

It says that while we are rebuilding our military, we should be anticipating that we have to increase our military spending by between 3 percent and 5 percent over this period of time. That is a net increase. Well, the budget we came out with in the defense authorization bill was \$750 billion, and it was a budget that almost gets us there but not quite.

The President's budget agreement that came out the other day has a figure of \$738 billion. That is very close to where we are supposed to be. It is a 2-year budget, and that is a good thing for the military. Those of us on the Defense Committee understand that. So that brings that \$738 up to \$740.5 billion for 2021, so it is very close to the \$750 billion defense authorization.

I only say that because that makes it more important for anyone who is serving on the Senate Armed Services Committee to be in a position to know what I just said. And that is something that most people don't know, and I don't believe that most of the Members of this body know, but those who are on the committee do know it. We have to keep in mind that this budget is going to be the only way that we are going to be able to do what needs to be done.

This is the short version. I will come back and talk more this coming Monday and give a lot more details than I gave now. I will say this: I would encourage any member of the Senate Armed Services Committee to understand that they are in a position to know what the problem is, and a lot of other people do not know this. I would anticipate that members of the committee would be in that unique position to know and would be supporting a budget that gives us enough room to get back into position to recover from the losses that we took from the previous administration. That is what is at stake. That is what we are anticipating. I would anticipate that our members from the committee should be doing that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNT). The Senator from Ohio.

OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I am on the floor this afternoon to talk about an issue that I have come to this floor other times to speak about, and that is the drug crisis we face in this country. In fact, I am told that over the last 3 years, I have now come to the floor 58 times to address this topic—to talk about the opioid crisis, talk about the new resurgence of crystal meth, and talk about what we can do about it.

I will tell you, during those 3 years, we made a lot of progress, not just in talking about this issue but doing something about it. We put new policies in place at the Federal level for better prevention, better treatment, better longer term recovery, and to also help our first responders—specifically, to give them access to this mir-

acle drug naloxone, which reverses the effect of overdose.

Congress passed legislation, like the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, the Cures legislation, and the STOP Act. We have provided actually more than \$4 billion of additional funding for these programs—particularly for treatment—over just the last few years. In Ohio alone, we have received \$140 million through CARA and Cures since they were signed into law. That money has gone toward innovative, evidence-based programs that are actually making a difference. We had to do this because this crisis has gripped our country in the worst drug epidemic ever. More people are now dying every year from overdoses from these drugs than died in the entire Vietnam conflict, as an example. We have never seen anything quite this bad, so we responded, as we should have, at the national level to a national crisis.

Working with States, localities, nonprofits, people out there in the trenches doing the hard work, we are beginning to make a difference. Last week, the Centers for Disease Control—CDC—issued a report with their latest statistics on overdose deaths. While drug overdose deaths are still way too high, they show we are actually seeing a reduction.

By the way, this is the first time we have seen a reduction in opioid overdose deaths in more than 8 years. Think about that. Every year for 8 years, we have seen increases in deaths, to the point that we had over 70,000 people a year dying of overdoses in 2017. In 2018—we now have the numbers in from CDC—it went from roughly 71,000 to roughly 68,000. Again, that is way too high. No one should be satisfied with that. But after increases every year, to have a 4-percent decrease nationally shows that we are beginning to turn the tide. Let's keep doing what we are doing. We cannot pull back now. If we do, it will just go back up again. Actually, it is the first time since 1990, I am told, that nationwide overdoses from any kind of drugs—opioids and other things—have decreased in a calendar year. That is the first time since 1990.

In Ohio, we did even better from 2017 to 2018. We had more than a 4-percent drop; we actually had a 22-percent drop in Ohio. That is partly because my home State has been ground zero for this. Like West Virginia, Kentucky, and other States, we have been hit really hard. To go 22 percent below where we were the previous year is progress, and we should be proud of that. Still, we are seeing overdose rates that are way too high. Overall, around the country, 33 States had reductions.

As I said earlier, the area where we made the most progress is in combating opioids, partly because of legislation we passed here. Particularly, we tried to address this issue of prescription drugs, heroin, and fentanyl.

The Washington Post recently published a stunning analysis showing why

it is so important that we continue to push back and how we got here. They showed that for the 6 years between 2006 and 2012, there was an absolutely unbelievably high number of shipments of prescription pain medications. Oxycodone and hydrocodone were the ones they focused on, which account for three-quarters of the total opioid pill shipments to pharmacies.

In a single CVS pharmacy right outside of Cleveland, OH, more than 6.4 million pills were delivered during that 6-year period. Think about that. In one small pharmacy, there were over 6 million pills. Overall, the Post found that over that period, more than 3.6 billion prescription pain pills were supplied to Ohio. That is “billion” with a “b.” That is an astounding number. That means that during those 6 years, there were approximately 313 opioid prescription pain pills prescribed for every single man, woman, and child in Ohio. That is what we are talking about here.

Obviously, this was used as a way for people to take these pills and spread them, not just in Ohio but in other places, causing immense harm because people got addicted to these pills and turned to heroin and fentanyl. Many of these people are people who not just have an addiction but end up having overdoses, and many of them died.

This week, the largest civil trial in U.S. history will begin in my home State of Ohio. I think it is appropriate that it is in Ohio. This will consolidate cases from around the country. More than 2,000 cities, counties, Native American Tribes, and others will sue some of the biggest pharmaceutical companies and major distributors for their role in this drug crisis. The pharmaceutical companies and the distributors are going to be sued in court in Ohio through a consolidated case. This is the biggest civil trial, they say, in the history of our country.

Two of the Ohio plaintiff counties—Cuyahoga and Summit—have been among the areas in my State that were hardest hit by opioids. No wonder they are part of this lawsuit. In 2016, the death rate from pharmaceuticals—opioids, painkillers—in Cuyahoga County was 3.26 times the national average. In Summit County, so many people died from overdoses that a mobile morgue had to be created in order to help process the bodies. I was there in Summit County during that time period. They actually had to bring in a mobile unit to be able to deal with all the overdose deaths.

The more we find out about the sheer number of pills these drug companies pumped into the United States—more than 76 billion overall during that period—the more it is clear that lawsuits like this are going to be necessary to get to the bottom of what happened and require these entities to help those who were affected by these pain pills. A lot of these people turned to other substances that were more accessible and less expensive, like heroin, but had

started with an addiction to pain medication. We are pushing back against the opioid pill industry that flourished for too long within our borders. That is a positive sign.

While the CDC showed an overall decrease in overdose deaths, as I talked about earlier, there are some troubling trends that have continued.

First, while the number of opioid overdose deaths fell, the number of overdose deaths fell related to synthetic opioids—specifically, cheap and dangerous fentanyl—actually rose. Heroin and prescription drugs went down, but actually, for the synthetic opioid—which is 50 times more powerful than heroin and unfortunately produced overseas and shipped into our country—those numbers actually rose. Fentanyl deaths actually rose. In fact, last year, more deaths were attributed to fentanyl than to heroin and prescription drugs combined.

Fentanyl is the big new danger. There is overall progress, but fentanyl is getting worse. We had a report last week of a single kilo of fentanyl being seized in Middletown, OH, which is enough of the drug to kill more than half a million people. This was in our community, Middletown, OH. That is enough of the drug to kill more than half a million people.

We are beginning to push back on fentanyl, as some of you know, through legislation, including the STOP Act, which got passed in this Chamber and in the House. This is doing a better job with keeping this poison from coming through our U.S. mail system, which is where most of it has been coming from. Our own postal system has been the conduit for this poison. Most of it is coming from one country—China. It is produced in chemical labs there by unscrupulous scientists and chemists and then sent through the mail.

The 2019 audit by the inspector general of the Postal Service found that the Postal Service identified and pulled a package requested by Customs and Border Protection 88 percent of the time. This was an improvement from only 79 percent of the time the year before, in 2017, and only 67 percent of the time in 2016, but it is still not complying with the STOP Act. The STOP Act says 100 percent, not 88 percent.

Again, why is that important?

This stuff is getting in through the mail. If the U.S. Customs and Border Protection can identify these packages and screen them and pull them offline, less of that poison will come into our neighborhoods. It also raises the price of this product, which is part of the problem right now—that it is not just powerful and deadly but also inexpensive.

Overall, it was said that the Postal Service missed a number of packages—12 percent—due to operational errors. We can't afford these operational errors. It is too important.

We need to ensure that all packages that enter the United States have the kind of information we need to be able

to track potentially harmful packages once they get inside our border. This is advance electronic data. It is not required everywhere, but it needs to be.

The STOP Act requires the Postal Service to do that, including with 100 percent of the packages coming in from China. It required it, by the way, by December 31 of last year. Yet the Postal Service just informed us on the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, on which we did this work—where we investigated this over many, many months—that it has only received data on 52.8 percent of all of our international packages and only 70.7 percent on those from China for 2018. In March of this year, 2019, it was up to 57 percent and 78 percent. Let's get to 100 percent from China. This legislation requires 70 percent from other countries. There is no excuse for not meeting this. Again, it is the law of the land. So, while it is improving, the process is taking too long, and it has failed to meet the requirements in the STOP Act.

The next big milestone, by the way, in the implementation of the law requires the Postal Service to begin refusing foreign shipments without there being the required advance electronic data that reads where it is from, what is in it, and where it is going. This is to apply to any package to be received after December 31, 2020. At the end of next year, if it is not providing the data, we will refuse the package.

A lot of people have expressed concern about that to me. “My gosh. This is going to stop international freight back and forth.” No. It is going to require the Postal Service to do what it should be doing already, which is to require these shippers to do what they should be doing, and that is to provide the data. It is not hard, and it is not expensive. Again, most people are doing it. By the way, FedEx, DHL, and UPS—the private carriers—have done it for years. They have done it based on the law that passed after the 9/11 attacks. It is our post office that has not. Sometimes it has viewed this, apparently, as its having a competitive advantage in its not having to require that. Do you know what? It is too important to us and to the deaths that are occurring from fentanyl not to require that.

We have to improve the screening in the mail, and we are, and we will continue to make progress on that. Of course, that is not all we have to do. More fentanyl is now coming from other places, particularly from across our southern border. This is very concerning because we have gaps on our southern border right now. They say that between 40 and 60 percent of the Border Patrol agents are being pulled off the border to deal with the very real humanitarian crisis on the border.

I was there a week ago last Friday, and I had an opportunity to speak to a number of Border Patrol agents who were processing individuals and dealing with the humanitarian needs of a surge

of families and children, including those who were claiming asylum. We need to have these people attending to the humanitarian needs and processing these individuals. Yet I will tell you, when I talked to the Border Patrol agents about it, that was not where they wanted to be. They want to be doing their jobs because they know these drugs are coming in when they are not out there with a watchful eye on our border.

Unfortunately, we are in a situation right now where we need more humanitarian aid, which we have finally provided, thank goodness. We also need more help on the border itself to be able to close some of these gaps. I want to be sure that we are, indeed, dealing with both issues. We can and should.

The drug smugglers who are affiliated with Mexican cartels are pretty smart. They know where there are gaps. They take advantage of them and bring in more fentanyl. Last year, Customs and Border Protection seized about 1,800 pounds of fentanyl at the border. In the first half of this year alone, it seized more than 2,000 pounds of fentanyl. This year, we are headed toward apprehending double the fentanyl at the border. I will tell you we don't know how much is coming in. Nobody does.

Because of these gaps and because of the Border Patrol's having been pulled off the border to deal with the very real crisis down there with regard to the humanitarian issue and the flux of people coming in, there are more gaps. The numbers of those shipments that have been apprehended have been bad enough—more than double this year. It has been enough fentanyl to kill millions of people, and it is probably worse than that.

This fentanyl is increasingly being laced into other drugs by the cartels. The fentanyl makes you so likely to become addicted that they put it in other things, including crystal meth, including cocaine, including heroin. Individuals who consume anything right now that is a street drug might be unknowingly ingesting this incredibly toxic drug fentanyl also and risking their lives because of the overdose deaths that are associated with it.

In Ohio, the number of overdose deaths attributed to fentanyl-laced cocaine and methamphetamines has increased dramatically. As an example, Columbus Public Health actually released a public alert just this week that urged anyone who uses drugs or knows someone who uses drugs to have naloxone, a miracle drug—some people call it Narcan—that reverses the effects of the overdose from opioids. They say you have to have this miracle drug on hand because of the fentanyl poisoning that is going on in Columbus. Already in 2019, 740 doses of Narcan have been issued in response to overdoses in one town alone, Toledo, OH.

This issue of fentanyl is very real. It is affecting our communities in new ways, and we have to be able to respond flexibly to what is happening. It remains a dangerous threat.

Also complicating the recovery process is the continued resurgence of psychostimulants, particularly crystal meth. Again, crystal meth is coming from—where?—across the border, from Mexico. You will probably remember that at one time in your communities, there was talk about meth labs. You may have seen some coverage of that, and you may have had some meth labs in your neighborhood. There are horrible environmental issues, obviously, in the producing of methamphetamines, which are so dangerous. Guess what. There are no more meth labs in your neighborhood. That is the good news. The bad news is, there are no meth labs because this stuff that comes in from Mexico is cheaper and more powerful, more devastating, and more damaging to our communities. So it is a concern.

The latest CDC data on overdose deaths—particularly with regard to opioids—is very hopeful, but the overdose deaths by psychostimulants and cocaine continue to increase. That is because, again, fentanyl is being mixed into these psychostimulants. Methamphetamine deaths increased by nearly 30 percent, and 42 percent of all overdose deaths last year were directly attributable to cocaine, psychostimulants like meth, or both mixed together. That is the new problem, and we have to address it.

As we have continued to fight opioid abuse, I recently introduced a bill, entitled “Combating Meth and Cocaine Act,” in order to address this resurgence and to be sure that here in Congress we are being flexible in responding to it and not waiting until we have another huge drug crisis here of a new way to mix drugs or a new resurgence of crystal meth. To date, grants provided by the 21st Century Cures Act, which is now called the State opioid response grants, have been used to increase access to naloxone—again, a very important drug—as well as to long-term addiction treatment and support services. Yet, for all the good these grants have done, they can’t be used to address the crisis beyond opioids, which ignores the underground reality, at least in my State and in so many other States.

Earlier this year, for example, I participated in a roundtable discussion with leaders in Knox County, and I do this around the State on a regular basis. In Knox County, the prosecutor’s office estimated that 80 to 90 percent of all drug incidents now involve crystal meth—methamphetamines. They told me they have been able to use the State opioid response grants to help with the treatment and recovery services but that they are not effective with regard to meth because there is not an effective way to treat meth with drugs, as there is with opioids. There is

not an effective way to use the Narcan with meth, as there is with opioids. So we need to be more flexible in providing these communities with the help they need to combat this new resurgence. Our legislation will allow the State opioid response grants to be used for programs that focus on methamphetamines and on cocaine usage. More flexibility is important.

We know these funds are making a difference, so the bill will also reauthorize the State opioid response grants for 5 years, which will give some certainty by providing the \$500 million annually that will be needed to ensure there will be a stable funding stream to go to these innovative programs in the States. This is a simple, commonsense change. It will allow State and local organizations the flexibility they need to fight what is quickly becoming a two-front war on addiction—opioids but also psychostimulants that are coming back with a vengeance.

The latest data from the CDC is a promising sign that we can and will recover from the drug crisis if we continue to work to give those in need the help they need to get back on their feet. We also need to ensure that we don’t rest on our laurels as cartels continue to innovate themselves and try different angles.

There is so much money in this that these deadly drugs will continue to come unless we show the same kind of flexibility when responding. If they can, they are going to continue to send drugs through the postal system. They are going to continue to send them across the southern border. Fentanyl, cocaine, and meth have shown themselves to be continuing public health threats, and we have to keep working—all of us here on a bipartisan basis—to ensure that State and local governments get the resources they need to help stem the tide.

The Federal Government has been a better partner over the past few years with our States, with our localities, and with our nonprofits that are there in the trenches, doing the hard work. We can’t give up now. The numbers from the CDC are hopeful with regard to opioids, but that just means we need to redouble our efforts to ensure that we do not now back off. We cannot take our eye off the ball. We have to continue to focus on what we are doing and then add to that more flexible responses to the new resurgence of fentanyl being mixed with meth and crystal meth coming in directly from Mexico. This new drug reality is one that must be met with the same kind of innovative response we have responded with here in the last few years.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I rise after 10 years of being in the Senate and after having endured speech after speech after speech on this floor that has claimed the Republican Party is

the party of fiscal discipline. It was politics that created something during the depths of the worst recession, called the tea party, which rallied all over America to stop what it said was runaway spending.

When I arrived here, I actually believed that the Republican Party was a fiscally responsible party, that there was some principle behind it. I know better today. I was naive. It is all about politics.

There have been five budget deals since 2013 between Majority Leader MITCH MCCONNELL and whoever has happened to be in the White House. These deals were meant to overcome the idiocy of the across-the-board cuts that were created by the sequestration—which nobody in America understands but which are basically across-the-board cuts on spending—that otherwise would have been investments in your family, maybe, or investments in our military. They were agreed to as part of a fiscal cliff deal in the dark of night, at 2 o’clock in the morning, by nobody—literally nobody—who had actually read the bill. Ever since then, politicians in Washington have been making deals to try to overcome it.

When President Obama was President, this is how much money he was allowed to spend. Since Donald Trump has been President, this is the money that the Republicans have spent. This red is defense, and the blue is non-defense.

Under President Obama the deals increased by an average of \$33 billion above the sequester. The two deals under Donald Trump increased spending by \$154 billion, four times as much—four times as much—at a moment when the President is saying our economy is the best it has ever been in American history.

The result of this is that under Donald Trump the deficit has increased by 15 percent each year. The deficit just between last year and this year is up by 23 percent as a result of the Republican majority in the Senate and Donald Trump.

We are on track to run \$1 trillion deficits every year as far as the eye can see. That is after 10 years of economic growth and unemployment below 4 percent.

At no time in our history have deficits been this large outside of a major war or a recession, which brings me to my second slide.

This is the annual spending growth around here. This is the annual spending growth around here of defense and nondefense. They are both in here.

Under President Obama, in his first term, the spending went up by 3 percent. We were in the worst recession since the Great Depression. He had to pass the Recovery Act. That is in this number. That is in this number. It was at the depths of the worst recession since the Great Depression. Three million Americans lost their homes, and 9 million Americans lost their jobs. We had a 10-percent unemployment rate—