors, judges, counselors, law enforcement, doctors, nurses, and families like the Savages—can succeed in fighting the crisis.

This is a package of more than 70 proposals from nearly three-quarters of the Members of the U.S. Senate—72 Members—that includes the work of five committees: the HELP Committee that I chair, the Finance, Judiciary, Commerce, and Banking Committees.

Since last October, the Senate HELP Committee, which I chair and Senator PATTY MURRAY of Washington is the ranking member of, has held seven hearings on the opioid crisis. We heard from Governors, from doctors, from addiction experts, family members, and others on how the Federal Government can be the best possible partner as we work to solve the crisis.

We took the input we heard at the first six hearings, and we turned it into a draft package of proposals, which Senator MURRAY and I released on April 5. On April 11, we held our seventh hearing to review the draft proposal. On April 17, we introduced an updated package of 40 proposals, based on the feedback we heard at the seventh hearing. On April 24, the Senate Health Committee voted 23 to 0 to pass this legislation, which included proposals from 38 different Senators.

Because this crisis is so widespread, the Finance, Judiciary, Commerce, and Banking Committees also have been working on their contributions to this bill.

On May 22, the Commerce Committee passed two provisions; May 24, the Judiciary passed six; June 12, the Finance Committee offered 22 more provisions. We have also included a provision that the Banking Committee has been working on.

Senator MURRAY and I have since worked with Senators HATCH, GRASSLEY, THUNE, WYDEN, FEINSTEIN, and NELSON to combine all of these proposals, along with other proposals, such as Senator PORTMAN's STOP Act, into one package of legislation—the Opioid Crisis Response Act. We thank all of them.

Over 20 Senators contributed to the Finance Committee provisions, 25 to

the Judiciary provisions, and 7 to the Commerce Committee's provisions. I think it is a testament to just how far-reaching this crisis is and why we feel a sense of bipartisan urgency in passing this legislation in the Senate and in the Congress.

In June the House of Representatives passed its own package of legislation to fight the opioid crisis by a vote of 396 to 14. The Senate and House staff combined our legislation and what the House has passed, and we believe it will produce an even stronger bill to fight the crisis.

My hope is that the five Senate committees will work quickly with our House colleagues to reach an agreement by September 21, so the House can pass a final opioids package, the Senate can pass it, and we can send it to the President's desk as quickly as possible. That is the bipartisan sense of urgency I feel so that we can help States and communities fight the opioid crisis.

This act builds on the work already done—the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, or CARA, passed in 2016, which gave a substantial boost to States on the frontlines, providing grants to expand access to lifesaving opioid overdose reversal medications and to support State efforts to help individuals.

Later in 2016, Congress enacted the 21st Century Cures Act, which included \$1 billion over 2 years in State grants to fight the crisis. It sought to accelerate research for major discoveries, like new nonaddictive pain medicines, which, as I mentioned, I believe is the Holy Grail of solving the opioid crisis.

Then, the omnibus appropriations bill in March provided \$4.7 billion of funding, and \$1 billion of that is for grants. We believe another \$3.7 billion is coming from the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill, which we hope to pass this month.

According to Senator BLUNT, the chairman of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies, Federal funding to help combat the opioid epidemic has increased nearly 1,300 percent over the past 4 years. The bill we are voting on next week builds on this funding.

So we will be passing the STOP Act, new nonaddictive painkillers, blister packs for opioids, more medication-assisted treatment, and efforts to prevent doctor shopping, to provide more behavioral and mental health providers, to support comprehensive opioid recovery centers, and to provide help for babies born in opioid withdrawal, help for mothers with opioid use disorders, and more early intervention with vulnerable children who have experienced trauma. These are just a portion of the more than 70 provisions in the Opioid Crisis Response Act.

This is, as the majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, has said, "landmark legislation" that represents the work

of nearly three-fourths of the Senate, five committees, and countless staff who have worked to try to help States and communities put an end to this crisis that is ravaging virtually every community in America.

The House of Representatives has passed its version. We have our bipartisan urgency to work together. No mother should have to go through what Becky Savage has gone through. It is time to finish our work and help States and communities bring an end to the opioid crisis. This legislation would give us many of the tools we need to do just that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

#### ATTORNEY GENERAL SESSIONS

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, in the annals of "President's Say the Darndest Things," last week's Twitter outburst will stand out, at least for me, because the President attacked the Attorney General of the United States for simply doing the job he swore an oath to do.

Of course, it wasn't the first time the President has so diminished himself, but this particular slander was leveled at the Attorney General for having the temerity to prosecute public corruption by Members of Congress who also happen to belong to the President's political party.

That is right. The President attacked Mr. Sessions by name for refusing to cover up allegations of Republican misconduct. The President's concern was not for justice but for the political fortunes of the accused, because their congressional seats might now be at risk of falling to Democrats. In doing this, the President is projecting a vision onto the system of American justice that is both bizarre and, more importantly, destructive.

Of course, the only truly shocking thing about this statement from the President is that, given what all of us have become accustomed to during this Presidency—or, even worse, have become numb to—this Twitter eruption was not at all surprising. This numb acceptance is an appalling statement on the very real threat to our democratic institutions.

At this point, it might be too late for tutorials on the American justice system, but it certainly bears repeating that in order for justice to truly be served, justice must be based in empirical truth and must be absolutely carried out independent of politics, period.

No President—any President—administers the justice system in America, any more than he or she decrees what is objective truth. In this country, justice and truth operate quite independent of the dictates of even the most powerful of offices.

The reasons for this point are obvious to most, but we know by now that this particular President seems to have a profound unease with both justice and truth and so has been at unrelent-

ing war with both, virtually since the moment he swore the oath—not because there is any deficiency in justice or truth that requires his intervention, mind you, but for other less noble reasons. The President seems to think that the office confers on him the ability to decide who and what gets investigated in the United States and who and what does not.

Weekly, it seems, this President has been threatening to "get involved" in the function of the Justice Department—sometimes intimidating, sometimes plainly threatening to corrupt the independence of justice in America.

He has overtly expressed a desire for his political opponents to be investigated, and almost 2 years into his Presidency, he presides over boisterous rallies where the last election is relitigated and chants of "lock her up" fill the halls.

None of this is normal or acceptable, but his is not mere recklessness. It seems to be a deliberate program, by which he intends to weaken the institution of American justice, threaten its independence, and perhaps set the stage for some future assault on it—the firing of the attorney general, the deputy attorney general, and perhaps even the special counsel.

It has been said that the President deserves to have an attorney general of his choice, a top lawyer with whom he is compatible. This is true. The President's appointment powers are clear, and all of his appointees serve at the pleasure of the President. But what no President deserves is a top lawyer who is simply there to do his bidding. The Attorney General is not the President's personal lawyer, and his job is not to protect the President from damaging facts or to turn the power of American justice onto the President's enemies or to direct Justice Department investigations in any particular way that is either politically motivated or presupposes guilt or innocence or favors any outcome whatsoever, other than that which is supported by the evidence and truth. The Attorney General's job description, as tweeted last week by the President, bears scant resemblance to the Attorney General's job in a constitutional democracy.

So I rise today because the Founders gave us the article I branch of this government that they conceived and the responsibility to curb such reckless behavior.

Thus far, I believe we have all been so incredulous at the daily excess and ever hopeful—hopeful beyond any reason—that this President would at last begin to inhabit the office in a more responsible fashion that we have been somewhat uncertain what to do.

First and foremost, we must speak out. We cannot be quiet when the moment requires us to defend the democratic norms under which this system functions, and without which our system ceases to function. The President has repeatedly and over time heedlessly breached these norms. If we say

nothing, then, we become accomplices in the destruction of these democratic norms.

The Senate is not the place to come for deniability. We must do what we can to curb the destructive impulses of this White House. We must encourage the administration of justice. That means voicing our support for Mr. Mueller and his team. We have passed bipartisan legislation out of the Senate Judiciary Committee—legislation to protect the special counsel. I call on the majority leader to bring this legislation to the Senate floor.

We must also say in no uncertain terms that to call this investigation a "witch hunt" is wrong. To call Mr. Mueller's team "thugs" is wrong. Relentlessly slandering the Attorney General of the United States is wrong. It is a travesty, and it is unbecoming of the Office of the Presidency.

I would say to the Attorney General: Stand firm. You spent your life in public service, in the service of your country. At the risk of being presumptuous, I will say that these days of your service, right now, during this crucial period in which we have a President who in a malign fashion is actively testing the limits of his power and the independence of American justice, your determination to safeguard the independence of the Justice Department at the same time that you have been under assault by the President has verged on heroic. In your long career, you will render no more consequential service to your country. Stand firm, Attorney General Sessions.

I appeal to the leadership of this body to speak out. You don't have to speak out at every Twitter outburst, but when the President so blatantly calls for the Department of Justice to act as an arm of the Republican Party, then, the leaders of the Republican Party in this body need to stand and say that the President is out of bounds.

We all have our pulls to conscience. Most recently for me, I hear the whisper so well described a few weeks ago—the whisper over my shoulder that says: We are better than this. America is better than this. In a time of rank tribalism, we need to remember that we are all Americans. That is our only tribe. It is to the rule of law and the ideals of our founding that we owe our allegiance.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 933, 934.

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