

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

S. 1790

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, yesterday, the Senate overwhelmingly voted to proceed to the National Defense Authorization Act by a vote of 86 to 6. That is about as overwhelming a bipartisan vote as we have had lately, and it is for good reason. This bill represents one of our most fundamental duties as the U.S. Congress, which is to authorize military expenditures and to provide our men and women in uniform with the resources they need in order to protect the American people.

The Defense authorization bill would authorize funding for the Department of Defense to carry out its most vital missions, as well as support our alliances around the world and improve the quality of life for our servicemembers, including the largest pay raise in a decade. All of us have long understood the importance of passing this legislation each year, which is why for the past 58 years we have passed the Defense authorization bill each of those years without delay. The bill, of course, has gained broad bipartisan support in the Armed Services Committee and in the first procedural vote yesterday evening, but that doesn't mean that our colleagues across the aisle aren't eyeing it as the latest target for their obstructionist tactics.

We are hearing that our Democratic friends are actually threatening to filibuster this legislation in an attempt to force a vote on Iran, but this is really just a subterfuge. I don't buy it. In reality, the Democratic leader has urged the majority leader not to hold a vote on the Defense authorization bill this week because so many of his Members are running for President and need to be at the debate in Miami. He said the Senate should wait to have the vote until the full body is present. He said there is no rush to complete the National Defense Authorization Act. Just to translate, the minority leader wants the rest of us to stop working so that the Democrat Senators who are running for President can prepare for the debate in Miami instead of being here in Washington and doing their job. Instead of doing that, they want to audition for their next job—or so they hope. Well, the minority leader thinks we should delay giving our military families a pay raise so his Members can campaign for President. That is one of the more galling things I have ever heard proposed across the aisle.

The demand for a vote in relation to Iran is a smokescreen. It is a tactic being used to cover up for their colleagues who don't want to miss yet another vote. In the first 6 months of this year alone, Senate Democrats have played politics with nominees for important positions throughout the Federal Government and with border secu-

rity funding in the midst of a humanitarian and security crisis that is occurring at the border. They dragged their feet on Middle East policy bills and now, apparently, on the National Defense Authorization Act.

Our constituents sent us here to Washington to cast votes—yes or no—on bills that shape our country and, in this case, strengthen our Nation's military. We should not tolerate the political ambitions of some of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to take precedence over the men and women who serve us in the military. Their priorities may be elsewhere, but the rest of us are not buying it. It is appalling, and we will not let it happen.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Madam President, on another matter, I recently heard from one of my constituents in San Antonio about her growing concern with rising drug prices. She wrote to me:

I personally haven't had to make the choice yet between making my mortgage or getting a drug I need or my family needs, but I know the day is coming. It's not a matter of if it will happen, but when for all of us in America.

She is certainly not alone. Countless Texans have conveyed to me their concerns about rising drug costs, and one man even told me that he and his wife feel like their health is being held ransom. Across the country more and more people are struggling to pay their out-of-pocket costs for their prescription drugs and are weighing financial decisions that no family should be forced to make.

Now, the good news is there is bipartisan agreement here in Congress—somewhat of a rarity these days—that something must be done to reel in these skyrocketing costs and to protect patients who are being taken advantage of by some pharmaceutical companies. We have spent a lot of time looking at this issue on both the Judiciary Committee and the Finance Committee, on which I sit, as well as the HELP Committee, which is also working on legislation to lower out-of-pocket healthcare costs.

When it comes to drug prices, we know that the high cost frequently is not the result of the necessary sunk cost for research and development of an innovative drug or a labor-intensive production process or scarce supply. The high cost frequently is because major players in the healthcare industry are driving up prices to increase their bottom line.

Later this week, the Judiciary Committee will hold a markup to consider some of the proposals by members of the committee to address this kind of behavior. One of the bills we will consider was introduced by Senators GRASSLEY and CANTWELL. It would require the Federal Trade Commission to look at the role of pharmacy benefit managers, which play an important—albeit an elusive part—in the pharmaceutical supply chain.

Another bill we will be reviewing has been introduced by Senators KLOBUCHAR and GRASSLEY and would combat branded pharmaceutical companies' ability to interfere with the regulatory approval of generic competitors.

I am glad we will also have a chance to consider a bill I introduced with my colleague Senator BLUMENTHAL from Connecticut called the Affordable Prescriptions for Patients Act. That bill takes aim at two practices often deployed by pharmaceutical companies to crowd out competition and protect their bottom line. Now, this bill, importantly, will not stymie innovation, and it will not punish those who rightfully gained exclusive production rights for a drug. That is what our patent system is designed to do. Those are two false arguments being pushed by opponents to my bill, though, and, believe me, there are many. The bill is designed, rather, to stop the bad actors who abuse our laws and effectively create a monopoly. Most drug companies don't fall into that category, but some definitely do.

First, the bill targets a practice called product hopping. When a company is about to lose exclusivity of a drug because their patent is going to expire, they often develop some sort of minor reformulation and then yank the original product off the market. That prevents generic competitors from entering the market. One example was the drug Namenda, which is used by patients with Alzheimer's. Near the end of the exclusivity period, the manufacturer switched from a twice daily drug to a once daily drug. That move prevented pharmacists from being able to switch patients to a lower cost generic and gave the company an unprecedented 14 additional years of exclusivity. Now, don't get me wrong. There are often legitimate changes that warrant a new patent, but too frequently we are seeing this deployed as a strategy to box out generic competition.

By defining product hopping as anticompetitive behavior, the Federal Trade Commission would be able to take action against those who engage in this practice. It is an important way to prevent companies from gaming the patent system and patients from carrying the cost of that corporate greed.

Our country thankfully is the leader in pharmaceutical innovation. None of us wants to change that, and that is partly because we offer robust protections for intellectual property. Sadly, though, some companies are taking advantage of those innovation protections in order to maintain their monopoly as long as possible. Our bill would target this practice, known as patent thicketing, by limiting patents companies can use to keep their competitors away. One famous example is the drug HUMIRA, which, as I understand, is the most commonly prescribed drug in the world. It is used to treat arthritis and a number of other conditions. AbbVie, the manufacturer of HUMIRA, has 136 patents on the

drug and 247 patent applications. This drug has been available now for more than 15 years. This type of behavior makes it difficult for biosimilar manufacturers to bring a new product to market to compete with that drug and thus bring down the price for consumers.

In the case of HUMIRA, multiple biosimilars have been FDA-approved and available since last year, but the vast array of patents obtained by AbbVie prevent any competition from entering the market until 2023. This artificial structuring delays market entry years past the exclusivity period the law originally intended to grant. While the patent on the actual drug formula may have expired, there are still, in this case, hundreds of other patents that have to be sorted through.

Our legislation would seek to end patent gaming that leads to high cost for consumers. Companies use these patents to extend litigation against would-be competitors. That process is lengthy, complex, and expensive. So by limiting the number of patents these companies can use and preventing this sort of gamesmanship, our bill would simplify the litigation process so companies are spending less time in the courtroom and, hopefully, more time in the laboratories, innovating new disease-curing, life-extending drugs. Competitors would be able to resolve patent issues faster and bring their drugs to market sooner. Better competition, which is our goal, creates a better product at a lower price for patients.

What my bill and those that we will be considering in the Judiciary Committee this week have in common is that they seek to prevent bad actors from gaming the system to exploit patients for profit. Since Senator BLUMENTHAL and I introduced this bill, we have received valuable feedback from our colleagues in the Senate, as well as from folks at the Federal Trade Commission, the Patent and Trademark Office, the Food and Drug Administration, and many stakeholders. Their input has helped us make adjustments to ensure our bill will effectively carry out our goal, which is to reduce drug prices without hampering innovation or creating overly burdensome regulations. We are finalizing our revised bill, and we will introduce it soon.

The Affordable Prescriptions for Patients Act will stop pharmaceutical companies from deploying defensive strategies to monopolize prescription drug patents and ensure that our healthcare system works for, not against, the American people.

I appreciate our colleagues in the Senate, especially Chairman ALEXANDER of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee; Chairman GRASSLEY, who is chairman of the Finance Committee; and Chairman GRAHAM, who is chairman of the Judiciary Committee, who continue to work with us to increase competition and bring down healthcare costs for patients

across the country. I look forward to our markup on these bills later this week.

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.

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

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1247

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Rules Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 1247; that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that the bill be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Mississippi.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. An objection is heard.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, the reason for this request for unanimous consent is very simply that this legislation is based on a straightforward, commonly accepted idea: If you see something, say something.

The Duty to Report Act, this measure, would require campaigns, candidates, and family members to immediately report to the FBI and the Federal Election Commission any offers of illegal foreign assistance. It is simply a duty to report illegality. It codifies into law what is already a moral duty, a patriotic duty, and a matter of basic common sense.

It is already illegal to accept foreign assistance during a campaign. It is already illegal to solicit foreign assistance during a campaign. All this bill does is to require campaigns and individuals to report those illegal foreign assistance offers or solicitations directly to the FBI.

I never thought—and few would have guessed—that there is a need for this kind of legislative mandate to do what is a patriotic and a moral duty. With the 2020 election on the horizon, we need to do everything we can to safeguard the integrity of our election.

The President has made remarks that are truly historically astonishing. He made those remarks just recently, which highlighted his own moral and patriotic depravity. He was asked whether he would accept help in 2020 from foreign governments or foreign nationals, and he simply said: “I’d take it.”

That is very much reminiscent of what his son said when he was offered assistance from Russian agents with dirt on Hillary Clinton. He said, “I love it.” That kind of receptivity to ille-

gality is not only un-American, it ought to be explicitly illegal, and all of us in this Chamber would reject it, I am sure. In fact, many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle were severely critical of President Trump’s remarks.

His remarks are also reminiscent of what his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, said in a television interview—that he didn’t know whether he would contact the FBI in that same kind of situation, again, that Donald junior encountered with offers of assistance from Russian agents. He didn’t know whether he would. It is a hypothetical.

Well, we really know what both the President and Jared Kushner, as well as his son Donald junior think about this issue. According to the Mueller report, when a Kremlin-linked individual, Dimitri Simes, offered to provide Kushner with damaging information on Hillary Clinton, he took the meeting. That is not the only example. When George Papadopoulos, the Trump foreign policy campaign staffer, convicted on a Federal charge of lying to the FBI, was told by a Maltese professor that the Russians had dirt on Hillary Clinton in the form of thousands of emails and were willing to provide them to the Trump campaign, what did he do? Rather than go to the FBI, he eagerly alerted others on the campaign.

Just last week, Hope Hicks, Trump’s Communications Director for a while, was interviewed by the House Judiciary Committee. She said that she “knew that the President’s statement was troubling”—in her words, “knew that the President’s statement was troubling” and “understood the President to be serious” when he made those remarks.

The President’s remarks should alarm every American and everyone in the law enforcement community. Our legislative efforts stem from this basic principle. The American people—not Russia, not China, and no one else—should decide who the leaders of our country are and the direction our democracy should go.

Eighty percent of the American people across the political spectrum—or more—support this legislation—Republicans, Democrats, and Independents. All we are doing is asking that MITCH McCONNELL avoid blocking this important legislation and allow a vote on the Senate floor. This bill has 19 cosponsors in the Senate, including Senators WHITEHOUSE, BOOKER, HARRIS, WARREN, GILLIBRAND, KLOBUCHAR, SANDERS, HEINRICH, UDALL, MARKEY, LEAHY, MURRAY, CASEY, SMITH, CARDIN, MURPHY, WYDEN, MERKLEY, and HIRONO. It has been introduced in the House by Congressman ERIC SWALWELL, and it now has 30 cosponsors there, including the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, JERRY NADLER.

I invite my Republican colleagues to support me in passing this legislation. Republicans ought to stand up for the rule of law. They ought to speak out

for our national security. They should refuse to tolerate these kinds of words and behavior from an American Commander in Chief.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

S. 1790

Mr. CRAMER. Madam President, I rise today to emphasize the importance of this year's National Defense Authorization Act—both why it is important and what we must accomplish this week while we are still here.

The primary obligation of Congress is to provide for the common defense. For the past 57, 58-plus years, Congress has met this obligation primarily through passage of the NDAA. With this bipartisan legislation, we have provided our Armed Forces the resources and authorities they need to defend our country. This bill keeps America on track by confronting the readiness crisis in our military branches.

I am the first North Dakotan ever to serve on the Senate Armed Services Committee, and I consider this a great honor. North Dakota is home to two Air Force bases: Minot, which is home to two of the three legs of the nuclear triad, the B-52 bombers and Minuteman ICBM missiles; and one in Grand Forks, home to the RQ-4 Global Hawk mission and, effective in just a few days, on Friday, the 319th Reconnaissance Wing.

We are also home to multiple Army and Air National Guard units and missions, ranging from construction and combat engineers to security forces, to ISR and launch and recovery Reaper operations. Our Army National Guard, in fact, has an air defense artillery regiment that regularly protects us right here in the Capital region as part of Operation Noble Eagle.

Our military community is a foundational element to our State as it is to many States. To us, the NDAA is not just arbitrary funding numbers for abstract aircraft and equipment. This legislation supports those in my State and across the country who defend our Nation at home and around the world.

We are honored by the outsized role our patriots play in defense of our Nation and the cause of liberty. Our commitment to them and their families must be clear. When they are called into action, they will have every resource they need to carry out successful missions.

I want to address a fundamental aspect to this week's debate. Apparently, there are some in this body who would rather bypass budget negotiations and pass a continuing resolution. There are others who want to delay passage of this important priority until later in the year.

We cannot simply kick this can down the road. Passing a CR is handing our military community months of uncertainty and anxiety and could nullify much of the good work that we are doing here today and this week, such as improving the livelihoods of our

servicemembers. Delaying passage to accommodate the political ambitions of a few of our Democratic colleagues is simply unacceptable and should be dismissed as quickly as it was suggested.

Those who offer their lives in service to our country represent the best of what America has to offer. What they give us, we can never repay, but we can do our best to help as they serve and transition back to civilian life.

For example, this NDAA seeks to improve the livelihood of our volunteer military force with benefits such as the largest pay increase in over a decade.

It also provides personal assistance for military spouses looking for work or hoping to retain their job after being relocated. We also included language that encourages the Air National Guard to provide tuition assistance.

To keep us safe from foreign adversaries, this year's NDAA bolsters our nuclear triad with an enhanced commitment to modernization—a move I firmly support. While recently visiting the Minot Air Force Base, I witnessed the reality the base's airmen face every day. Our brave men and women in uniform feel the weight of the world on their shoulders. Yet they remain vigilant and alert—and most of the time quite cheerful, I might add.

Deterrence works. It has always worked. Democratic and Republican administrations over the last several decades have supported this. Eliminating a leg of the deterrence does not eliminate the threat. The world does not become a safe place when we remove that which keeps us safe.

If we defied history and the military community by unilaterally weakening our superior arsenal, as some in the House have proposed, we would be placing the fate of the world in the hands of our adversaries.

That is not to say the bill shouldn't be amended. In fact, I want to bring attention to a matter that wasn't included that I believe should be. I submitted an amendment, along with a stand-alone bill, that honors the Lost 74—the 74 Vietnam veterans who died in the sinking of the USS *Frank E. Evans*, whose names are not included on the Vietnam Memorial Wall. This year marks 50 years since they were killed off the coast of Vietnam while serving our Nation.

Congress passed this legislation last year in the House NDAA, but it failed to be added in conference. This year, I moved from the House to the Senate, and so did this bill. It has received overwhelming, bipartisan support from my colleagues here and from constituents across the country; however, the bureaucrats in Washington remain firmly opposed. It is inexplicable to me that bureaucrats could determine that these sailors' ultimate sacrifice is unworthy of being memorialized simply because they were on the wrong side of an arbitrary line. Their disregard for these veterans has been a source of tremendous frustration to me throughout

this process. I have had my own motives questioned. I have been told it would require too much "work" to change the memorial. I have even heard fears expressed of precedent being changed, as if finding more ways to honor the fallen and forgotten would somehow set a bad precedent for the future. These excuses are insufficient. The Lost 74 and the families they left behind deserve better than this, and I have no plans to quit this fight for them anytime soon.

But this and other possible inclusions aside, this NDAA contains important national security efforts, including the establishment of the U.S. Space Force. The Senate Armed Services Committee came up with a bipartisan proposal that reduces redundancy in space programs, defines clear leadership on space at the upper echelons of our military, and guarantees dedicated servicemembers to the space domain. I thank my colleagues for seeing the administration's vision and working in a bipartisan fashion to improve it.

I led two important amendments to the Space Force proposal that were adopted in the committee markup. The first requires that the commander of the Space Force report directly to the Secretary of the Air Force after the first year of establishment. The second is that the commander of the Space Force become a permanent member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also after the first year of establishment. Both were supported by the Department of Defense and should be maintained through conference negotiations.

The first provision—reporting directly to the Secretary—ensures that the Space Force commander has direct access to the top civilian leadership of the Air Force, just like the Navy-Marine Corps model. The Commandant of the Marine Corps does not report to the Chief of Naval Operations, and neither should the Space Force commander be forced to report to the Air Force Chief of Staff.

Reporting to the Secretary will give our space forces an equal voice in the Air Force's budget development process. We all know that real authority in the Pentagon is budget authority, and unless the Space Force has a true voice in the budget process, they will never be prioritized appropriately.

When testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Strategic Command commander and vice chairman nominee General Hyten spoke to the challenges of the Air Force Chief of Staff making space a priority, stating:

We have to have somebody in the Pentagon that focuses their total attention on space all the time. I have known every chief of staff of the Air Force for the last 20 or 30 years, and they've all carried space effectively into the tank. They've all cared about space. But it is a secondary issue.

Rather than automatically relegating space to a secondary issue, the Space Force commander should follow the Marine Corps model and report directly to the Secretary of the Air Force.

In addition, the Space Force commander should be a statutory member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Joint Chiefs, of course, are the primary military advisers to the President. The President makes strategic decisions on the composition and use of our national security resources based on the counsel received from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Without a separate, equal voice at the table, the Space Force commander will inevitably be marginalized from critical decision-making and resource allocation processes.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Dunford, reiterated this point when he said that “the key is to have individuals who are singularly focused on space and make sure we incorporate that perspective, that very healthy perspective, into the outcome, which is a joint force that can fight.” General Dunford is exactly right. The Space Force commander should have a seat on the Joint Chiefs and bring that singular focus of space to the table.

I understand the concerns surrounding these amendments, and I agree with my colleagues that we should minimize overhead and unneeded bureaucracy, which is why both of my amendments do not take effect for a year, and the language specifically bars any new staff or additional billets in the interim.

Last week, the ranking member of the committee cited CBO estimates on the potential costs of these amendments. I would like to quote the same CBO report for additional context and reference. The CBO report says that “the estimates in this report are for illustrative policy options; they do not represent cost estimates for any particular piece of legislation.”

With that in mind, I would ask the Department of Defense to take these concerns seriously and use the 1 year to craft and present a plan to appropriately implement these two provisions.

My colleagues’ concerns are not unwarranted; however, it would be poor policy to hamstring the Space Force from the beginning rather than set it up for success.

It is worth noting that the House NDAA establishes a Space Corps and takes two concrete steps directly in line with my amendments. The leader of the Space Corps would report directly to the Secretary of the Air Force and sit on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, without the 1-year delay my amendment would require. The House, Senate, and Department of Defense are largely in line with these two provisions.

The idea of the Space Force will become a reality with this year’s NDAA. The establishment process will be incremental and requires oversight, but our first step must set the conditions to ensure its success.

The importance of this NDAA is clear. Passing it is vital to my State and to our Nation. It supports our

troops, bolsters our nuclear deterrence, and provides for the creation of a Space Force capable of defending the next domain of military conflict. For these and dozens of other reasons, I urge my colleagues to support it and pass it quickly to demonstrate our commitment to our highest priority.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I thought there would be people here speaking. We are right now in consideration of the most significant bill of the year, the National Defense Authorization Act. It is not just the biggest bill but the most significant one, and we know it is going to pass. It has passed for 59 years in a row, so obviously it is going to pass. But the problem is that we have many amendments to be discussed because yesterday alone, we adopted 93 amendments, and they are equally divided between Democrats and Republicans.

I have invited and encouraged all the Members who have amendments that were on the list to come down to the floor and talk about their amendments. I have a list of those individuals who have requested to be here in conjunction with that, and they are not down here.

Let me just appeal to the Members—Democrats and Republicans alike—to come in and describe your amendments and talk about this because we are going to do everything we can to get this bill passed this week.

I have to say, there is an effort right now by the leader of the Democrats to try to put this off because they want to watch their friends run for President on TV on Wednesday night and Thursday night. To me, we have the most important bill of the entire year. This is something we have to pass because of all the problems that come up. We have housing, for example. The big problem with privatization of housing came up last February. All the solutions are in this bill. They are taken care of. Modernizing our nuclear modernization is in this bill. That is going to be done, but it can’t be done until the bill is passed and signed by the President.

If we wait, as suggested, in order for them to watch their friends on TV, then this is going to put it off for a week, and that is certainly going to jeopardize the possibility of getting it passed. There isn’t time.

If you look at the list of things which the leader of the Senate articulated just a short while ago, all these things have to be done before the end of the

fiscal year. The end of the fiscal year is looming out there. We don’t have that many legislative days.

We have to do a budget. All these things have to be done, so we cannot jeopardize all of that by postponing this for a week.

I encourage our Members to come down and be heard and describe their amendments.

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

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

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I rise to once again talk about the truly obscene cost of prescription drugs and the No. 1 thing we can do to lower prices. It is spelled out right here: Let Medicare negotiate. It is very simple. Let Medicare negotiate to bring down the cost of prescription drugs.

Prescription drug costs are a huge issue for people, frankly, of all ages who need medication in my State. Whether I am talking to farmers in Western Michigan, retirees in the Upper Peninsula, working families in Wayne County or Macomb County, families are feeling the effects.

When you look at the numbers between 2008 and 2016, prices on the most popular brand-name drugs went up over 208 percent. Just ask those farmers in West Michigan and those working families in Macomb; their income did not rise 208 percent.

Perhaps nobody has been hurt more than our seniors who tend to take more medications and live on fixed incomes. In 2017 alone, the average price of brand-name drugs that seniors often take rose four times faster than the rate of inflation. In 1 year, it rose faster than the rate of inflation. Again, I am absolutely certain that the vast majority of the seniors in my State did not see their incomes go up four times faster than the rate of inflation. I can tell you that seniors in the Upper Peninsula didn’t see their pensions or Social Security checks increase that much.

What do families do? What do seniors do? We all know the stories. Some people are forced to cut back on other things like food and paying their bills. Some folks cut their heart pills in half or take their arthritis medication every other day instead of every day—which, by the way, is not OK to do. Some families stop filling their prescriptions altogether simply because they can’t afford it. This is wrong.

I have always believed healthcare is a basic human right, and that includes prescription medications. How do we lower the cost of prescriptions so families can afford the medications they need to get healthy and to stay healthy? The No. 1 way to do that is to

let Medicare negotiate. It is very straightforward: Let Medicare negotiate. The VA is allowed to negotiate the price of prescription drugs, and the VA saves 40 percent compared to Medicare. In fact, if Medicare paid the same price as the VA, it could have saved \$14.4 billion on just 50 drugs if it paid the same prices as the VA. It could have \$14.4 billion in savings if Medicare could negotiate for seniors the way the VA is able to negotiate for veterans.

So what is stopping us? Republicans in Congress and pharma lobbyists are standing in the way of getting this done. In 2018, there were 1,451 lobbyists for the pharmaceutical and health product industry. That is almost 15 lobbyists for every 1 Member of the Senate. Their job is to stop competition and keep prices high, and they are doing a very good job.

Back in 2003, when Medicare Part D was signed into law, they blocked Medicare from harnessing the bargaining power of 43 million American seniors. Those 43 million American seniors together could see negotiating power, but it was blocked by language that was put into Medicare Part D. Let me just say that again. It is very simple. Take that language out and let Medicare negotiate.

Sixteen years later, pharmaceutical companies are still boosting their bottom lines on the backs of our seniors. As if putting that language in Medicare Part D wasn't enough, we constantly see efforts to look for an advantage to block competition, to do something to protect prices, to keep prices high, and they are at it again. The name-brand industry that is a huge supporter of the new trade agreement, NAFTA 2.0—some say NAFTA 1.5, some people call it the U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade agreement—but this deal with Canada and America that has been put together and negotiated by the administration has something in it to protect the pricing for Big Pharma. The provisions could stop competitors from getting cheaper generic versions of biologic drugs on the market sooner. If you stop the competition, you stop the ability for generic, no-brand names. They are the same drug most of the time but just without a brand name on it. If you stop that competition, even though that competition brings down prices, you can keep prices and profits high. Biologics are some of the most expensive drugs out there. For example, Humira, the world's top-selling prescription drug, treats conditions including Crohn's disease and rheumatoid arthritis, and it can cost up to \$50,000 a year for one prescription drug. How many people do you know who can afford to pay \$50,000 a year for their medication for just one drug?

At least three companies have developed generic versions of the drug, but they will not be available in the United States until at least 2023. We have at least three companies with a lower cost generic version that could bring down prices. They will not be available in

the United States until at least 2023. Humira isn't a new drug. It has been around since 2002.

When we had a hearing in the Finance Committee—and I want to commend our chairman for doing that and bringing in the top drug company CEOs—the CEO that puts Humira into the marketplace indicated they have over 130 different patents that protect them from competition. Here we are, in the middle of a trade agreement, where they are wanting to put language in concerning the length of patents in order to protect their position.

By the way, shortly after the President signed the USMCA at the end of last year, the drug companies decided to begin 2019 with price increases on more than 250 prescription drugs, including Humira. So they feel more confident their position is protected; there is not going to be competition. So what happens? They raise the prices again.

Pharmaceutical companies like to argue that they need special giveaways—like they got in Medicare Part D and that they are trying to get in the new U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade agreement—because they invest so much in research and development. However, it is also true that when given the opportunity to invest in research and development, many companies chose, instead, to put more money in the pockets of CEOs and shareholders rather than using the big tax cut they received to put more into research and development.

I am a huge supporter of research and development. Most of the primary, basic research is done by all of us as taxpayers. In fact, last year, the 500 biggest U.S. companies spent \$608 billion on research and development, which is great. That might sound like a lot, but they spent \$806 billion buying back their own stock to keep the prices up on the stock. That also makes you wonder why pharmaceutical companies didn't use their tax giveaway to reduce the cost of prescription drugs.

The pricing of prescription drugs in this country is the ultimate example of a rigged system. It is time to come together and unrig it. That is what we should be doing. Our job is to unrig the system.

First, we need to allow Medicare to harness the bargaining power of 43 million American seniors. One recent poll found that 92 percent of voters support allowing Medicare to negotiate. Let Medicare negotiate. That is 92 percent of voters who believe in this.

Second, we need to prevent the pharmaceutical companies from receiving additional sweet deals that keep drug costs high. I think it is about time we make a deal that benefits Michigan farmers and businesses and seniors and working families. That should be our focus. We should not be in a situation where, time after time, there is special treatment, protective language that bars the pharmaceutical industry from negotiating under Medicare or that allows them to protect their patents

longer so they don't have competition from generic drugs to bring down prices.

Let's unrig this system and address the highest driver, the biggest driver in raising the costs of healthcare in this country, which is the cost of prescription drugs. We can do something about that, and we need to do it soon.

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

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

Mr. TILLIS. Madam President, I come before you, first and foremost, to thank Senator INHOFE for his great leadership as the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and a special thanks to the staff who are working very, very hard to process the hundreds of amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act that came out of the committee with broad bipartisan support.

I am here to talk specifically about some provisions that I think are pretty important that actually started in the Personnel Subcommittee. I chair the Personnel Subcommittee for Senate Armed Services. Early this year, we heard of what I consider to be absolutely unacceptable conditions in military housing across the country. In North Carolina—and, Madam President, in your great State of Tennessee—we have bases, and we have military housing. We have men and women, many of them very young. Oftentimes the spouses are deployed, so the family is back home taking care of their children, taking care of their own jobs, and living on the base.

About February, we got reports—and these are not just one-off reports; these are reports across the country of mold, mildew, damage from storms, and all kinds of conditions that I think in the private sector you would find objectionable. I think it is particularly objectionable when you are talking about people whose families are with that husband or wife who serve in the military or serve in this country.

We decided to have a number of hearings where we brought the private housing providers into the Senate and my Personnel Subcommittee and the full committee to get an explanation. Quite honestly, there wasn't a good explanation.

Back in 1996, the Federal Government decided to get out of the housing business. I am glad they did because they were doing a really bad job. For about 10 years, we had a great story to tell in terms of the quality of housing, the service to the tenants, and the satisfaction of the military families. But then something got sideways in a very, very bad way.

This is a shower. If you see this kind of mold and mildew in your shower,

would you think it is acceptable? If you go in and see children's toys—and this is actually the bottom side of a crib—mold and mildew in these folks' housing with small children in them, people with respiratory conditions living in these kinds of conditions, I expect the garrison down at the bases and I expect the private housing providers to move Heaven and Earth to eliminate these sorts of problems. We are making progress, but I feel, in order to make sure it is not progress that is being made just when they all of a sudden get the attention of this Senator and other Members of the U.S. Senate, we have to change the rules in terms of the authorities that the Department of Defense has and the expectations that we have for the private housing providers.

I have to give thanks to the Acting Secretary of Defense, formerly the Secretary of the Army, and all of the service Secretaries for stepping up. They have recreated a tenant of bill of rights. They have created a dispute process. They have demanded a more timely and more transparent method for actually solving service requests. All of those now have language in this National Defense Authorization Act that Congress needs to act quickly on so that we can make sure we put into place the right expectations in the statute, to make sure that the problems that exist today are fixed and that they don't happen again.

I will tell you that while we are making progress, when I go to Fort Bragg and Camp Lejeune, I hold what are called sensing sessions, which are basically getting a few dozen people together to hear their complaints. There is an amazing thing that happens when I go to North Carolina.

I don't know, Madam President, if you have done one of these in Tennessee yet, but if you announce that you are going to go down and hear from the tenants, there is an amazing thing that happens. You have all of these service requests that are about to here when they announce that I am coming to Jacksonville or I am coming to Fayetteville. About a day or two before I get there, magically, they have been able to solve almost all of those service requests. Then I go away for a couple of months, and I see them coming back up again.

One thing that everybody who is listening—and these are not just the private housing providers. It is the Department of Defense and Congress that I think have shifted their focus away from this problem, and we have to maintain a focus on it.

So for my part, I just spoke with my scheduling director and my State staff. I told them that I want to take the next sensing session up a level. I want a townhall. I want to be able to put 200 or 300 families with housing down in Jacksonville at Camp Lejeune and down at Ft. Bragg in Fayetteville—I want to put them in a room, and I want to make it very clear to everybody involved, whether it is the private hous-

ing provider, the garrison commanders, the Department of Defense, and put a light on us in Congress because it is our inaction that has caused the problem.

We want to know what their problems are. We are going to hear from hundreds of people. We are going to make progress on these kinds of things through the provisions in the NDAA, but we still have to continue to focus on this problem.

First, I want to thank Senator INHOFE. He did a great job in terms of casting light on this, and I know I have the commitment of the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, but I don't want these just to be words on the floor. I want them to be words that are put into action in terms of how we can help these military families today.

If you have a service request outstanding with any vendor and you do not feel like you are getting a proper response, I want you to write down "Tillis.senate.gov." In my office, we will treat every single housing request you have as a request for casework, and I will have one of several dozen staff members in my office open up a case and track it until it is completed.

As for anybody else who knows a servicemember who has this problem and thinks he will not have somebody who will follow up on it, give me a chance. We have already solved a lot of them, and we are going to solve a lot more. We are not going to finish until I believe the men and women and the families at Fort Bragg, at Camp Lejeune, and at bases across this country have the safe and comfortable housing they deserve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TILLIS). The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, in 1831, a young Frenchman who sought to understand the motivating principles behind the world's newest independent Nation mused:

In America, the principle of the sovereignty . . . is not either barren or concealed, as it is with some other nations; it is recognized by the customs and proclaimed by the laws; it spreads freely, and arrives without impediment at its most remote consequences.

Alexis de Tocqueville had come to America on a research mission. He had had no special training in government or political science, but he had been fueled by a desire to know if the principles that had guided the early American Republic could help his fellow Frenchmen. Even as an outsider, de Tocqueville had seen freedom, not a lone figurehead or compulsory philosophy, as the foundation to build upon. Freedom had been what he had seen as an enduring foundation.

Today, however, the belief in a moral right to self-governance is more often than not portrayed as quaint and the kind of fierce independence that drove our Founders to the battlefield as out-dated in comparison to modern con-

cepts of so-called global governance and polite codependence.

Yet, when I look at the state of the world and all of its competing philosophies, I am very grateful for our bold commitment to self-defense. That is why I come to the floor today—to express my thoughts on our National Defense Authorization Act and to say a thank-you to Chairman INHOFE for his leadership in pushing the Senate Armed Services Committee to present ideas, to bring forward amendments, and to work through this process together. I am looking forward to the couple of days in front of us in this Chamber with Members from both sides of the aisle.

It cannot be understated that the importance of maintaining a regular budget for our military cannot be diminished. The failure to do so will put our troops at a disadvantage. Look no further than the ongoing tension right now between the United States and Iran and how this has magnified the part that deterrence plays—the importance of deterrence—in our defending our security without our resorting to the use of military force.

Last week, I spoke at length about two emerging warfighting domains that challenge the way we think about modern defense. These are cyber and space. That is why this year's NDAA expands beyond legacy programs to include the recognition of emerging threats and our responses to those.

The next great threat to our sovereignty may be more subtle than a bomb's being dropped on American soil. It could undermine our cyber security or slowly compromise the supply chain that provides us with needed microelectronics. It might cause us to question our position in the world or to rethink our influence in the international community. It is important to understand that these attacks aren't only meant to undermine our relationships and our infrastructure; they are coordinated and intentional attacks on the foundations that de Tocqueville recognized as being powerful, unique, and underpinning what we have in the United States.

The implications are clear: Everything we do in this Chamber must be understood in the context of defending America's sovereignty. It means believing in the supremacy of the Constitution and giving the defense community the means to protect us in order to fulfill that first responsibility of providing for the common defense. It means recognizing that freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and free assembly are just as precious as any physical thing we can put under lock and key.

Those who would threaten our freedom and safety do not look to America and see our formidable military as the single greatest threat to their destructive agendas. They are most frightened by our unwavering and ardent commitment to freedom. Our enemies are frightened of the young men and

women who willingly join the military. They volunteer for service.

They are frightened by the strength of conviction that leads men and women on our streets to protect protests even though they would never join those protests—not in a million years. They do this because they recognize that defending someone's right to speak is just as important as speaking oneself.

Our enemies are frightened by the confidence with which we defend the Constitution when well-meaning actors ask if we could set the First Amendment aside to better protect impressionable minds from dangerous ideas.

Ours is the kind of freedom that is always in danger of extinction, just as the late President Reagan repeatedly reminded us, but it is also worth protecting.

This week, I implore my friends on both sides of the aisle to do all they can to ensure that our best, first line of defense has the ability to protect and defend freedom and freedom's cause.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, we have been discussing this, and I think it is not just redundant but it is important to reemphasize that this is the most significant vote of the year. This is a \$750 billion bill. This is the one that our entire military is depending on having pass. It will pass. It has passed every year for 59 years, and it is going to pass this year. I am concerned, however, that there is an effort to try to delay it for a week or two, which is something that will not work, which I will explain in a minute.

It just occurred to me that there is so much stuff in this bill. We talk about all of the equipment. We talk about the change. We talk about trying to make up and trying to catch up with Russia and with China and our adversaries, who are actually ahead of us in many areas. That is all significant, but there is one issue that not many people are aware of that I think is really significant and is addressed. It kind of lets you know how far this bill goes.

There is a problem that exists with the spouses of the military. Right now, under the Trump administration, we are seeing the best economy we have had, arguably, in my lifetime. We are clearly seeing success in tax relief, a reduction in taxes, because of this. Then, of course, there is the deregulatory effort by this administration.

Right now, we have the lowest national unemployment rate we have had in a long period of time—3.6 percent. Full employment is supposed to be 4 percent. In my State of Oklahoma, we are even doing better than that; we have 3.2 percent.

Anyway, families across the country are feeling the benefit of getting the economic engine moving again, and that is good, but there is one group that still faces extreme unemployment, that being the military spouses.

People don't think about this, but in almost every case of the members of the military's husbands or wives, whoever the spouse happens to be, they want part-time employment. Of course, many of them are skilled and have prepared for careers, but they are not able to get careers or to get employment because of the spouses' moving sometimes every 2 years or every 3 years so that they have to go into whole new environments. There are some State laws that preclude spouses from getting employment without their complying with certifications from the different States.

In 2018, there was a RAND study that found that frequent military moves result in spousal unemployment or underemployment and delays in employment among spouses who need to obtain credentials at new duty locations. We need to facilitate easier paths to both licensure and employment for military spouses.

Now, we make a correction in this policy that—as President Trump signed an Executive order last year—would work to improve employment opportunities for military spouses. Well, he did that with an Executive order, and we have gone a little further with this bill.

We have been successful in getting these results, and they are clear. Military spouses' unemployment dropped from nearly 25 percent in 2017 to 13 percent in 2019, but it is still a significant thing. It is still a form of discrimination by people because they are the spouse of a servicemember.

That is significant progress, but it also doesn't address the more than one-third of military spouses who are underemployed, working part time or outside their education or technical field.

One area where we can make an immediate impact is for approximately 35 percent of the military spouses in careers that require occupational licenses that are administered by the States. They may be different from State to State, and these individuals are not in a position to satisfy one State and then go to another State. Most of those spouses are licensed in healthcare and education, but others include attorneys and real estate agents.

For the military family moving an average of every 2 years, relicensing and transferring the license each time becomes very costly. So the solution is simple. We just have to go after more of the redtape that makes it hard for our military spouses to move their professional license, move their career. This is something we have addressed in this bill. People don't think about this, but we have done it, and so this is going to give a lot of relief to these people.

It kind of reminds me, when you look at the overwhelming issues we have dealt with in this bill, it is something that is very significant, and it is something that is, by far, the most important thing we will be doing all year.

There is a report from the National Defense Strategy Commission. The

Commission has Democrats and Republicans. A year ago, this group got together, and they are the very foremost authorities in the country on military. They decided what it is we need to do.

We went through 8 years of the Obama administration, and I have to admit that he was very honest about it. He never had defending America as a top priority, and so we find ourselves in the situation where we have countries like China and like Russia who are actually ahead of us in areas like hypersonics.

Hypersonics is the most state-of-the-art thing we are doing in both defense and offense. It is a system that moves at five times the speed of sound, and we were leading all of the rest of the world in this effort until that administration, and that put us behind so that both China and Russia are ahead of us in that area.

This is something that really disappoints a lot of American people when they find out.

I go out and give talks around the country, and when I tell them that there are countries that have better equipment than we do, better artillery than we do, they are surprised to find that out. Clearly, China and Russia are doing that.

Now, a lot of times people would say: Well, wait a minute. How could they be ahead of us when we are spending so much more money than they are on our defense? The reason for that is very simple. It is something people don't think about, and that is the single largest expense item is the cost of people. Of course, in China and Russia they just tell them what to do. They don't have to have good living conditions for their troops.

Consequently, they are actually doing better than we are doing in many areas. This is more than just our conventional capabilities.

The NDAA—National Defense Authorization Act—fully funds our nuclear modernization. It looks out for our troops, giving them the largest pay raise in over a decade. We make needed reforms to our privatized military housing.

We thought things were going pretty well. A number of years ago, we decided to privatize our military housing. I was here at that time, and I thought it was a good idea. No one was opposed to it, and we did it.

The problem is the contractors who came in and won these contracts to take care of military housing worked fine for the first 2 or 3 years, then they got a little bit greedy, and time went by, and all of a sudden it all exploded last February when several people got together from military housing and talked about the deplorable conditions that we wouldn't expect anyone to live under.

Subsequently, we had a series of hearings in the committee I chair. The first one was a hearing on the victims, the individuals who are living in those

housing conditions. They told the stories about all the problems with the housing situation.

The next thing we had was a hearing on the contractors. These are the guys who came along and bid so they would be able to do it. They admitted in the public hearing that was true and that they had not been doing the job they needed to do.

That is something in this bill that we have taken care of. We now have a system set up that has pretty much resolved that problem.

So we have a lot of capabilities that are in this bill. It makes it easier and more affordable for spouses to transfer their occupational licenses. That is what I was just talking about.

I said before that this bill is going to pass, and it will, but what would keep it from passing is if the minority leader, CHUCK SCHUMER, is successful in insisting on delaying consideration until July.

This has to be done by the end of this fiscal year, and that is creeping up on us. In the event that we don't get it done this week, as we had planned to do, then very likely it is not going to be done next week or the week after that because the longer it takes something like this to do, we know the political reality of how that works.

We have to get this thing done, we have to get it passed by Thursday, and I think we will. This bill has the stuff in it that we really need. It is the most significant bill we have.

So we want to avoid any delays in the calendar. It would likely mean that we would not be able to enact the NDAA before October 1 and the start of the fiscal year. That has real impact. That would delay the fixes we are talking about in privatization of housing. The delays in MILCON money. MILCON, that is military construction. We have a lot of military construction that is proposed right now. If you put it off a week, we don't know what will happen to that military construction. There are delays in disaster recovery. We have right now—and you have heard on the floor today the problems that exist in various States: Florida, North Carolina, and some places out in the Nebraska area and around there. We have disaster recovery programs that we can't do if we delay this thing for another couple weeks. These people are going to have to be living in those conditions for that period of time. The authority for Afghanistan National Security Forces and Iraq security cooperation will expire by that time.

So there is every reason in the world that we should go ahead. I think it is pretty bad when a political decision is made to delay the consideration of this bill for another week or 2 weeks—all done for purely political reasons because the Democrats are having their big show on TV tomorrow night and the next night, and they want us to sit and watch that as opposed to finishing this bill.

It is our intention to go ahead, finish the bill, get it done, and that is what

we are going to do. We are anxious to do it.

I am very proud of the committee I chair. The Senate Armed Services Committee met for a period of several months and talked about all the possible amendments that could be considered, and there is a lot of talk right now about the fact that we are not doing amendments on the floor.

Well, we wanted to do amendments on the floor. JACK REED, the Democrat who is my counterpart here, he and I have been talking about doing floor amendments for a long period of time, but under the rules of the Senate, if one person objects to bringing an amendment up, then no amendments can come up.

For that reason, we took the initiative just yesterday and passed the supplemental bill that has 93 amendments. So all of those amendments came through this process of people talking about their amendments, they just can't do it on the floor. That is what is happening right now. We have the best of intentions to continue doing that until we get the bill.

So let me just reinvite the Members down. We have, right now, a long list of the 93 amendments and the sponsors of those amendments, and we are encouraging each Member to bring his amendment down to the floor. Even though it may not be considered individually, it already passed yesterday, and people need to know what is in this bill.

So I am going to encourage our Members, invite them to come down right now and to get involved and explain to not just this U.S. Senate but to everyone else what all is in this bill.

People have a right to have pride in their own amendments, and so we are encouraging them to come down at this time and present their amendments.

With that, I will invite them down.

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

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

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, while we are waiting for other Senators, let me once again encourage Members of the Senate to come down and talk about their amendments.

It is kind of an awkward situation that we have here, and we are all aware of this, but the Senate rules say that amendments can't come to the floor except by unanimous consent. That means that if there is one person who objects to having an amendment come up and be considered, then all that person has to do is object.

Frankly, that happened last year. We had a couple Members who were holding out for a nongermane amendment they wanted to consider, and they stated they would hold up all the other

amendments. That happened, and it looks like it is happening again this year, but we are prepared this year because, anticipating that would be the case, yesterday we passed the 93 amendments with the bill—that we went to as the underlying bill. We now have 93 amendments in addition to the amendments we already had. We are probably now in excess of 200 amendments that we have had on this bill since its inception. Most of these amendments are bipartisan. In fact, the 93 amendments we adopted yesterday were amendments we had considered in the committee I chair, the Senate Armed Services Committee. Of those amendments, 44 were Democrats', 44 were Republicans', and the rest were bipartisan.

So this is not really that partisan of a bill.

Anyway, this includes an amendment by my colleagues, Senator GRAHAM and Senator HEINRICH, in support of plutonium pit production, which is key to maintaining our nuclear stockpile.

A lot of people are not aware of the problems we have with plutonium pit production. Consequently, we have to be competitive in this area. We have not had a nuclear modernization program in quite a long period of time. Nuclear modernization has gotten a lot of attention this year.

Traditionally, we have seen bipartisan support for these programs, and there is a good reason for that. Our nuclear force is critical to our deterrence posture and, in turn, the overall security of the Nation and really the world. This is our top priority—defending America.

Stop and think about it. The threat that is out there today—I often say I look wistfully back at the days of the Cold War when there were two superpowers. We knew what they had, they knew what we had, and mutual destruction really meant something at that time. It doesn't mean anything anymore. There are people who are run by deranged leaders in countries, and these people have the power to knock out an American city. That is the kind of threat we are faced with today, and that is why nuclear deterrence is so significant. It is such a significant part of this bill. Our nuclear force is critical for our deterrence posture and, in turn, the overall security of the Nation.

Anyway, we can't pretend that just because we take a step back, countries like Russia and China will do the same. And we did. For a period of time, in the last administration, we did step back in our efforts, and a lot of those efforts were in nuclear modernization. Consequently, while we were ahead in this area—ahead of China and Russia—they caught up and actually passed us.

Right now, they have hypersonics, as an example. Hypersonics is kind of the state-of-the-art in warfare. It is something that travels five times the speed of sound. It is something we were ahead of prior to the last administration, and we fell behind because while

we were not doing anything, China and Russia were doing things. We tried this before during the Obama administration; it just didn't work.

We know Russia and China are modernizing their nuclear forces at an alarming speed while we have been neglecting ours. And North Korea and Iran continue to pursue nuclear programs, furthering their goals of creating instability and gaining influence in their regions, and we are at a disadvantage. It poses a formidable threat to America and our allies.

If we don't provide robust support of our nuclear programs now, do it now, we will be in danger of falling behind. The National Defense Strategy acknowledged this reality. That is the thing I talked about a few minutes ago, that we have the National Defense Strategy as a blueprint for what we have been doing in our defense authorization committee, and we have been adhering to that. The NDAA takes this into account and supports all of the aspects of the triad.

The triad—recently, people have said: Well, we don't need to spend an amount of money on a triad system. “Triad” obviously means three approaches to our nuclear defense. When you stop and think about the three different ways a weapon can come into the United States, it can come in on an ICBM, it can come in on a submarine, or it can come in on a bomber. So that is what they mean by “triad.” For somebody to say “Well, we don't need the three approaches; we need only one,” well, if we knew in advance what that weapon was coming in on, what was going to be used for its delivery, then I would agree with that. But that can't happen, so we can't block off a leg or two of the triad or the whole thing will collapse. Each component provides a different type of protection and, combined, makes it far more challenging for adversaries to find opportunities to strike, and there are adversaries out there who want to do that.

Make no mistake—our adversaries are paying attention to their capabilities and to our capabilities. We need a strong, resilient, responsive nuclear enterprise to deter threats.

Nuclear weapons aren't just a relic of the Cold War, but currently we are treating them that way. Half of our DOE nuclear facilities are more than 40 years old, and a quarter date back to World War II. After years of neglect, the ceilings are literally falling down around the workers in nuclear complexes across the country. Fortunately, in fact, we have several people coming down here and talking about that threat because in some States, their Senators want to be sure they are doing a good job in maintaining our nuclear capability. So we need to modernize and revitalize this infrastructure if we want to maintain pace with China and Russia and if we want to preserve a credible nuclear deterrent.

I think it is important to note that the cost of modernization is not exces-

sive. It averages about 5 percent of the DOD budget. That seems like a small price to pay to prevent a nuclear war.

The NDAA—that is what we are considering now—the National Defense Authorization Act fully funds the nuclear modernization program at or above the request, including additional funding for Columbia-class submarines and low-yield ballistic missile warheads.

The NDAA also pushes the National Nuclear Security Administration toward its goal of plutonium pit production—a requirement to meet the needs of our nuclear strategy.

These investments will increase our capabilities and bring us into the 21st century. This is what we need to be doing to implement the National Defense Strategy and assess the full range of threats our Nation faces. You know, it is a dangerous world out there, and we have a lot of people out there who don't like America—let's face it.

I was disappointed in the last administration, talking about the Obama administration. It was the first time in my memory—certainly since World War II—that we had either a Democratic or Republican administration that used something other than defending America as a primary goal of our country. Instead, that has dropped back, and we suffer the consequences. So we are in the process right now of rebuilding our military. We did it in 2018. That was the first year of the Trump administration. He increased the military spending back to where it had been before—up to \$700 billion and then \$716 billion the next year and then \$750 billion in the bill we are considering at this very moment. So we are going to end up with a stronger America. I think that by the end of this year, if everything we are doing with this bill is fully implemented and behind us, we are going to be in good shape to do the job we are supposed to be doing in defending America.

In the meantime, we have this bill. Again, I will quit talking and encourage our Members to come down and talk about their amendments. One who is going to be coming down in just a few minutes—in fact, is due down any minute now—is Senator RICHARD BURR. He is in charge of intelligence. He chairs the Intelligence Committee, and that is a part of this bill.

It is important that people understand how far-reaching this is. This is the most significant thing we are doing, and that is probably the real reason we don't want to give in to the minority leader of the Senate, who is trying to get us to delay this for another week or longer because of the big show people are going to see on TV tomorrow and the next day of all the Democrats who are going to run for President. If I remember, the last time, we had 17 Republicans running. This time, we have 20 Democrats running. Anyway, that might be a great show, but it is not as important as the work we are doing here. And we absolutely

have to get this done this week in order to fulfill the obligation we have to the American people.

Let me again encourage our Members to come down and discuss their amendments because we are going to be coming to a vote this week on all of those, and we have to make sure we have a full house of Senators who know everything that is in this bill.

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.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASSIDY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I want to thank Chairman INHOFE and Ranking Member REED for accommodating the Intelligence Committee's intelligence authorization bill for 2020 to be included in the NDAA. I want to thank Leader McCONNELL and Senator SCHUMER for their understanding of why this is important to do.

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence is a unique committee. We uphold the secrecy and the confidentiality of intelligence programs that keep our Nation safe every day. We ensure our intelligence community has the tools and resources to protect America at home and abroad.

So I am pleased that the Senate is considering our intelligence authorization bill as part of the NDAA. Our bill is 3 fiscal years in the making. In May, the Senate Intelligence Committee unanimously passed the bill with a vote of 15 to 0. Let me say that one more time. We unanimously passed the intelligence authorization bill 15 to 0.

I appreciate Vice Chairman WARNER's work and his collaboration to achieve that unanimous support of all 15 Members of the Intelligence Committee. The bill is a genuinely bipartisan product that protects the United States, strengthens our national security, and supports the activities of the men and women who are serving in uniform around the clock and around the globe. I would remind the Presiding Officer and the Members that it is the 15 Members of the Select Committee on Intelligence who give the other 85 Members of the Senate and the American people the assurance that our intelligence activities operate within the Constitution and/or the Executive orders of the President.

The last intelligence authorization bill for fiscal year 2017 was enacted May 5, 2017. We have gone too long without critical resources and authorities that our intelligence agencies need to do their work and to keep our country safe from ever-expanding national security threats. Not only does our bill fund the U.S. intelligence activities across 17 agencies, but it enables congressional oversight of the intelligence community's classified activities. The

bill ensures financial accountability for the programs we authorize and supports development of future capabilities to stay a step ahead of our adversaries. We do not have time to waste as the threats increase in scope and scale.

All of this bipartisan oversight and accountability can exist only when we have a current, enacted intelligence authorization bill. Our intelligence agencies need the authorization, the direction, and the guidance from Congress to protect and defend America, its allies, and its partners. The agencies need these authorizations to collect, analyze, and utilize intelligence and to recruit and retain the personnel they need. Equally important, our authorization bill ensures that those activities abide by our Constitution and privacy laws.

I would like to mention some specifics in the bill. First, it deters Russian and other foreign influence in our U.S. elections. It facilitates information sharing between Federal, State, and local election officials. These activities are essential to protecting the foundation of our democracy, our U.S. elections.

Next, the bill increases oversight of Russian activities by requiring notifications of Russian Federation personnel travel in the United States, countering Russian propaganda activities within the United States, and by requiring threat assessments on Russian financial activities.

In addition, the bill improves our security clearance processes by requiring the intelligence community to take steps to reduce backlogs, improving clearance information sharing and oversight and holding the executive branch responsible for modernizing clearance policies.

The bill protects the intelligence community's supply chain from foreign counterintelligence threats from countries such as Russia and China.

Importantly, the bill increases benefits for intelligence community personnel by enhancing pay scales for certain cyber security positions and increasing paid parental leave.

Finally, it establishes increased accountability for our most sensitive programs.

The Senate Intelligence Committee has acted carefully and comprehensively to oversee our intelligence community and its resources. But the current gap in authorities is unacceptable and, frankly, dangerous. Our enemies and adversaries do not take 2 years off. Congress cannot afford to let our intelligence authorization bills lapse any longer.

I will end where I started. Without the collaboration and cooperation of the chairman and the ranking member and the entire SAS Committee, we wouldn't have this opportunity, but they recognize as well as we do that the security of America comes first. Any delay in authorizing the intelligence community bill or passing the NDAA is not what America expects us

to do. They expect us to pass an authorization bill rapidly and with as much predictability as possible for the men and women in uniform and those who serve in the shadows of our intelligence community. An authorization bill that is done quickly and clearly makes their lives and futures more predictable. America's safety is too important for us to delay any longer authorizations for the military or for the intelligence community.

I once again thank the chairman for his accommodations in this bill. I urge my colleagues in this body to pass this authorization bill as quickly as we possibly can and send a signal to the men and women who serve this country and defend this country that Congress is on their side and not in opposition to them.

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.

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

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am pleased and honored to be on the floor with my colleague, the Senator from the great State of Rhode Island. We share a border, and we share many common views, one of them being a commitment to our environment. Senator WHITEHOUSE has been a historic champion of action against environmental degradation, as well as climate change—global warming—which brings us to the floor today.

We are here to call attention and call for action in connection with the effects of climate change on the waters off our State and the east coast of our Nation.

There is a palpable, historic consequence to the warming of those waters, among others, to drive fish populations northward in search of cooler waters. The Northeast has already experienced some of the highest levels of ocean warming and sea level rise in the United States. They are only projected to exacerbate and exceed the present levels.

There are storms our States—Rhode Island and Connecticut, and others up and down the East Coast and all around the country—have experienced. Those new superstorms are becoming the new normal in our Nation, the most recent being the unprecedented hurricane and then Superstorm Sandy.

Connecticut and Rhode Island are poised to lose land to sea level rise. Scientists predict an almost 2-foot increase in the level of Long Island Sound by 2050. My colleague Senator WHITEHOUSE has been here more times than I can count—I think more than 200 times—to call our attention to the effects and the causes of this historic and catastrophic trend of climate

change in our Nation and on our planet.

What brings us here today is the very discrete and disastrous consequence of those waters warming and changing fish populations that are available to a group of our citizens and residents who have been an economic mainstay and backbone for our States. They are the fishermen who carry on a great profession and way of life, despite an outdated and Byzantine quota system that has failed to adapt to those movements of fish stock, like black sea bass, summer flounder, and scup from their waters northward and then new fish populations from the Mid-Atlantic States to our waters.

These fish quotas fail to take account of changing fish populations. The fish are smart biologically. They know when the waters are warming. They seek cooler waters further north, but the quotas fail to keep track. So the fish that are caught by our fishermen are not the same kinds as they caught before, and they are not the same kinds that are contemplated by the present quotas. They are catching fish they are required to throw back even after they are dead. So this quota system is failing at every level. It is failing environmentally if the goal is to enhance and save fish populations; it is failing economically because it is driving these fishermen out of their way of life; and it is failing in public policy by failing to provide a rational and informed way to set those quotas.

There is a solution because this whole system is governed by the Magnuson-Stevens Act, which, by the way, is under the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, where I sit. There have been proposals to reform and change it. The current Byzantine system of quota setting is really a relic of a long-gone era, and it should be reformed. Right now, immediately, the Secretary of Commerce can intervene. The statute says the law governing the management of fisheries requires that the Department of Commerce must ensure fishery management plans adhere to several national standards, including the use of the “best scientific information available to decide catch limits.” It also says that any management plan “shall not discriminate” between residents of different States and must allow quotas that are “fair and equitable.” This system is failing those standards.

I agree with fishermen of Connecticut and, I believe, of Rhode Island who are saying this current system is nonsensical. It is outdated. It is irrational, and it is worthless. It fails to give them fairness and justice. It is time for action.

The Commerce Department should use its power—extraordinary as it is—to impose emergency regulations and create a more equitable system.

As Bobby Guzzo, a fisherman from Stonington told Greenwire recently:

Things have changed—the fish have moved north, but the quotas have not changed to

keep up with it. The science has to be better. They've got to get more of a handle on it.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Greenwire article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[June 4, 2019]

AS FISH MOVE NORTH, 'THINGS ARE GETTING WEIRD OUT THERE'

(BY ROB HOTAKAINEN)

STONINGTON, CONN.—Here in one of New England's oldest fishing communities, there's a longing for the old days, long before climate change and the federal government's quota system got so complicated.

Convinced that Congress and NOAA will never allow them larger quotas, many fishermen want to take their grievances straight to the White House, hoping the commander in chief will intervene and allow them to catch more fish.

At his fish wholesaling business, Mike Gambardella reached for his iPhone to find one of his prized photographs: a picture showing him wearing a white T-shirt bearing the message, "President Trump: Make Commercial Fishing Great Again!"

Bobby Guzzo, Gambardella's friend, who's been fishing here for more than 50 years, has the same sign on a bumper sticker plastered on the back window of his pickup.

"It used to be you'd go catch fish, come in and sell them," Guzzo said. But now the system is needlessly complicated, he said, with too much bookwork and a quota system that's hard to decipher, adding, "Now you've got to be a lawyer."

"If you get ahold of the president, tell him to come see us," Gambardella tells a visitor.

With a lack of fish, Gambardella said, it's gotten to the point where it's even difficult to get trucks to come through Stonington any more. He tells the story of a friend in the business who killed himself.

"We don't have enough fish—and it's not a Connecticut thing; it's all of us," Gambardella said. "And little by little, we're all going out of business. The Lord gave us that ocean, and he put fish in that ocean for us to eat. And now we can't even get the fish."

The struggling commercial fishermen in Stonington, a small town that was first settled in 1649, are doing all they can to get Trump's attention.

When the president showed up in nearby New London, Conn., to address the Coast Guard Academy class two years ago, they got as close as they could, parking a boat that bore a simple sign: "Please help us."

Gambardella even left his cellphone number on the Twitter page of Linda McMahon, a former professional wrestling executive who until recently served as the head of the Small Business Administration.

"We've been trying to get to the president," Gambardella said. "We like his style. . . . He sat down with the coal miners. He sat down with the farmers. It's time to sit down with the fishermen."

Without intervention, the fishermen only see their plight worsening as climate change forces more fish to move to cooler waters and regulators scramble to adjust quotas.

"Things have changed—the fish have moved north, but the quotas have not changed to keep up with it," Guzzo said. "The science has to be better. They've got to get more of a handle on it."

That's easier said than done, under a byzantine regulatory system that's often slow to adapt. It has also forced fishermen to learn the new language of Washington, D.C., navigating a world of catch shares and stock

assessments, of fish mortality rates and maximum sustainable yields.

While they're upset with the quota system, many fishermen and politicians are also angry that fishermen must throw away the "bycatch," the fish they bring in by accident but are not licensed to catch.

Gambardella said he's particularly eager to tell the president that Americans are eating too much "chemical shit," consuming imported seafood while millions of pounds of healthy wild seafood gets discarded every year.

"He's going to be shocked to know that we import over 90% of our seafood, and we have fish in our backyard here that we're throwing overboard," Gambardella said. "I don't understand—we're throwing good wild seafood overboard that we could sell or have the kids eat healthy food. It's sad, really, really sad. . . . The whole thing is so screwed up."

Lawmakers from coastal states have long argued the case on Capitol Hill, with no luck in winning any changes.

At a hearing last fall, Connecticut Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D) said "there is something profoundly unfair and intolerable" with a management system that forces fishermen to discard so much seafood while many people across the world go hungry.

"They are compelled to throw back perfectly good fish that they catch as a result of quotas that are based on totally obsolete, out-of-touch limits," he said. "And meanwhile, fishermen from Southern states come into their waters and catch their fish," he said of fishermen in more northern points.

In a speech on the Senate floor last year, Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.) said fishermen in his state are now routinely sharing anecdotes of catching increasing numbers of tropical fish early in the summer season.

"As fishermen in Rhode Island have told me, 'Things are getting weird out there,'" Whitehouse said. "As new fish move in and traditional fish move out, fishermen are left with more questions than answers."

In Washington, members of Congress are trying to figure out how to best respond.

"Climate change is throwing some real curveballs at fisheries management," said Rep. Jared Huffman (D-Calif.), chairman of the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans and Wildlife, adding that he intended to schedule "some roundtables with folks who are living through this."

The issue is sure to come up when Congress examines the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the nation's premier fisheries law, first passed in 1976. The law created eight regional fishery management councils to develop fishery management plans, working with NOAA on "a transparent and robust process of science, management, innovation and collaboration with the fishing industry."

But there's disagreement over who's best equipped to change the rules: regional boards, which are dominated by state interests, or Congress, which has its own share of political pressures.

"You need some strong federal guidance," said Dave Monti, a charter boat captain and fishing guide who operates in Wickford Harbor in North Kingstown, R.I., and the vice president of the Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association.

"Local needs circumvent the needs of the people of the United States of America. I'm a firm believer that those fish in the water don't belong to me and they don't belong to Rhode Island. Someone living in Minnesota or Kentucky owns these fish as much as anyone else does."

Chris Batsavage, who represents North Carolina on the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Mid-Atlantic Fish-

ery Management Council, said regional boards have struggled to find the right allocations for years. But he said they're capable of doing the job.

"It's still a work in progress—no one has found a silver-bullet solution," Batsavage said. "But I think we're going to get to go where we need to go. Allocations are always one of the most contentious things a management agency has to deal with."

Huffman said regional councils remain "part of the critical framework" and that he's not interested in taking their power away. He said Congress' role will be to set the policy and leave implementation to regional fisheries officials.

"I don't want to undermine the councils," Huffman said. "And what I don't want to do is a whole bunch of micromanaging."

But while many fishermen and politicians complain about U.S. fishing rules, NOAA boasts that the nation has become an international leader in fisheries management.

In 2017, Chris Oliver, who heads NOAA Fisheries, told a congressional panel that the law clearly had worked and that the United States had "effectively ended overfishing."

NOAA Fisheries tracks 474 stocks or stock complexes in 46 fishery management plans. Of those, 91% had not exceeded their annual catch limits, known as ACLs, according to a report NOAA sent to Congress in 2017.

Under federal law, fisheries managers must specify their goals and use "measurable criteria," also known as reference points, to get there. That requires a stock assessment, which is a scientific analysis of the abundance of fish stock and a measure of "the degree of fishing intensity."

Once an assessment is done, fisheries managers must determine if a stock is overfished, measuring the "maximum sustainable yield." That's the largest long-term average catch that can be taken from a stock.

Fisheries managers then have different ways to reduce fishing, including the use of "catch limits" or "catch shares." Catch limits measure the amount of fish that can be caught, while catch shares are an optional tool used to allocate shares to individual fishermen or groups.

KEEPING 'AN EYE ON THE BIG PICTURE'

As they adjust quotas, NOAA officials walk a fine line in making sure fishermen follow the law while cooperating with regional officials to make any changes.

The Trump administration has already shown deference for listening to local fishermen, overriding regional decisions to shorten the season for the red snapper in Gulf Coast states and to limit catches of summer flounder for New Jersey fishermen.

"It's our job in that setting to also keep an eye on the big picture, and not just all of the regional and small-scale interests," said Mike Fogarty, senior scientist at NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center in Massachusetts.

Fogarty, who has studied climate issues since the early 1990s, said one idea under consideration is to no longer set regulations for individual fish species but to instead focus on their role in an ecosystem, such as whether they're part of a prey or a predator group.

"You could set quotas for the predator groups, prey groups and bottom-feeder groups," he said. "Individual species could change over time, but their roles would remain intact. That could reduce tension between states."

While many fishermen want NOAA to be more flexible, environmental groups want regulators to adhere to the federal law and to adjust fishing quotas as soon as populations change. A study published in the ICES Journal of Marine Science in April

showed that adapting fishing intensity to the health of fish populations would make fisheries more climate-resilient. The study suggested automatically reducing the catch percentage when managers detect decreases in biomass, allowing more immediate responses to changing conditions.

"If a catch limit is too high and too many fish are taken out of the ocean, the ecosystem suffers," said Jake Kritzer, senior director with the Environmental Defense Fund's oceans program and lead author of the study. "If a limit is too low, with more fish than can be caught sustainably left in the water, fishermen suffer."

So it is past time for an update for a system that takes advantage of science and research. We owe it to our fishing industry, but we owe it to ourselves as members of this ecosystem, as policy centers, and as legislators to keep faith with the fishermen of Rhode Island and Connecticut. Really, it is with the fishermen of America. As fish stocks shift north, fishermen from other States are going to encounter the same challenges. They will be sailing north to seek fish stocks off Connecticut's coast. Their quotas around their States are as outmoded and outdated as ours. The longer trips they will undertake will mean more carbon pollution, which will lead to more atmospheric carbon dioxide, climate shifts, and acidification of the ocean.

There is some good news amidst all of this gloom and doom in that we are already mustering the awareness and the resolve to take action. That is why we are here today. It is not only to wake up but to keep up this kind of fight.

I thank my colleague, the Senator from Rhode Island, for leading this great effort.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, it is a great honor and pleasure to join the senior Senator from Connecticut on the floor today. We were both U.S. attorneys. We were attorneys general together. We now serve in the Senate together, and I consider him a friend outside of my day job as well. It is terrific to be here with him. It is also a happy coincidence that a Senator from another great fishing State, Louisiana, should be presiding while we speak about our fisheries. This is my 247th of these speeches.

Rhode Island, of course, shares a border with Connecticut, as well as a proud fishing heritage and connection to the sea. Whether you are walking the docks of Stonington and New London or of Newport and Point Judith, the story from our fishermen is the same—that these are not the waters that our grandparents, parents, and great-grandparents fished. One fishermen told me: "Sheldon, it's getting weird out there, and it's a big economic deal that it's getting weird out there."

In 2017, commercial fishery landings from Connecticut and Rhode Island totaled over \$114 million, and that was just the landings. That was not the ancillary fishing economy around it. Carbon pollution and warming, acidifying oceans put that whole economy at risk.

Earlier this month, the National Academy of Sciences estimated that by 2100, around 17 percent of all ocean life, by biomass, will disappear. In February, the journal *Science* found that since 1930, we have already lost around 4 percent of our harvestable seafood due to ocean warming, and the fish that we are still able to harvest are getting smaller due to warming temperatures and depleted oxygen levels. A 2017 study warned "the body size of fish decreases 20 to 30 percent for every 1-degree Celsius increase in water temperature," and the water is warming.

Oceans have absorbed more than 90 percent of the excess heat that has been trapped by our greenhouse gas emissions. Of all of the excess heat that has been trapped by greenhouse gas emissions since we began the Industrial Revolution and started burning all of these fossil fuels, 90 percent of it has gone into the oceans.

How much is that?

The Federal Government's 2017 Climate Science Special Report from NOAA, NASA, the Department of Energy, and others found that the oceans had absorbed more than 9 zettajoules of heat energy per year.

What is a zettajoule?

A zettajoule is 9 billion trillion joules. They are not jewels like your grandmother's earrings. They are joules as a measure of energy.

From 1998 to 2015, the oceans had absorbed more than 9 billion trillion joules. That is a rate of more than 12 times the total energy use of humans on the planet. If you want a more vigorous, a more kinetic description of what that heat load is like, visualize the power of a Hiroshima-style atomic bomb with its classic mushroom cloud erupting into the sky. Imagine all of that energy from that nuclear blast being captured just as heat. Now imagine four Hiroshima-sized atomic bombs exploding every second. That is the excess heat that is going into our oceans from climate change—more than four atomic bombs' worth of excess heat energy being absorbed by the oceans every second of every day of every year. That is a lot of heat energy, and adding it to the oceans has consequences.

The global average ocean surface temperature was already up around 0.8 degrees Celsius, or 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit, since before the carbon pollution of industrial times began, and the rate is accelerating. According to NOAA, "the global land and ocean temperature departure from average has reached new record highs five times since 2000."

The rapid rise in ocean temperatures is forcing species that were once southern New England icons to abandon our waters for cooler, deeper, northerner seas. A 2018 NOAA-funded study warned that hundreds of commercially valuable species are being forced northward as oceans warm.

For Rhode Island, squid is now king. In 2017, around 60 percent of the longfin

squid and 63 percent of northern shortfin squid caught in the United States were landed in Rhode Island. According to NOAA, Rhode Island's share of the catch was valued at over \$28 million. In my State, that is a big deal. Remember, that is just the landing value. That is not the surrounding economic value. Climate change is putting that—our precious calamari—at risk. Squid is Rhode Island's most valuable fishery with its having accounted for nearly 30 percent of all of our States' landings, by value, in 2017.

Rhode Island once had a booming lobster fishery. The lobster population shifted north as our waters warmed, and it left Rhode Island's lobster traps empty. NOAA reports what we already know: "The lobster industry in New York and southern New England has nearly collapsed." Maine is temporarily benefiting from the northern movement of lobster, but the lobster is expected to keep moving north, into Canada, as we keep warming the oceans.

In January, the Washington Post ran this amazing piece as part of its "Gone in a Generation" series. It featured the stories of Rhode Island and Maine lobstermen who deal with our changing ocean.

New England's fishermen also see declining shellfish populations. The total landings for eastern oysters, northern quahogs, soft-shell clams, and northern bay scallops all declined 85 percent between 1980 and 2010. NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center identified warming ocean temperatures as the culprit.

As climate change warms the oceans, all of that excess CO₂ in the atmosphere chemically acidifies the oceans as 90 percent of the heat is absorbed by the oceans and 30 percent of the CO₂ is chemically absorbed by the oceans—out of the atmosphere and into the seas. It acidifies the oceans, and for many species, that is a double whammy. Sea scallops were one of the Nation's most valuable fisheries and Connecticut's most valuable species in 2017 landings. So let's look at that one.

Ocean acidification and warming both trouble sea scallops. Scallops and other shellfish extract calcium carbonate from ocean waters around them in order to build their shells. Acidic waters decrease the chemical availability of that compound, and if you actually get it high enough, you actually dissolve the shells of living creatures. In 2018, the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution warned that ocean acidification "could reduce the sea scallop population by more than 50 percent in the next 30 to 80 years under a worst-case scenario."

While we in the Senate struggle to free our Chamber from the remorseless political grip of the fossil fuel industry, our fishermen pay the price. The oceans are warming too fast for us to respond to rapid changes in fish stocks. So, in our States, black sea bass and

summer flounder—both species mentioned by Senator BLUMENTHAL—are poster children for this disconnect.

He mentioned his fisherman Bobby Guzzo in the article from Greenwire, and Rhode Island's fishermen are telling me exactly the same thing. The Science Director for NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center says, "Much of our management assumes that conditions in the future will be the same as they have been in the past," but that is no longer true. We are already so off base from historical trends and data that we can no longer rely on that history to forecast where fish populations will be.

So black sea bass and summer flounder head north toward cooler waters from the Mid-Atlantic States, which used to be the home base. You would think, as they did, that it would make sense for the catch allocations of that fish to move northward with them. The blue is the base of where most of the black sea bass food stock existed back in the seventies. Up here is the base right now. That is the Chesapeake Bay. There is Rhode Island—there at the hook of Cape Cod in Massachusetts.

It is a big move up into our space, but did the catch limits move up with it? No. Southern States were unwilling to give up their quotas, which left our fishermen in Connecticut and Rhode Island to fish our northeast waters with an abundant catch they couldn't harvest. Imagine the frustration as Rhode Island, Connecticut, and other New England States don't have a vote on a critical fishery management council that makes this decision to put our fishermen at a severe disadvantage to fight for their right to the fish that are now settling up here in southern New England. Our fishermen have to throw back valuable fish from lobster pots and from nets because our fisheries' management rules haven't caught up with their ocean reality.

We have to update how we manage these shifting fish stocks as climate change moves fish populations around. We must speed research and catch limits to match what fishermen actually see in the water. Our fishermen and our coastal economies depend on it.

I am very grateful to Senator BLUMENTHAL, my outstanding colleague from Connecticut, for joining me today. Together, we will continue to fight for a day when our Rhode Island and Connecticut fishermen can foresee their children and grandchildren continuing their long tradition of fishing the seas.

We strive for meaningful action on climate change and ocean acidification, for updated fisheries and climate modeling, and for improvements on how we manage these stocks. To save our seas and to save our fishing economies, we must wake up to the threat of climate change and respond to these consequences that real fishermen are seeing in their real nets and boats every single day.

I yield the floor.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Connecticut and I be allowed to engage in a brief colloquy.

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

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, after that eloquence, I hesitate to even add anything, but the urgency of his plea and the need to hear the voices of these fishermen brings to mind this photograph, which was taken from the Greenwire article. In fact, it is of a boat in Stonington Harbor during a visit by President Trump in 2017 to the Coast Guard Academy in New London. The banner on this boat reads: "Please help us."

We need help for the fishermen of our Nation, whether they be in Louisiana or Rhode Island or Connecticut, because of this completely obsolete, obscenely outdated system that is depriving them of decent livelihoods, depriving our Nation of sufficient fish nutrition, and depriving our Nation and our world of an end to climate change.

I would ask my colleague from Rhode Island very briefly, does he believe that the administration is heeding that message, not only behalf of the fishermen of Stonington in Connecticut—please help us—but on behalf of the planet to please help us stop global warming and climate change? Is this administration acting sufficiently?

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Well, clearly, when it comes to climate change, this administration is embarrassing itself and our country with the factually and scientifically preposterous claims that they make, and the nonsense denial that they continue to propagate is going to be, I think, a lasting blot on our country, as the rest of the world looks to us for leadership and sees instead more fossil-fuel-funded denial and treacherous political behavior by the industry that guides, very often, the hands of people in government. So from that point of view, it is a complete train wreck.

From the point of view of helping the fishing communities, they have actually been taking it on the chin for a while. I will say a good word for the fishing communities. I think they have really tried to do their best. When we asked the fishing community to consider moving to a catch shares type of regulatory model, a lot of them didn't like it, but a number of them tried it, and they realized they actually could make it work and it actually improved their business prospects. So that move has been one that has not been easy for them to make, but more and more they have made it, and they have been able to see how it works better for them to be able to share catches.

If somebody is out at sea having a great day, instead of having to go back in, they can get on the radio to somebody and say: I am having a great day out here. It is cheap for me to stay out here. I will keep fishing if you will give me some of your catch. You can stay home. And they work out the deal over the radio.

That has been a good thing, but, again, it is not easy for them. And they have also really stepped up, as Senator BLUMENTHAL knows so well, in our regional ocean planning, the offshore planning. The fishermen have come forward, and they have participated. They have been, I think, very fair and productive.

Unfortunately, the manner in which the Obama administration rolled out the offshore marine monument was a bit of a blow to the trust that had been developed, but they had participated in good faith. I have good things to say about what our fishing community has tried to do to keep up.

But no matter what you try to do as a fisherman, if you have an abundance of black sea bass—if it is so abundant that it is going into lobster pots to eat the bait and you are pulling up black sea bass in lobster pots, if you are pulling it up in your trawls—and you find that you can't keep this fish, you could go to the dock and you could sell it for several dollars but, no, you are obliged to throw it overboard because you can't bring it in. It has already been probably a little bit compromised, particularly if it has been caught in the trawl. So it is not likely to survive very long when you put it back in the water. So you are not really helping anybody by throwing it in. You know it is valuable. You know there are a lot of them. You know you are throwing them back injured or having difficulty surviving or, very often, dead. I have seen them just go twirling down through the water. You wonder, who is looking out for me, because this does not make sense? This does not make sense.

The science supports what they are saying. NOAA has known for a very long time that this black sea bass population was moving northward. This was only 2014. It is even further north from there.

Nothing is more frustrating than not being taken seriously, and I think we need to take the concerns of our fishermen seriously. Of course, one way to do that is to take climate change seriously and not listen to this nonsense about it being a Chinese hoax and not have a bunch of really creepy eccentrics from the climate denial stooge community brought into government and actually given positions as if they were legitimate.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Rhode Island and I look forward to coming back to the floor with him and expanding on this colloquy in the future. I will be a proud partner of his in advocating for the measures, and I join him in praising our fishing community because they have stood strong in the face of adversity.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, let me conclude by thanking Senator BLUMENTHAL for his leadership on this issue. Our fishing communities have a powerful voice in Senator BLUMENTHAL. He has worked with them for many,

many years in the Senate and before, when he was attorney general. It is a great honor for me to share the floor of the Senate with him today.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in 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 CHANSE JONES

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, today I want to recognize my deputy communications director, Chanse Jones, who is leaving my office in early July after more than 4 years of service to the State of Nebraska and to me.

Although he is a Mississippian by birth, Chanse has become an adopted son of Nebraska. He started with me in Washington as a press assistant in 2015. I quickly learned he was someone with a big personality, big ideas, and a lot of creativity, so I promoted him to the role of deputy press secretary. He worked hard, and it wasn't long before he became my press secretary and then my deputy communications director.

As the years went by, Chanse came to love and be loved by so many communities across the State of Nebraska. He joined me for many road trips all across the Good Life. These trips took us from Omaha to Scottsbluff, to my ranch outside of Valentine, to the northeast part of the state, and many places between—the stories he could tell about our "adventures."

During these journeys, Chanse endeared himself to Nebraskans with his charming nature. He is a delight, and he made friends just about everywhere he went. While on the road, he also captured Nebraska's beauty in many ways, including through wonderful photographs that I will forever cherish.

When carrying out his job responsibilities whether in Nebraska or in Washington, Chanse always brought a sense of fun to every task. He has been a dear friend to me and a fierce protector. He is also an original "Friend of Fred" and godparent of my goldendoodle, Fred Fischer. In fact, he helped us find Fred and was with us when we rescued him a few years ago.

The three of us, Fred, my husband Bruce, and I, are certainly going to miss Chanse's company.

I want to thank Chanse for his friendship and his service to the people

of Nebraska over the years. I wish him all the best in this next chapter of his career, and I am excited to see what life has in store for him.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO JOHN MANCHESTER

• Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, today I wish to recognize a friend and fellow public servant of the great State of West Virginia, John Manchester, as Friday marks his retirement from 16 years of service as the mayor of Lewisburg, WV. Under John's leadership, the city of Lewisburg has endured tough times, yet still flourishes as one of the cultural epicenters for our State, nestled deep in the rolling hills of Appalachia and the mighty Greenbrier River.

Although Mayor Manchester is not a native West Virginian, the love for this State has rooted itself deep within him. After graduating from Brown University, he packed his bags for Morgantown, WV, and became a Mountaineer as he accepted a research assistantship with West Virginia University. However, it wasn't until 1982 that these country roads called John and his wife Connie home to the Greenbrier River Valley, when they settled in the small town of Renick, WV.

John and his family began to grow into the fabric of the small town with only 200 residents. First, they started their own sawmill and entered the timber business. The harsh West Virginia winter forced John to reconsider his line of work, and he took a job as an editor with a newspaper, the Mountaineer Messenger. From there, John's desire to give back to the community that had given so much to him and his family took over, and he accepted the vacated mayor position in Renick. It would be this experience with local government that would inspire John to run for mayor of Lewisburg when his family moved in 2003.

Sixteen years later, Mayor Manchester still calls Lewisburg the best small town in West Virginia. I truly believe in John's vision and dedication for Lewisburg and can personally attest to how special of a place that this town is. One can sense a deep communal bond in this locale, which is a direct result of the strong character of its people and the examples set by its leadership.

Leadership begins and ends with service. Mayor Manchester is someone who exemplifies service, not only by his words, but by how he lives his life every day. Three years ago, Greenbrier County experienced an historic flood, and while Lewisburg experienced its share of high water, it was spared the widespread devastation that hit the nearby towns of White Sulphur Springs and Rainelle. Once Lewisburg was safe and sound, the residents, under the leadership of John Manchester, pulled together and took care of their neigh-

bors throughout the Greenbrier Valley. I appreciate and commend the leadership Mayor Manchester showed during that difficult time and throughout his tenure as mayor.

Mayor Manchester has many accomplishments over the past 16 years of service as the mayor of Lewisburg. On a personal note, I would like to thank John for his kindness to my staff and me during our many interactions over the years. The people of Lewisburg are very fortunate John Manchester chose to live in West Virginia and serve its residents through his constant devotion, truly making this State and his city a better place to live. I wish him well in his retirement. It is truly an honor to call you friend and fellow West Virginian. •

TRIBUTE TO ANDREA "ANDY" PENDLETON

• Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, today I wish to honor my friend and the first woman mayor of the town of Rainelle, WV, Andrea "Andy" Pendleton. Mayor Andy, as her friends call her, has served the town of Rainelle and Greenbrier County for the past 8 years, standing tall in the face of adversity and some of the toughest times that the Greenbrier River Valley has ever experienced. As the first woman elected to the Senate from West Virginia, I greatly admire Andy's initiative and her desire to give back to her community through public service.

Growing up in West Virginia teaches you to be tough, it teaches you to be respectful, and it teaches you take care of those around you. I know by Mayor Andy's character and her desire to help others that she holds those same West Virginia values close to her heart. To this day, Andy credits many of the positive qualities she possesses to the time she spent growing up in her family's discount food store, working 7 days a week. Little did she know that these fundamental lessons were building her into the leader that the town of Rainelle desperately needed.

The historic floods that ripped through West Virginia in June of 2016 devastated Rainelle, with almost 90 percent of homes and businesses ravaged by the flood water. Out of the 23 West Virginians we lost on that day, five of them were members of the Rainelle community. Mayor Andy was on the scene immediately and worked tirelessly in the days and months following the flood. From moving logs and rocks, alerting first responders, and keeping the community together, she dove directly into the flood relief process and led by example. She was tireless.

The impact that Mayor Andy has had on her community will be felt for far longer than her tenure as mayor. She was the driving force in securing funds to construct a new water system that efficiently supplies clean drinking water to the people of her town. In addition, she has also worked to replace