

Security Minister, under whom directly are the narcotics agents; Yang Jiechi, the Politburo Member and Communist Party Foreign Affairs Director. They understand how serious this is for us. They know it hurts because they had a long history with opioids which they dealt with. I appreciate the fact that they said they are willing to explore this. I intend to report our visit to President Trump and urge him to continue to ask China to help us.

We also met with Ambassadors of other countries who are affected, such as Mexico and China and other countries whom Ambassador Branstad invited to the U.S. Embassy for a meeting. They agreed to form a working group to try to help make clear to the Chinese we weren't pointing the finger at them saying it is your problem. We are just saying the only finger we would like to point is saying you can do more than anybody else to help solve the problem.

I want to thank Ambassador Branstad, Terry Branstad, for setting up the relationships we had with the Ministers in China to help deliver the message that opioids is our biggest public health epidemic and that the fentanyl flowing into the United States is the most severe part of that.

The staff at the U.S. Embassy were very helpful. In particular, I would like to thank Steve Churchill, Rob Fordan, and Richard Jao for all their work.

I want to thank, again, some of the Chinese officials with whom we met, Premier Li Keqiang, Minister Zhao Kezhi, and Director Yang Jiechi, for the time they spent with us and the commitment they made to continue to work with us on this public health epidemic.

In conclusion, there is no public health crisis in the United States of America that compares with the opioid crisis. The most severe part of that crisis right now is the flow of fentanyl coming into the United States. What we respectfully ask China to do is more of what they are already doing. They are already controlling 25 different classes of fentanyl. We want them to control all of those classes of fentanyl. That frees their narcotics agents—and they are pretty good—to go after anyone in China who uses or produces fentanyl illegally or improperly.

We saw the difference that made when China controlled 25 of the fentanyl substances. We look forward to the difference it will make when it controls the rest.

My hope is, the President of the United States and the President of China will discuss this and that they see each other next week in Argentina. I hope the President will thank President Xi for what they have already done and ask him to do more. It is not China's problem. It is really our problem. We are the ones with the opioids problem. China can help us solve it by doing what we have already done about fentanyl in this country and doing more of what they have already done.

If they do that, China can be seen as the country in the world doing the most to stop the flow of this deadly fentanyl, and the American people will be grateful for that action.

I thank the President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The Senator from Alaska.

COAST GUARD REAUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I want to echo what my colleague from Tennessee just mentioned about a lot of bipartisan accomplishments on the Senate floor over the last several weeks. They are really important ones.

He led the charge on the opioid bill which is going to help our entire country and so many others. They don't always get reported in the press, but it is important to make sure our fellow Americans, our constituents, know that is happening.

This afternoon, I want to talk about another one that is a really important accomplishment that we were able to achieve on the Senate floor a couple of hours ago; that is, the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2018.

A number of Senators have already been down on the floor to talk about this: JOHN THUNE, the chairman of the Commerce Committee, which is where the oversight and responsibility of the Coast Guard lies; Senator WICKER from Mississippi; Senator CARPER—so many Senators contributed to this important piece of legislation that we just passed today by almost a vote of over 90 Senators.

It is a very bipartisan piece of legislation that we were able to get through the Senate floor today. As you know, this has taken some time. For almost 2 years, we have been working on the Coast Guard bill. A number of us put a lot of time and effort into it.

I do want to do a shout out to my staff: Eric Elam, my legislative director; Tom Mansour, a Coast Guard fellow in my office; and Scott Leathard. All of them worked literally for the last year and a half, night and day, on this bill.

Again, it is important for America and certainly important for my great State of Alaska. It raises a broader issue. We just celebrated Veterans Day. Our country was rightfully focused on our veterans. There was a lot of focus on the centennial of the Armistice of World War I, the ending of World War I. Often when there is a focus on the armed services, it focuses on the armed services at the Pentagon—Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines—and sometimes the brave men and women in the Coast Guard can be overlooked. They shouldn't be. We all know that.

One of the things I tried to focus on in my time in the Senate is making sure they are not. Prior to 9/11, the Coast Guard was probably the only service in the entire U.S. military—because they are a member of the services of the U.S. military—whose members were risking their lives every single day on the job. Post-9/11, with the

national security challenges we have, every member of our military—all the services—are risking their lives every day, but the Coast Guard does it day in and day out.

Pre-9/11 and post-9/11, men and women in that wonderful service undertake a heroic mission with actions that we see saving American lives and defending our national security.

What do they focus on and what does this bill focus on? Well, the bottom line is, this bill is focused on making sure the men and women of the Coast Guard have the resources to do their job. Their job is varied and extremely important.

We have all seen the Coast Guard coming out of the sky to rescue us—rescue Americans on seas when they are in trouble; with the hurricanes we have seen over the last couple of years; the heroic pictures of the men and women in the Coast Guard doing thousands of rescues. We see that as part of their mission. They have been described as angels in helicopters. When they show up, it is certainly witnessing America at its very best. We have seen a lot of that. The mission of the Coast Guard also includes ice-breaking, marine environmental protection, port security, and international crisis response. Many members are deployed overseas in places like the Middle East, combating illegal fishing by other nations, protecting American fishermen, protecting Alaskan fishermen, readiness to support the Department of Defense operation. It is a long list. The Coast Guard does it very well.

Importantly, the bill we just passed today will significantly help the men and women with this important mission. You and I serve on the Armed Services Committee. Again, what my colleague from Tennessee was talking about is another one of these bipartisan areas of achievement that we have seen in the Senate in the last year, year and a half, consensus on issues like rebuilding our military. We are doing that on the Armed Services Committee through the National Defense Authorization Act that passes the Senate and the House every year.

I am certainly honored to be on the Armed Services Committee, where we are working on rebuilding from the cuts of 2010 to 2015. They were almost 25 percent of the Department of Defense budget while national security challenges were increasing all over the world.

The other thing we are rebuilding—and it doesn't always get a lot of attention—we are rebuilding the Coast Guard. In essence, this bill we passed today is the NDAA for the U.S. Coast Guard. The recapitalization and rebuilding of the Coast Guard is a core element of the bill we just passed.

Let's run through a couple of examples. Like what we just did in the NDAA, increasing the end strength of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines, this bill today works to increase the end strength of the U.S. Coast

Guard. Importantly, it starts to really accelerate what we are doing in terms of recapitalizing the Coast Guard fleet. For example, this bill authorizes the building of six more fast response cutters—these are critical cutters for the U.S. Coast Guard—and three more national security cutters for the U.S. Coast Guard. These are incredible vessels. They are huge—400-plus feet.

I had the honor to go out to a commissioning of the *Douglas Munro*, one of the new national security cutters. These ships can do it all. They look like big Navy ships that can do it all. That is what these national security cutters are doing.

This legislation also helps to streamline the building of Navy ships, which is important as we recapitalize the fleet. It directs the Coast Guard's overall policies.

Now I want to talk a little bit about some of the more specific provisions in this bill that relate to my great State, the great State of Alaska, where the Coast Guard and the people of Alaska have a very special relationship. We love the men and women of the Coast Guard. We see them in action all the time, doing heroic missions. We had the largest Coast Guard base in the country in Kodiak, AK, and District 17—that is the Coast Guard district in Alaska—is the largest geographic district in terms of square miles in the entire Coast Guard area of responsibility. There are close to 4 million square miles and over 47,000 miles of coastline just in the State of Alaska. That is more coastline than in the rest of the lower 48 States combined. So the Coast Guard has a huge mission in Alaska—a really important mission in Alaska—and it covers all kinds of territory.

Let me just give you, again, a sense of the importance that District 17 and the men and women of the Coast Guard in Alaska have to my constituents, to their fellow Alaskans—a snapshot from District 17's website. It reads, just in an average month in Alaska, that the Coast Guard saves 22 lives, performs 53 assists, and conducts 13 security boardings and 22 security patrols throughout this gigantic area of District 17, just to name a few of its duties, in addition to making sure that illegal fishing in this part of our Nation doesn't occur.

I am also grateful that as we look at the recapitalization of the Coast Guard's fleet, the former Commandant of the Coast Guard, Admiral Zukunft, recognized how important Alaska was and sent me a letter, as I am the chairman of the subcommittee in the Commerce Committee that is in charge of the Coast Guard. My team and I put in a lot of effort with Chairman THUNE and others in writing this bill and in working on it for the last 2 years.

In a letter to me prior to his retirement, the former Commandant of the Coast Guard said that we know there are challenges and that there is a growing mission, from the Coast Guard's perspective, in Alaska. In terms of this

recapitalization, we see a lot of these vessels coming to Southeast Alaska. For example, six fast response cutters that are being built and that are part of this bill are slated for Alaska, and two additional patrol boats are for Petersburg and Juneau. The FRCs will be home-ported—two of them—in Kodiak, one in Seward, one in Sitka, and two previously commissioned FRCs will remain stationed in Ketchikan. So those are a lot of assets coming, and I believe there are going to be more. We are going to continue to work on that.

I thank the former Commandant and the current Commandant, Admiral Schultz, who has been on the job for about 6 months and has already been to Alaska three times. That is just another testament to recognizing how important the Coast Guard is to the great State of Alaska. I can't thank enough the men and women of the Coast Guard nationally and in my State for the great work they do.

There are a number of provisions in this legislation, in addition to the national areas of recapitalizing the Coast Guard, that are actually focused, not surprisingly, on Alaska, given how important the Coast Guard is to Alaska. Let me just highlight a few of them.

There is a provision that says the Coast Guard must position assets to respond to any incidences given the national security and economic significance growing in the Arctic region. The Department of Defense is starting to focus on the Arctic region, and, certainly, the Coast Guard is.

The provision further states that it requires the Coast Guard, in consultation with the Department of Defense, to report to Congress on the progress being made in implementing the Coast Guard's Arctic strategy and to provide an assessment of the placement of additional Coast Guard assets and cutters in light of meeting those strategic objectives in the Arctic.

We know that the demands of a more strategic Arctic are putting a strain on the Department of Defense and the Coast Guard. We believe—I believe—that the provisions in this bill state that the Coast Guard needs to look at that and provide more assets to do the mission if need be.

As we are recapitalizing the fleet, it also talks about moving bigger cutters in for smaller ones in region 17 because the Coast Guard must continue to have adequate coverage. You don't want to move one ship out and another ship in and have a gap in coverage. This bill focuses on that—no gaps in coverage.

The bill also requires the Coast Guard to deliver a plan to extend the life of the *Polar Star*, which is the heavy icebreaker that is home-ported in Seattle and has a critical mission. Again, in the NDAA this year, we received authorization for six additional heavy icebreakers—three heavies, three mediums. Yet we need to make sure that we still have coverage with the icebreakers we have as we look to build and deploy the new Coast Guard

icebreakers that were authorized in the NDAA this summer. This provision focuses on that.

It directs the Coast Guard to conduct persistent, aircraft-based surveillance in terms of monitoring illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing in the Western Pacific. This is a huge problem. We have our 200-mile limit where American fishermen and Alaska fishermen can fish off the coast of Alaska and other States, but we often have pirate fishing going on. We have countries such as China that come and illegally take fish that should be in our economic zone or on the high seas. The Coast Guard does a great job in monitoring and catching this illegal fishing, which harms the oceans and harms our fisheries. This bill underscores how important that mission is and directs the Coast Guard to make sure there is persistent, aircraft-based surveillance in monitoring what we call IUU fishing—illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing—in the Western Pacific.

The bill requires the Coast Guard to have tested the capability of oilspill vessel response plans in Alaskan waters and to report to Congress on these capabilities.

It also, importantly, focuses on funding to update and maintain the Nation's nautical charts with there being an emphasis on the Arctic, where there is growing vessel traffic. Yet we have nautical charts that are 70 or 80 years old, and some places have never been charted.

This bill facilitates the construction of a viable home port for the NOAA research vessel *Fairweather* in Ketchikan, AK, which is an issue that is important to my constituents, and to be perfectly honest, with regard to NOAA, it has been hanging out there for too long. This bill helps to make sure that the vessel is going to be home-ported where it should be legally home-ported under the law, and that is in Ketchikan.

Those are just a few examples of the national aspects of this bill for the Coast Guard's recapitalization effort and of some of the more important provisions that focus on the Coast Guard's special relationship with Alaska.

This act also contains many important items for our fishermen and fisheries and our maritime industry throughout the United States, whether in the oceans, whether on the Great Lakes, whether in the rivers that we have. It is very, very important to our fishing community, to our fishermen, and to the maritime workers throughout the country.

Of course, this is important to my State. I often refer to Alaska as the superpower of seafood. What am I talking about? Almost 60 percent of the commercial and sport fish that is harvested in the United States of America comes from Alaska. It is billions of dollars in terms of the economic impact for our State. So included in this legislation is important language to permanently address issues that have plagued Alaskan fishermen, American fishermen, and

commercial vessel owners and operators of maritime fleets and, importantly, the workers in these important industries for decades—regulatory problems and challenges that these important industries and the important men and women who work in these industries have been struggling with for decades with no long-term solutions. At long last, this bill addresses these—the long-term, permanent solutions.

What am I talking about?

Currently, our fishing fleets throughout the entire country, as well as vessel owners and operators—again, throughout the entire country in rivers, lakes, and oceans—are forced to comply with a patchwork of burdensome Federal and State regulations that are well-intentioned but often conflicted for incidental discharges off the decks of these ships and for ballast water. Let me start with the incidental discharges.

Again, it is very important to my State but very important to any State with regard to the fishing industry and fishermen who work hard every day. If you are a commercial fisherman on a fishing vessel and you have caught some fish and you want to hose down your deck—because let's face it; fishing can be a bit of a messy business—through a long history of requirements and lawsuits, you are forced to report to the EPA these incidental discharges, and you need to get a permit to hose down your deck of a fishing vessel or you will face a fine.

Now, you don't have to be a fisherman to recognize that this is ridiculous and that people—Democrats and Republicans in this body—have been trying to address this issue for decades because it creates inefficiency, and it certainly doesn't help the environment. It adds to costs, inhibits economic prosperity, and hurts fishermen and the vessels they operate. This body has introduced short-term fixes for years to try and address this. Those have not been sufficient. So this bill addresses it for good.

Let me talk about another provision that tries to cut through the patchwork of burdensome State regulations—again, well-intentioned but often conflicted for ballast water and vessels. Currently, ballast water is regulated by both the Coast Guard and the EPA. They both have separate, inconsistent, and sometimes directly conflicting sets of Federal requirements that are interdispersed with requirements from States. This is literally a patchwork of requirements for vessels that move through different State waters. Let me give you an example.

You are the owner-operator of a commercial vessel that is going up the full length of the Mississippi River. You are moving commerce and keeping a strong economy stronger. As you do that, not only must you comply with inconsistent Coast Guard and EPA requirements, but you also will likely have to comply with different and separate requirements regarding ballast

water for Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri. You get the picture. It is a patchwork of regulations—all well-intentioned—that has the impact of inhibiting commerce and, most importantly, of inhibiting job opportunities for the men and women in this commerce. Twenty-five States have been regulating ballast water under separate, inconsistent, and sometimes directly conflicting sets of requirements. This has not only inhibited U.S. economic growth, but it also actually makes it more likely that invasive species will accidentally be introduced into this ballast water because the requirements are so different, it is hard to keep up with them.

So, again, what this bill does at long last, working across the aisle—and trust me, we worked on this for over a year, on these provisions, Democrats and Republicans rolling up their sleeves, in good faith, getting to work. Because we know how important this is to our constituents, we looked at and focused on getting permanent solutions, not quick fixes—the way these issues have been handled in the past, for over a decade—to these significant challenges.

This bill will provide a permanent exemption on incidental vessel discharges for all commercial fishing vessels and commercial vessels under 79 feet in length. This is very important to the American fishing industry, the men and women in that industry, and it is something that they have been advocating for and Members of this body, of both parties, have been trying to get for well over a decade. Well, we did it today. That is important. As I said, without this exemption, small vessel owner-operators would be required, as they have been for years, to get an EPA permit to hose off their decks—not a good use of the EPA and not a good use of the hard-working time of American fishermen.

Similarly, this bill provides a comprehensive solution to this patchwork ballast water challenge that I just described, establishing a single, nationally uniform standard for the regulation of ballast water and other vessel discharges, and the EPA and the Coast Guard, with input from the States, will work together. This uniform standard will have the impact of helping our environment and our maritime industry and fishing industry workers and the U.S. economy all at the same time. That is an important accomplishment, and that is why over 90 Senators voted for this bill today.

In conclusion, the men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard do heroic work day in and day out. I am honored to chair the subcommittee of the Commerce Committee in charge of the Coast Guard. This bipartisan bill will support them and their incredibly important mission, and it was long overdue. It was long overdue, but we got it done.

The Coast Guard's motto, "Semper Paratus"—"Always Ready"—is a

motto I think we can learn from here in the U.S. Senate. It is so appropriate for what they do for us. I want to make sure that the members of the Coast Guard who are watching or learning about this bill know that it is a signal that they have strong bipartisan support from the vast majority of the Members of the U.S. Senate.

Hopefully, this bill will get over to the House quickly. We have been working closely with the House on a number of these provisions, and they are going to pass it, we hope, and we will get it to the President soon for his signature.

Going forward, we have to work to make sure there is not an almost 2-year delay in getting the Coast Guard Authorization Act passed in the U.S. Senate. When we work together, we can see that it is very bipartisan.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee, the Presiding Officer and I both know that the National Defense Authorization Act moves every year. What I think we need to do is make sure, when we start debating the NDAA in late spring, early summer every year, as we do, that we reserve time to move and debate and pass the Coast Guard bill as well. This is an issue I have raised with the leadership on both sides of the aisle, with the chairmen of the Commerce Committee and the Armed Services Committee, and I am hopeful that we can make some progress on that so we are moving a Coast Guard Authorization Act, as we should be, with the other services in the NDAA. But that is for tomorrow. For today, we have an important accomplishment for our country, an important accomplishment for the State of Alaska, and most importantly, an important accomplishment for the men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard who continue to undertake heroic actions day in and day out on our behalf.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO STEVE MAGRUDER

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, Steve Magruder has devoted his life to helping working families. For more than 40 years, Steve faithfully served as a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers International Local 176. Last week, Steve retired as the business manager of Local 176, a position he held for 8 years.