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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOSH HAWLEY, a Senator from the State of Missouri.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, who rules the raging of the sea, we thank You for these moments when we are more aware of Your presence. We are grateful that we can seize these opportunities to lift our hearts in praise.

Use our lawmakers today to live with such excellence that they will illuminate the darkness of our world. Lord, give them the grace and mercy that will inspire them to live for Your glory. Remind them that the earnest and fervent prayers of the righteous avail much. Cleanse the inner fountains of their hearts from all defilement and pretense as they strive to please and honor You.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, June 24, 2019.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable JOSH HAWLEY, a Senator from the State of Missouri, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. HAWLEY thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

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.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 1790, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to the consideration of S. 1790, a bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2020 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, in virtually every aspect of our lives, technology and innovation have made jobs simpler and made us much more efficient. You can easily track your appointments, hail a ride, or even change the temperature of your house from your smartphone. You can broaden the reach of your small business, use fundraising platforms to raise money for a

cause you care about, and easily stay connected with friends and family around the globe. But for all the ways these innovations have made our daily life easier, they have also created an array of security challenges.

We are all familiar with the high-profile hacking targeting customer financial data and personal information. To be sure, it is scary, but nowhere is the threat of this hyperinnovation more terrifying than on the national security front.

The challenges we confront today look different from those 100, 50, or even 5 years ago. We are seeing new technologies used in the battlefield, like drones, and the race to develop next-generation hypersonic missiles. Top military officials, including ADM Gary Roughead, cochair of the Commission on National Defense Strategy, have voiced their concerns about our ability as a nation to confront these rapidly evolving threats. Admiral Roughead told Congress: "We are operating a force today that was last modernized in the 1980s."

That is unacceptable. We cannot send our men and women in uniform into battle to defend our freedom at a disadvantage or allow these rapidly changing threats to outpace our ability to respond. Our military should never be fighting next-generation wars with last-generation weapons and equipment.

Of course, the goal is not to have to fight any wars but to maintain the peace through a superior military over any of our potential adversaries. We must continue to invest in military modernization, which is why we need to pass the National Defense Authorization Act, the bill that is presently before the Senate.

This bill invests in cutting-edge technology to protect our military's combat advantage, including to promote 5G networks, the hypersonic weapons that we need to develop to maintain parity—at least, with our adversaries—and artificial intelligence.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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It also invests in nuclear weapons modernization, something I spoke about on the floor just this last week. As our adversaries continue to develop the use of their nuclear arsenal, maintaining a safe and strong nuclear deterrent is the key to preventing nuclear war and keeping our adversaries in check.

This year's Defense authorization bill also takes major steps to improve the quality of life for our troops and their families. America's 2.1 million service-members have made a commitment that few are willing to make and have joined the ranks of America's heroes who have defended our great country throughout our history.

This bill will provide a modest 3.1 percent pay raise for our troops—the largest increase in a decade. I hope it will also include a provision that I have introduced to support our service-members during life after the military.

Occasionally, when veterans fall on hard times, their disability benefits can be counted as income in bankruptcy court. That is not the case for their civilian counterparts with their Social Security disability, and it is unacceptable to me that a civilian with disability benefits would get better treatment in bankruptcy court than a veteran. To fix this issue, I have introduced a bill with Senator BALDWIN from Wisconsin, called the Honoring American Veterans in Extreme Need Act, or the HAVEN Act. This bill would shield VA and Department of Defense disability benefits in the same way that Social Security disability is currently exempted.

Veterans should not be penalized for receiving the disability compensation they have earned, and I hope this provision will be included in the Defense authorization bill, which we should soon be able to vote on.

Passing this bill is not only important to the safety of our Nation, but it is important for global security as well. It supports programs and policies that will strengthen existing alliances and promote new ones.

I am hopeful that the final version of this bill will include a provision I have introduced to enhance our relationship with India. In 2016 the United States designated India as a major defense partner, which seeks to elevate our defense partnership with India to the same level as that of our closest allies.

Since then, we have taken a number of steps to strengthen our defense relationship, such as establishing ministerial dialogue, increasing arms sales to India, and the first U.S.-India tri-service exercise later this year.

As cochair of the Senate India Caucus, I continue to advocate for policies that strengthen our ties with India, both militarily and otherwise. I introduced legislation that requires the Secretary of Defense to submit a report to Congress on U.S.-India defense cooperation in the Western Indian Ocean within 180 days of enactment. This will allow us to get a clearer picture of cur-

rent military activities and will enable the Secretary to enter into military cooperation agreements and conduct regular joint military training and operations with India in the Western Indian Ocean.

Including this provision in the National Defense Authorization Act would be a major step to bolster U.S.-India ties and strengthen our alliance. It is only fitting for the world's oldest democracy and the world's largest democracy to continue to work more and more closely together.

As we work to counter increasingly sophisticated adversaries around the world, passing the Defense authorization bill this week could not be more important. This legislation is integral to ensuring that our military is resourced and trained and ready for action when called upon.

That is why for more than 50 years, Congress has made passing the Defense authorization bill an annual priority. Funding our men and women in uniform who are fighting and facing unprecedented threats around the world on our behalf is a no-brainer. I look forward to voting to support the NDAA later this week, and I want to thank Chairman INHOFE and the ranking member, Senator REED, for working to get this bill passed with broad bipartisan support, as well as thank the Senate Armed Services Committee for working to get this bill to this point and bringing it to the floor in a broad, bipartisan way.

This bill provides our military men and women the resources and equipment they need to defend our country and later transition back into civilian life. It restores our combat advantage by promoting military modernization. It strengthens and builds alliances around the globe. Above all, it sends a message to the entire world that our country is and will remain the global military leader.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

VICTIM COMPENSATION FUND

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, tomorrow my friend John Feal and fellow survivors who were first responders on September 11 will visit with Leader MCCONNELL to press for the passage of legislation to fix the shortfall of the Victim Compensation Fund. This is the fund that awards compensation to the families of 9/11 first responders who died from 9/11-related illnesses, often cancers and fatal respiratory illnesses.

It makes me sick to my stomach that every time we have this debate, these

suffering first responders, many in wheelchairs, are forced to travel to Washington to shame politicians into supporting their healthcare.

I am sick of all of these delays; I am tired of temporary reauthorizations; and I have had enough of watching our first responders endure the indignity of waiting for a last-minute, must-pass bill to hide their issue in so Members will not vote against it. It shouldn't be this way, and it shouldn't be this hard to pass aid for our 9/11 responders and everyone who worked on the pile in the weeks and months thereafter.

Who has been standing in the way? At the top of the list, unfortunately, is my colleague the Republican leader. Leader MCCONNELL has to do the right thing here. He is meeting with these brave responders, and that is a good thing, but it is not enough. At the end of the meeting, he should promise them, and promise all of us, that he will put the Victim Compensation Fund fix on the floor as soon as it passes the House as a stand-alone bill—no more delays for these brave people, no more people like Ray Fifer, my dear friend who passed away, having to come to Washington five or six times begging and pleading, not for himself—he knew the cancer was fatal for him—but for his colleagues and allies. Let's do the right thing here.

Let's do the right thing, Leader MCCONNELL.

IRAN

Mr. President, on another matter, amid escalating tensions with Iran, the President today announced a new round of sanctions. It remains unclear what, if any, strategy this latest round of sanctions fits into and whether this latest round of sanctions will compel Iran's leaders to alter their current course. I worry that the President continues down a path of escalation.

Besides a small group of hawkish advisers and Republican cheerleaders in Congress, nobody wants a war with Iran. The American people are weary of endless wars in the Middle East, the trillions of dollars wasted, the thousands of American lives lost. Americans want the money spent here at home on things like our crumbling infrastructure. Americans don't want to see their sons and daughters dying in a war that seems to go on forever without a conclusion.

While I am not convinced the President is eager to go to war, I am very concerned that he could bumble us into war. His strategy seems erratic, changing from day to day and week to week. It seems opaque. There is no real discussion outside of his own little clique of advisers, and it seems to sometimes contradict itself.

Exchanges of aggression can escalate and cascade quickly in the Middle East; provocations can spin out of control. The President's lack of a steady hand, lack of transparency, and, above all, his lack of strategy make the danger of escalation even more distinct and worrisome.

It is also worrisome that John Bolton and Secretary Pompeo, the advocates for the conflict, appear to be leading the charge while there is no confirmed Secretary of Defense to pull back the reins, and it is interesting that it seems to be the Department of Defense that are the reins on the President. They know the limits of what we can do without escalation and the kind of endless war that our soldiers and our military leaders have always fought for this country, no matter what the consequences.

So let me be clear: If the President is going to engage the United States in another war in the Middle East, he is going to have to convince the American people, and he is going to have to come to Congress for authorization. One of the best ways to avoid bumbling into a war is to have a robust, open debate and for Congress to have some say. We have learned that lesson in the run up to Iraq.

Democrats have an amendment to the NDAA led by Senators Udall, Merkley, Murphy, and Kaine that would prohibit any funds authorized by the NDAA to be used to conduct hostilities against the Government of Iran. It makes imminent sense to consider this amendment on our annual defense bill. It is germane; it is timely.

Considering the gravity of the situation with Iran, Democrats believe the full Senate should be present to vote on the Udall amendment. Leader MCCONNELL is no doubt aware that several Members of this body will be absent this week for the Democratic Presidential debates. We should wait to have the vote until the full body is present. There is no rush to complete the NDAA. We have passed it very frequently later in the year with no harmful consequences to our military.

We should have the vote on the Udall amendment, which is an urgency, before we bumble into war, and it should occur when every Senator is able to cast their vote. Last week, the Republican leader promised the Senate would hold an open amendment process on the NDAA. We have critical national security issues to debate, including Iran, including election security.

Will the Republican leader keep his word and allow this debate to go forward? For much of this year, Leader MCCONNELL, unfortunately, and now becoming known from one end of America to the another, has turned the Senate into a legislative graveyard, where we hardly ever vote on the prevailing issue of the day.

Will the majority leader let the Senate have this important vote? Or is this another issue, another debate, the ability to fund a war that will be buried in his legislative graveyard?

I hope he will not continue his shameful record of ducking the issues of the day when it comes to something as important as Congress's role in the matter of war and peace.

BORDER SECURITY

Finally, Mr. President, on the border, after a week of making the chilling,

nasty, obnoxious threats about mass arrests and deportation of millions of immigrants, President Trump backed off on Sunday and demanded concessions from Democrats in exchange.

In doing so, the President reminded the American people that he might be incapable of having a rational discussion about challenges at the border. Look at the things he has gone through—tariffs, closed the border—issue after issue, he makes threats, then backs off because none of them make any sense, none of them have been thought through.

The President seems far more comfortable terrorizing immigrant families than actually coming up with real solutions. I mean, my God, to threaten separating children from their parents as a bargaining chip is the very definition of callousness. That is something that the vast majority of Americans would abhor, and he goes right ahead and does it.

Unfortunately, however, this is typical of the President's approach to the border. For 2 years, the President has said he wants to fix the problems at the border, but just about every action he has taken has made things worse. He shut down the government in a failed attempt to fund an ineffective wall. He threatened to close the border entirely until the business community rebelled and said it would really hurt our economy and our workers. He threatened destructive tariffs with Mexico, and he has cut off security assistance to Central American countries that help curb the violence and lawlessness that contributes to the flow of migrants in the first place.

His administration has separated children from their parents, kept them in cages, let them suffer in horrible conditions in for-profit detention centers that are little better than modern internment camps.

These are not the actions of an administration that is trying to solve a problem. It seems the President is incapable of saying it is a real problem—he thinks it is—and people agree that we have to do something at the border. We all do.

But instead of actually getting experts in and solving the problem, he is emotional, appeals to the dark side of human nature, and then is totally inconsistent and is on to doing the next thing. Any objective observer would say the President doesn't want to solve this problem.

He is, rather, trying to exploit it for what he thinks will be his political benefit, although it sure didn't work in the month before the 2018 election. To exploit an issue like this because he thinks it will benefit him politically, even if it means mistreating children and striking fear into the hearts of millions of people living in the U.S., that is disgraceful.

The thing is we can have a rational conversation about this. This week, the Senate will consider a bipartisan agreement on supplemental appropria-

tions for the border. That is a good thing. I salute Senator SHELBY, a Republican, and Senator LEAHY, a Democrat, who are coming together on a proposal that got 30 of the 31 votes on the Appropriations Committee. It shows that we can be rational and compromise and get something done on the border, even if it does not meet everybody's needs 100 percent of the way.

Beyond that, we Democrats continue to propose commonsense changes that would address what is happening at the border to deal with the root causes of migration. Doesn't it make sense to tell these people from Nicaragua and El Salvador they can claim asylum in their home countries and not go through the 1,000-mile trek—often expensive because they have to pay coyotes to cross the north border of Mexico and with the United States. Of course, it does.

Doesn't it make sense to have more immigration judges to reduce the backlog in cases? And doesn't it make sense to provide security assistance and help to those three Central American countries to combat the scourge of drug cartels, violent gangs, and lawlessness that has pushed migrants to go north because they don't want their child murdered and raped?

Both parties can support these policies. President Trump can support these policies, but so far, the President has shown a shameful lack of willingness to engage with the real problems at the border, preferring demagoguery and fear-mongering to progress.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMERICAN MINERS ACT

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I rise today to call for immediate action on the American Miners Act. We have an obligation to the coal miners across America who served our Nation by providing us with energy through our greatest advancements. They deserve to know that the pensions they rightfully worked for will be funded fully. They deserve to have acceptable healthcare, which was guaranteed to them, and they paid for it.

As the Senate fails to act, we continue to put our retired miners' healthcare and pension benefits in jeopardy yet again. I have been working with everyone from every angle in order to prevent our miners from losing their healthcare and retirement benefits, but, once again, they are facing a deadline that puts their whole livelihood at risk.

This has been a long fight, and it is far from over. Everyone—and I mean

everyone—who has joined me in this journey understands that they are fighting for the working people, and that is what we were sent here to do. These retired miners are walking the halls and fighting for what is rightfully theirs. I am doing this for them. I promised them that this body will not abandon them. I refuse to let them down.

The 1974 pension plan will be insolvent by 2022 if we do not act now. Miners who receive their healthcare through companies that went bankrupt in 2018 are at risk of losing their coverage in the coming months if we fail to act soon. Unlike many other public-private pension plans, the 1974 pension plan was well managed and 94 percent funded prior to the crash of 2008. However, the 2008 crash hit at a time when the plan had its highest payment obligations to the retirees. If the plan becomes insolvent, these beneficiaries will face benefit cuts and the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation will assume billions of dollars in liabilities.

To address these issues, the American Miners Act would shore up the 1974 pension plan, which is headed for insolvency due to coal company bankruptcies and the 2008 financial crisis. It would ensure that the miners who are at risk due to the 2018 coal company bankruptcies will not lose their healthcare. It would extend the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund tax at \$1.10 per ton of underground-mined coal and 55 cents per ton of surface-mined coal for 10 years.

West Virginia has more retired miners than any other State. More than 27,000 retirees live in West Virginia alone. Most of those who are receiving these pensions are widows. The pensions for these widows—basically, it is a family affair when someone in the family mines—on average is less than \$600 per month—less than \$600. They have worked for it. Their husbands worked for it. They have been counting on it. Basically, it is a lifeline for them. Because of the bankruptcies that have allowed companies to walk away from the legacy costs and leave them with nothing after they negotiated to not take home the pay to take care of this themselves, they are left in a very vulnerable position, which we should never have let happen.

I have a letter from a retired coal miner to read to you today. I think it puts everything in perspective. This is Delbert from West Virginia, who was a miner for 35 years. He said:

To the members of the Senate and House: Months ago, I walked the corridors of Washington, D.C., asking many members of Congress for help. I spoke with Mitch McConnell and bled my heart out to him, how this was not only the right thing to do but it was also a matter of life and death to many thousands of coal miners.

If this letter is read on the Senate and House floors, I plead with each and every one of you to search your hearts and souls today. Close your eyes and imagine giving your youth and your entire working life to the coal industry, and the only promise you were

given was a small retirement check and medical insurance. I know a favorable ruling for these miners will cost the taxpayers nothing. It will not lead to an increase in the deficit. I realize all we are asking for is the interest earned off the unused reclamation fund. Most coal companies are even on board with this.

These miners have black lung. Many have to use oxygen 24 hours a day. Many have to use wheelchairs, walkers, and canes. Their bodies are broken. Please don't break their hearts, spirits, and souls also. Please save their lives and pass this bill today.

He is a proud veteran of the Vietnam War, a proud coal miner, and a proud American. Please don't say no to these deserving miners and spouses.

Let me give to you in a nutshell what they are asking for. In 1946, when Harry Truman was President, the Krug-Lewis Agreement was signed. That was John L. Lewis. The miners had to work for our industry and our economy to keep moving forward. Until that time they had no pension and no retirement. From that day forward it was promised to every miner that for every ton of coal that would be mined, there would be a certain set-aside on the price of coal that would go into their pension and retirement because it was an important industry and important commodity for the economy of our great country.

After World War II, when the economy fell, miners were on strike, and they couldn't take care of themselves. This is how we got this bill, a guarantee from the Federal Government that they would be taken care of. It was not that the Federal taxpayer and government were going to pay for it. It was basically funded through the product they were mining and the products being sold, which gave them the resources to take care of their retirement and pensions.

Somebody got this money when there was a bankruptcy, and it wasn't the people who worked for it. The bankruptcy laws in this country are so messed up that they don't give money to the human beings—they don't give it to the workers who basically worked for this and didn't take money home to their families because it was based in their retirement and pension plan, and then, all of a sudden, it is gone. All of the financial institutions line up first. It is not the working person at the front of the line. They are in the back of the line getting nothing. That is what we are trying to change here.

We are trying to make sure that the people who have given everything they have for this great country—they are patriotic, they fought in the war, and they mined the coal that basically built America. Now we are about ready to let it go down.

We had this bill fixed 3 years ago. I talked with Majority Leader MCCONNELL about both the pension and the healthcare, but they separated it. We got the healthcare benefits for a certain portion of those people but not the pension plan. If there is one bankruptcy between now and 2022, this whole thing collapses immediately.

On the other hand, the guaranteed funding that the Federal Government does pay for will be hit hard, and it could break down. So we have a crisis looming. We can avoid it or we can allow this to happen, as we do so many things around here.

Why has this become a political fight? It shouldn't be. We have bipartisan support. We had almost every member on the Finance Committee from both parties—Democrats and Republicans—support it, but it never made it past the person who is responsible for putting it on the floor.

I hope that all my colleagues will consider the widows and their \$600 pensions, which means the difference between having a life and basically worrying from day to day whether they are going to have food or medical care for whatever they need. These pensions are not extravagant. These pensions are a necessity and something that is needed. So I implore all of my colleagues to look at this very hard and try to get this on the NDAA. This is something we all should be fighting for and helping the people who fought for us, who gave us the quality of life we have and the great country we have.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today with my colleague from Alabama, Senator JONES, to urge our colleagues' support for our amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act. It would repeal the Survivor Benefit Plan and dependency indemnity compensation offset, more commonly known as the military widow's tax. This unfair offset is currently preventing as many as 65,000 surviving military spouses—more than 260 of them in the State of Maine—from receiving the full benefits they deserve.

The Defense Department's Survivor Benefit Plan, or SBP, is primarily an insurance benefit that military families purchase in their retirement. It provides cash benefits to a surviving spouse or other eligible recipients when a retiree passes away. On the other hand, the Department of Veterans Affairs dependency and indemnity compensation, known as DIC, is a monthly, tax-free payment to survivors and dependents of servicemembers who pass away from service-related conditions.

For example, if a military retiree pays premiums into the SBP insurance program, then his or her spouse ought to be able to receive those benefits when the retiree passes away. What we find instead, however, is that surviving

spouses receiving these insurance payments have a dollar-for-dollar offset for the separate payments they are receiving from the VA. In some cases, this leads to the total elimination of the Survivor Benefit Plan benefit. In other cases, the offset greatly reduces the benefit. In either case, it is out-and-out unfair and harms the survivors of our servicemembers and military retirees. The average offset amounts to about \$925 per month, which is often a significant amount of money that a widow or a widower needs to help support their families or themselves in the absence of their spouses.

Military commanders often say that you recruit the soldier but you retain the family. We have an obligation to make sure we are taking care of our military families who sacrifice so much for our country.

Our amendment has the support of numerous military and veterans advocacy groups, including the Gold Star Wives of America, the Military Officers Association of America, the National Military Family Association, the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, and the VFW, among others.

More than 75 Senators—three-quarters of the Members of this Chamber—and 340 Members of the House of Representatives support the effort Senator JONES and I have led by cosponsoring our stand-alone bill. In fact, this legislation has been adopted by the Senate in the past numerous times, always by an overwhelming margin or by a voice vote, only to be later stripped out in the conference process.

This problem goes back decades, but this year we can finally solve it once and for all. It is time for us to do our duty not only to support the brave men and women who serve in our military but also to support their families. I encourage each of our colleagues to join in this bipartisan effort and support the repeal of the military widow's tax as part of the NDAA.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. JONES. Mr. President, I want to echo what my colleague and friend, the Senator from Maine, has said about the elimination of the widow's tax and rise today to urge this body to bring the Military Widow's Tax Elimination Act of 2019 to the Senate floor for a vote this week as an amendment to the NDAA.

I introduced this bipartisan legislation with my friend and colleague Senator COLLINS this year. It has been introduced numerous times. Legislation that is designed to right a terrible wrong has been introduced numerous times over the last 18 years but without success.

Today, we are at an alltime high for cosponsorship. Seventy-five Members of this body, Republicans and Democrats, support this legislation and have signed on as cosponsors. The only other major bill with support in this Congress like that was the one we recently passed by unanimous consent to crack

down on robocalls, which I know is something we can all agree needed to be done, and just like that, this legislation is needed as well.

As Senator COLLINS talked about, the military widow's tax bill has earned overwhelming support on both sides of the aisle and from groups like TAPS, the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, the Military Officers Association of America, and the VFW. Support out there is overwhelming because it is simply the right thing to do.

The law currently prohibits military widows from receiving their full survivor benefits from both the VA and the additional Department of Defense Survivor Benefit Plan that they paid into voluntarily. These Gold Star families—as many as, I think, 65,000 across the country and as many as 2,000 in my home State of Alabama—are being ripped off. It is just that plain and simple.

To add insult to injury, they are being ripped off by the very U.S. Government that their loved ones swore to protect. That is absolutely shameful, that we would treat our military families in such a way. We obviously—obviously—can never repay these families for their loss and the sacrifices they have made, but it is our duty, I submit—our duty—to try to do all we can. And we can dang sure stop the government from robbing them of the benefits they have paid for and earned.

At the end of the day, this is a cost of war. It is a cost of freedom, more importantly. It is a cost of freedom. So for folks to say that this fix is too expensive or that there is not an obvious pay-for in our budgets that we have today, I would remind my colleagues that this bill has made it into the NDAA several times before, and we have waived—this body has waived the pay-go rules for it several times in the past because Members of this body have recognized that there are more important issues at play here. Many of my colleagues have supported this bill without a pay-for in the past.

This week, we will be considering the NDAA, and I am very grateful to Senator INHOFE, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, who is responsible for shepherding this defense authorization on the floor this week.

The committee, of which I am a member, has done just incredible bipartisan work to get the NDAA to the floor this week.

Senator INHOFE is a cosponsor of this bill. In 2008, when the bill came to the floor of the Senate as an NDAA amendment earlier, also without a pay-for, he noted that an effort to eliminate the widow's tax had been in the works for 8 years at that point, since 2000. He urged his colleagues to right this wrong. He spoke on the floor, stating:

It is time we give back these benefits to those families of those who have served bravely in defense of our Nation. I think it is an insult to their honor and their memory to do anything else.

I couldn't agree more, and I hope that our colleagues today will, too, and

will continue their support for our veterans and widows and will work with our leaders to ensure that this amendment gets a vote during the NDAA deliberations.

This is our chance to right this wrong once and for all. This is not a partisan issue. It is an issue of common ground and, significantly, of common purpose. That is precisely why 75 Members of this body have signed on as cosponsors, to say that it is their fundamental belief that we should honor our promise to the families of the best and bravest among us who have given their lives in service to our Nation.

I thank my Republican colleague, Senator COLLINS of Maine, for her leadership on this important issue and for being a great partner in the fight to finally get this legislation passed once and for all. Like she did a few moments ago, I urge all the rest of my colleagues in this body to call for this amendment to be brought to the floor for a vote this week as an amendment to the NDAA. Let our votes speak louder than our words. Let's finally right this wrong.

I yield the floor.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. SASSE), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Mrs. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 86, nays 6, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 181 Leg.]

YEAS—86

Alexander	Crapo	King
Baldwin	Cruz	Lankford
Barrasso	Daines	Leahy
Bennet	Duckworth	Lee
Blackburn	Durbin	Manchin
Blumenthal	Enzi	McConnell
Blunt	Ernst	McSally
Booker	Feinstein	Menendez
Boozman	Fischer	Moran
Braun	Gardner	Murkowski
Brown	Graham	Murphy
Burr	Grassley	Murray
Cantwell	Hassan	Paul
Capito	Hawley	Perdue
Cardin	Heinrich	Peters
Casey	Hirono	Portman
Cassidy	Hoeven	Reed
Collins	Hyde-Smith	Risch
Coons	Inhofe	Roberts
Cornyn	Isakson	Romney
Cortez Masto	Johnson	Rosen
Cotton	Jones	Rubio
Cramer	Kaine	Schatz

Schumer
Scott (FL)
Scott (SC)
Shaheen
Shelby
Sinema

Smith
Stabenow
Sullivan
Tester
Thune
Tillis

Van Hollen
Warner
Whitehouse
Wicker
Young

NAYS—6

Carper
Klobuchar

Markley
Merkley

Udall
Wyden

NOT VOTING—8

Gillibrand
Harris
Kennedy

Rounds
Sanders
Sasse

Toomey
Warren

The motion was agreed to.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1790) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2020 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

AMENDMENT NO. 764, AS MODIFIED

Mr. MCCONNELL. I call up the Inhofe amendment No. 764, as modified, with the changes at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL], for Mr. INHOFE, proposes an amendment numbered 764.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment, as modified, is as follows:

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020”.

SEC. 2. ORGANIZATION OF ACT INTO DIVISIONS; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) DIVISIONS.—This Act is organized into seven divisions as follows:

(1) Division A—Department of Defense Authorizations.

(2) Division B—Military Construction Authorizations.

(3) Division C—Department of Energy National Security Authorizations and Other Authorizations.

(4) Division D—Funding Tables.

(5) Division E—Additional Provisions.

(6) Division F—Intelligence Authorizations for Fiscal Year 2020.

(7) Division G—Intelligence Authorizations for Fiscal Year 2018 and 2019.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title.

Sec. 2. Organization of Act into divisions; table of contents.

Sec. 3. Congressional defense committees.

Sec. 4. Budgetary effects of this Act.

DIVISION A—DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATIONS

TITLE I—PROCUREMENT

Subtitle A—Authorization of Appropriations

Sec. 101. Authorization of appropriations.

Subtitle B—Army Programs

Sec. 111. Sense of Senate on Army's approach to Capability Drops 1 and 2 of the Distributed Common Ground System-Army program.

Sec. 112. Authority of the Secretary of the Army to waive certain limitations related to the Distributed Common Ground System-Army Increment 1.

Subtitle C—Navy Programs

Sec. 121. Modification of prohibition on availability of funds for Navy waterborne security barriers.

Sec. 122. Capabilities based assessment for naval vessels that carry fixed-wing aircraft.

Sec. 123. Ford-class aircraft carrier cost limitation baselines.

Sec. 124. Design and construction of amphibious transport dock designated LPD-31.

Sec. 125. LHA Replacement Amphibious Assault Ship Program.

Sec. 126. Limitation on availability of funds for the Littoral Combat Ship.

Sec. 127. Limitation on the next new class of Navy large surface combatants.

Sec. 128. Refueling and complex overhauls of the U.S.S. John C. Stennis and U.S.S. Harry S. Truman.

Sec. 129. Report on carrier wing composition.

Subtitle D—Air Force Programs

Sec. 141. Requirement to align Air Force fighter force structure with National Defense Strategy and reports.

Sec. 142. Requirement to establish the use of an Agile DevOps software development solution as an alternative for Joint Strike Fighter Autonomic Logistics Information System.

Sec. 143. Report on feasibility of multiyear contract for procurement of JASSM-ER missiles.

Sec. 144. Air Force aggressor squadron modernization.

Sec. 145. Air Force plan for Combat Rescue Helicopter fielding.

Sec. 146. Military type certification for AT-6 and A-29 light attack experimentation aircraft.

Subtitle E—Defense-wide, Joint, and Multiservice Matters

Sec. 151. Limitation on availability of funds for communications systems lacking certain resiliency features.

Sec. 152. F-35 sustainment cost.

Sec. 153. Economic order quantity contracting authority for F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program.

Sec. 154. Repeal of tactical unmanned vehicle common data link requirement.

TITLE II—RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, TEST, AND EVALUATION

Subtitle A—Authorization of Appropriations

Sec. 201. Authorization of appropriations.

Subtitle B—Program Requirements, Restrictions, and Limitations

Sec. 211. Development and acquisition strategy to procure secure, low probability of detection data link network capability.

Sec. 212. Establishment of secure next-generation wireless network (5G) infrastructure for the Nevada Test and Training Range and base infrastructure.

Sec. 213. Limitation and report on Indirect Fire Protection Capability Increment 2 enduring capability.

Sec. 214. Electromagnetic spectrum sharing research and development program.

Sec. 215. Sense of the Senate on the Advanced Battle Management System.

Sec. 216. Modification of proof of concept commercialization program.

Sec. 217. Modification of Defense quantum information science and technology research and development program.

Sec. 218. Technology and National Security Fellowship.

Sec. 219. Direct Air Capture and Blue Carbon Removal Technology Program.

Subtitle C—Reports and Other Matters

Sec. 231. National security emerging biotechnologies research and development program.

Sec. 232. Cyber science and technology activities roadmap and reports.

Sec. 233. Requiring certain microelectronics products and services meet trusted supply chain and operational security standards.

Sec. 234. Technical correction to Global Research Watch Program.

Sec. 235. Additional technology areas for expedited access to technical talent.

Sec. 236. Sense of the Senate and periodic briefings on the security and availability of fifth-generation (5G) wireless network technology and production.

Sec. 237. Transfer of Combating Terrorism Technical Support Office.

Sec. 238. Briefing on cooperative defense technology programs and risks of technology transfer to China or Russia.

Sec. 239. Modification of authority for prizes for advanced technology achievements.

Sec. 240. Use of funds for Strategic Environmental Research Program, Environmental Security Technical Certification Program, and Operational Energy Capability Improvement.

Sec. 241. Funding for the Sea-Launched Cruise Missile-Nuclear analysis of alternatives.

Sec. 242. Review and assessment pertaining to transition of Department of Defense-originated dual-use technology.

TITLE III—OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Subtitle A—Authorization of Appropriations

Sec. 301. Authorization of appropriations.

Subtitle B—Energy and Environment

Sec. 311. Use of operational energy cost savings of Department of Defense.

Sec. 312. Use of proceeds from sales of electrical energy generated from geothermal resources.

Sec. 313. Energy resilience programs and activities.

Sec. 314. Native American Indian lands environmental mitigation program.

Sec. 315. Reimbursement of Environmental Protection Agency for certain costs in connection with the Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant, Minnesota.