

funding of the “U.S. Chamber of Carbon” means that corporate America is doing more harm than good for our climate.

Again, I thank the distinguished Senator from Oklahoma for his courtesy in allowing me the extra time.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, first of all, despite what some people might think, I have the highest regard for the Senator from Rhode Island.

It is very interesting in that the climate is changing, and the climate has always changed. All evidence out there—all historical evidence, all scriptural evidence—tells us over and over again that the climate is changing. It always has been changing, and it always will change.

The good news is that the world is not coming to an end because of climate change. That is because the climate is always changing. So, for those people who believe the world is coming to an end because of greenhouse gas emissions, the good news is it is not. I am happy to share that good news with you.

BIPARTISAN BUDGET ACT OF 2019

Madam President, I am here to speak about some other good news, which is that we have an opportunity with a vote that is coming up. Some people call it the budget vote or the budget agreement. I don't refer to it as such. I call it a defense agreement. I think everybody knows where I stand on this. This is a vote that is going to have to come up before too long, and there is a unique group of people in the U.S. Senate who know the reason that we have to pass the defense budget. They are the members of the Senate's Committee on Armed Services. It happens that I chair that committee and that we have done really great work.

I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for such time as I may consume.

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

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, we had a situation in which we went through an 8-year period of time when our military was somewhat devastated, and I want to share some of the specifics of that because it is a serious thing. We are going to be voting on the defense budget agreement, and I have already stated where I stand on it. I am here to outline why the budget agreement is necessary for our national defense.

This defense budget agreement will be able to focus on the Senate's Armed Services' top priorities, one of which is to fix the on-base privatization of military housing.

Remember that this happened about 6 months ago. We discovered, all of a sudden, that we were not doing a good job on our privatized housing. Hey, I have to admit that I am partly responsible for that because I was around here when we decided to privatize the

housing. It did work for a while. I think, after a period of time, people got a little careless, and there was a little slack. Some of the contractors who made that commitment got a little bit greedy. This information as to how bad the conditions were came from a person at Tinker Air Force Base who was the spouse of a military person. When I first heard this, I thought there were bad conditions just in my State of Oklahoma, but there were not; they were all over the Nation.

So we fixed that thing. We fixed it with our defense authorization bill, and we had a lot of provisions in there. We are now modernizing our military housing in a way that is going to be good for all of our spouses and others who are forced to live there. For some reason, if our defense budget agreement were to go down in flames and not be passed, there wouldn't be the modernizing of our military or the giving to our troops a well-deserved pay raise, and they have not had a pay raise in a long time. This is going to be the largest pay raise for our military people in the last 10 years. It is a good thing.

By the way, people are always talking about how we can be so concerned about building our military when we have China and Russia that have passed us up in many areas and spend just a fraction of the amount. The reason is very simple, which is that China and Russia are countries that don't have to do anything for their soldiers. We take care of ours. We try to provide good housing. We provide the types of things that our all-volunteer force can be very proud of and are very proud of. That is something we have to incur. The largest single expenditure that we have in the military is end strength—the people out there. Communist countries—China, Russia—don't have to worry about that. “Here is a gun. Go out and kill somebody.” We don't have that luxury, and we wouldn't do that if we wanted to.

If we don't pass this budget bill, the effects on the military will be devastating. Let me just share a couple of things that would happen.

We would force the Department of Defense to operate under a continuing resolution, which would shortchange our troops and waste taxpayer dollars. We all know that. We would face destructive, haphazard cuts in sequestration. What is it we hear on our committee? The Presiding Officer is fully familiar, for she is one of the most loyal members of the Senate's Committee on Armed Services. We have posture hearings for about 6 months at the beginning of every year with the leaders of the various branches of the military—General Votel, Gen. Thomas Waldhauser, ADM Craig Faller, ADM Phil Davidson, all of these people.

What do they tell us?

They tell us, if we don't actually start funding our military again, we are going to have sequestration. Look, if we vote for this thing and pass it, we

will end the sequestration problems and threats forever. It will not happen again.

What else do they tell us?

They tell us that a CR, which is a continuing resolution, would be an absolute disaster. A lot of people in this body don't know this, but every member of the Senate's Committee on Armed Services does know this because they were there.

All of these people—16 leaders—come in for posture hearings each year, and we know the problems we are having and the problems we are confronted with. We would be faced with cuts in sequestration.

This document right here is the “Assessment and Recommendations of the National Defense Strategy Commission.” Here it is right here. This is our blueprint of what we are doing to save America and to put us back on top in all of these areas in which we are deficient. If, for some reason, we don't pass this defense budget agreement, then we will not be able to continue the implementation of the national defense strategy, and we all know that. Certainly, we don't all know that, but the members of the Senate's Committee on Armed Services do know that.

So that is what would happen. But what would this mean? The members of the Armed Services Committee know what it means, but for everybody else, the deficit budget deal would end the threat of sequestration forever. You don't need me to tell you that sequestration would be devastating.

General Milley, just confirmed to be the Chairman of the Joints Chief of Staff, said that the levels of funding caused by sequestration would place America “at great risk.”

Remember, unfortunately, Heather Wilson, the former Air Force Secretary who had to leave her position. She said the cuts would be “absolutely devastating in scope and scale.”

If we were hit by sequestration, there would be an across-the-board cut of \$71 billion to the defense programs. That would halt our progress on the Space Command and developing crucial capabilities like hypersonic weapons and artificial intelligence. Those are two areas where we have actually been passed up by both Russia and China.

Just yesterday, the DARPA announced that they have completed a successful design review of a hypersonic weapons program. Now, that is a good first step. I am really glad because we were way ahead of them back before the last administration came into office, and then, all of a sudden, over that period of time, we got behind. So, meanwhile, China and Russia are already testing their hypersonic weapons, and they are ahead of us. We are just trying to catch up, and that is what this budget vote is all about.

The 2020 NDAA invests in hypersonic weapons, but we can't move forward if we are hit by sequestration. It would mean it would set us even further behind.

By the way, the hypersonics that we are talking about are the state of the art. That is a new thing. That is a weaponry that moves at five times the speed of sound, and here we are, allowing our—I don't want to characterize China and Russia as enemies. They are not enemies, but they are certainly on the other side, and people are in shock when they find out that they have something that we don't have. We have to be competitive with them, and we are going to be if we pass this defense budget vote that we are going to have before us.

So another example, in our NDAA that we passed overwhelmingly just last month, it authorized a 3.1-percent pay raise, or increase, for our troops. They deserve that pay raise, and under sequestration that pay raise is at risk.

The ability for basing facilities to receive the next generation of aircraft is also at risk. If your State is like my State, your State is slated to house the F-35 or the T-X trainer or the KC-46. The KC-46 is a system that is going to replace the KC-135, which has been in place now for over 50 years and so is 50 years old. That is a system, and if you were going to have one of these systems in your State, you may not get it because of this deal. Without the budget vote that is going to take place, we wouldn't be able to move forward with our plan, and we would be hit by sequestration. It could all be over.

I am talking about systems like the F-35, which we talk about every day, and the T-X trainer. We have had the trainers in existence now for some 50 years, and the KC-46, the same thing.

So, anyway, that is what would happen if for some reason we vote against and don't pass the defense bill that we are going to be asked to vote on probably tomorrow.

We have also made plans to continue increasing our end strength by 17,000 troops from the Obama era to our current goal, and without this defense budget deal, that wouldn't be possible. I think we all know it.

Now, maybe we don't all know it in this Chamber, but as for every member of the defense authorization committee, the Senate Armed Services Committee, they all know because they have been told over and over, and that is why it is so important that they be very responsible in their vote.

It would be kind of hard to say that you are working for the defense of our Nation and then turn around and vote to gut their funding.

Now, we have made remarkable gains in readiness over the past couple of years, thanks to President Trump's leadership and greater budgetary stability. For just one example, at the end of the Obama administration, only 5 percent of our brigade combat teams were ready to what they call "fight tonight"—only 5 percent.

Now, we have made a huge improvement. That is up to 50 percent now after just 2 years of this administration, but we have a lot more to do. All

the improvements we have made in fiscal years 2018 and 2019 would be at risk if we were not able to go forward and pass our defense budget act that we are going to be asked to support.

Sequestration would undo what we have done and take us back where we were before. It would be abandoning our troops right when we said we would be there for them. A continuing resolution means funding will go to the wrong places—places that were important last year but don't need to be funded this year. That is just wasteful. We all understand that, but a continuing resolution would be especially devastating for the military.

Every one of these military people whom I was just reading about came in for their annual meeting. They all said the same thing: It would be devastating if we had to go into a continuing resolution. We would be forced to do programs that otherwise we would not be doing.

So General Dunford said it himself. He said: "The fact that we have routinely not had a budget at the beginning of the year has delayed new starts, and it's been incredibly inefficient in how we prioritize and allocate resources throughout the year." That was General Dunford.

A continuing resolution means that our military will lose key planning ability. David Norquist, nominated to be the Deputy Secretary of Defense, gave a great example to the Senate Armed Services Committee last week. He said: Let's say a unit is planning right now for some training in October, but we are operating under a continuing resolution. At that time, they will cancel training because they don't know how much money they would be getting in order to accomplish that. We may eventually get more money, but in the meantime we will have lost a month in the process.

With sequestration off the table and with a stable 2-year budget deal in place, the Department of Defense can move forward with what is really important: implementing the National Defense Strategy. This is what my committee has been focusing on all year. We are facing a different, more dangerous world than we were 10 years ago.

I look back wistfully. I have said this many times. I look back wistfully at the days of the Cold War. We had two super powers. We knew what they had, and they knew what we had—mutually assured destruction. It doesn't mean anything anymore. You have countries that are run by people that are mentally deficient having the capability of blowing up one of our American cities. It is a scary world out there. That is what we are doing. That is why it is so important that we pass this budget, because our defense is depending on it.

Not everybody knows this, but the members of the Armed Services Committee do know it. We are falling behind China and Russia as they continue to build their militaries. We are seeing

persistent threats from North Korea, from Iran, from the terrorist groups, and we no longer have the best of everything, and most people don't understand that. Of course the members of our committee do understand that.

We have set clear priorities, and now we need to fund it. The future of our Nation is at stake. This is what it will take to regain the qualitative and quantitative advantages that we have lost.

I would have liked to have seen even more funding provided to this. The National Defense Strategy Commission—by the way, they set up a system that they can use, and that system is that we should be putting together between a 3- and a 5-percent increase over inflation, but we have not done it. We have not done it even with the budget that we are working on now.

The National Defense Strategy Commission, which is nonpartisan, has said that 3 to 5 percent growth is what is needed, and that is what we did not do.

But at the end of the day, I am willing to take this smaller than ideal increase and give our military what it needs—predictability. It is also more than what the House passed in their Defense authorization bill, which was dangerously low.

Every member of Armed Services Committee should vote for this defense budget because they know everything we have been talking about. They know that we are outraged and outgunned in artillery. They know that we are at a disadvantage in air defense, having only two Active-Duty battalions. Nuclear Triad modernization has not been taking place. We aren't there. China and Russia are.

So, anyway, what I am trying to impress upon you is that those individuals who are members of the committee are fully aware of the problems we have had. They remember that under the Obama administration, at the end of the Obama administration, our Air Force was short 2,000 pilots, and 1,500 of them were fighter pilots. Only one-third of our brigade combat teams, one-fourth of our aviation brigades, and half of our divisions were ready. Also, 60 percent of our F-18s weren't flyable. This is what we are in the process of correcting, and it is all dependent upon the passage of this budget.

So I would say to those individuals who are on the committee, I can't imagine that any of them would not be supporting this defense budget when it comes up, and I would hope that we don't have members of our committee who are anticipating doing things such as hearings back in their State or amendments to go as we put our Defense authorization bill through the next steps, because now is when our defense system needs to have this budget passed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 15 minutes.

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

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I want to inform my colleagues and the American people about some progress that has been made on a very important bipartisan piece of legislation, plus what a couple other committees are doing along the same line of keeping healthcare costs down—that we are making progress to reduce the price of prescription medicine for the American people.

I have been tilling the fields of legislative policy long enough to know that we have our work cut out for us. The ranking member and I of the Finance Committee started out 6 months ago to cultivate a bipartisan consensus for much needed reforms. We knew that we had a long row ahead. Our efforts to reduce drug prices face big-time opposition from Big Pharma.

As we worked side by side in a Republican and Democratic way, we planted the seeds to grow a strong bipartisan coalition—one strong enough, I believe, to withstand the influence of moneyed special interests.

Now, it should be no surprise to anybody that Big Pharma and other stakeholders in the drug supply chain are working six ways from Sunday to throw sand in our gears. We know they will continue to fight us during the August work period.

As a lifelong farmer from Iowa, I learned a long time ago that the fruits of one's labor will not be worth a hill of beans without proper groundwork. For months, we have been tilling the soil and fertilizing the legislative fields to bear fruit at harvest time. We have teamed up with leadership of other key committees of jurisdiction.

Together with the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Health Committee, Senators LAMAR ALEXANDER and PATTY MURRAY, and the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senators LINDSEY GRAHAM and DIANNE FEINSTEIN, the Senate has a real opportunity this Congress to deliver meaningful reforms that would yield real savings for what Americans spend on healthcare.

Both the Health and the Judiciary Committees have advanced legislative packages that help address drug prices, including bills I have sponsored, such as the CREATES Act, the Stop STALLING Act, and the Prescription Pricing for the People Act.

Since January, the Finance Committee, which I chair, and Senator WYDEN is the ranking member, has held a series of hearings to examine the vulnerabilities in the drug supply chain that are ripe for abuse. We don't have the answers to all the problems, but it is really crystal clear that a strong dose of transparency is desperately needed to shed light on a convoluted

pricing system when dealing with prescription drugs.

From the drug manufacturer to the patient's medicine cabinet, the drug supply chain is shrouded in secrecy and is exceedingly complex. This opaque pricing system has allowed exorbitant price hikes to climb higher and higher and higher, with no end in sight.

Don't forget, the taxpayers of the United States foot the bill for the lion's share of prescription drugs through Medicare and Medicaid.

The woolly drug supply chain allows taxpayers to be fleeced year after year. We need to let the sunshine in to help root out their abusive practices. Secrecy in the supply chain has grown into a noxious weed, damaging our free market ecosystem.

Transparency is needed to help rein in unsustainable costs threatening the fiscal viability of Medicaid and Medicare. Seniors, individuals with disability, and low-income Americans depend on these programs for lifesaving medicine and innovative cures.

Last week, the Senate Finance Committee approved the bipartisan Prescription Drug Price Reduction Act. The carefully sown Grassley-Wyden bill limits seniors' out-of-pocket costs without limiting access to lifesaving cures Americans expect. It injects reasonable incentives in government prescription drug programs for drug manufacturers and insurers to keep prices low. Pharmaceutical companies and insurers need to have more skin in the game to keep prices down. It also fixes flawed policies that distort free market principles to lower the lid on spending.

We all know in the town meetings and other places we go that Americans have spoken very loudly on this subject. They want high prescription drug prices addressed. Furthermore, Americans want Congress to act and to act now.

The Senate Finance, HELP, and Judiciary Committees have acted. Now it is time to get the job done.

As my fellow lawmakers go home over the August recess, I encourage each of you to share the good news with your constituents. Americans are fed up with sticker shock at the pharmacy counter. We have the opportunity to deliver a badly needed legislative remedy.

First, we have to drain the swampy special interests blocking the path to victory. The moneyed players in the drug supply chain will use the August recess to unleash a public relations blitz against our bipartisan efforts. You can bet the farm that Big Pharma, hospitals, and pharmacy benefit managers will whip themselves into a real frenzy to kill these bipartisan reforms.

Let's remember why we started down this path in the first place. It is simply democracy working, representative government working.

Americans are demanding relief at the prescription counter. We hear it from our constituents in our town meetings, in our letters, in our emails,

and in the phone calls we get. Unchecked drug prices are putting Medicare and Medicaid in financial peril. The payment structure is unmoored from fiscal reality, and the American taxpayer is on the hook. Congress has a real opportunity to do something about the spiraling of drug prices.

For my colleagues who are on the fence about our bipartisan proposal—and there is nothing wrong with being on the fence because you have plenty of time to become acquainted with an issue you hear from your constituents all the time and to become acquainted with our solution—here are a series of questions I want you to ask yourself: Do Americans want us to act to reduce runaway drug prices? Do Americans want to keep access to breakthrough drug therapies and innovation? Do older Americans want protection from coverage gaps and out-of-pocket costs? Do people with disabilities and poor and elderly Americans who depend on Medicaid deserve access to innovative cures and next-generation therapies?

The answer to all of these questions, I think, is a resounding yes.

Farmers are smart enough to make hay while the Sun shines. Let's apply that time-tested farm lesson in the Congress. Don't bail out on the opportunity to make a meaningful difference for the people whom we are elected to serve. Too many Americans are rationing or skipping doses because they can't afford their prescription medicines.

I will finish as I started out by saying, on behalf of Senator WYDEN, Senator ALEXANDER, Senator MURRAY, Senator GRAHAM, Senator FEINSTEIN, and others, I suggest to our colleagues that this is our Goldilocks moment. Let's not let it be a gridlock moment. Our legislative reforms are not too far right and not too far left. That is what makes our bipartisan remedy to lower prescription drug prices just exactly right for the American people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, following disposition of the Jordan nomination, the Senate vote on the motions to invoke cloture on the following nominations in the order listed: Executive Calendar Nos. 205, 231, 232, 233, 326, 327, 345, 350, 352, and 364, and then up to 10 minutes of debate under the control of Senator MENENDEZ prior to the vote on cloture on Calendar No. 402. I further ask consent that if cloture is invoked, the confirmation votes on the nominations be at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Democratic leader. Finally, I ask consent that the cloture motions on the following nominations be withdrawn: Executive Calendar Nos. 48, 55, 344, 346, 351, and 394, and the Senate vote on the