

assault survivor whose advocacy was born of her personal experience.

Three decades ago, Debbie Smith was taken from her home and taken to a wooded area where she was robbed and raped by an unknown attacker. She reported the crime to police and went to the emergency room for a forensic exam, but because of the rape kit backlog, she had to wait 6½ years before finally receiving the call that her attacker had been identified through a DNA test.

During that time, she lived in constant fear, wondering who he was, where he was, and whether he would return to hurt her again. Identifying offenders through DNA evidence is critical to providing not only justice but peace of mind for those assaulted and delivering justice to victims, and, yes, even exonerating the innocent. The power of DNA testing is such that it can essentially rule out people from being the alleged assailant or the actual assailant. So this is really important for a number of reasons.

Sharing this information across State lines through the Federal system can help us identify repeat offenders who would otherwise go undetected. Knowing the potential impact, Debbie became one of our Nation's most vocal advocates for eliminating rape kit backlogs, including the reprehensible rape kit backlog I have been speaking about.

In 2004, a bill that carries her name was signed into law to help local and State crime labs partner with Federal law enforcement to receive resources to end the Federal DNA evidence backlog. It is because of the Debbie Smith Act that more than a billion dollars has been provided to forensic labs across the country.

Since 2005, more than 860,000 DNA cases have been processed, accounting for 43 percent of all forensic profiles in the FBI's DNA database.

The Debbie Smith Act has also been central in eliminating the rape kit backlog in my home State of Texas, which had reached the point of more than 20,000 untested kits at one point earlier this decade.

As I said at the beginning, I introduced the Debbie Smith Act of 2019 to reauthorize this important funding stream that supports the auditing, testing, and sharing of DNA evidence so we can eliminate that backlog and ensure that it will not grow again in the future. The benefits of continuing the programs created under the original Debbie Smith Act cannot be overstated, and we must get this important legislation to the President's desk before it expires at the end of September.

Since it was first enacted in 2004, the Debbie Smith Act has never lapsed or expired, and there is no excuse for allowing it to expire or lapse this year. This bill is not controversial; it is not partisan; and it is not divisive. In fact, when it came to the Senate floor, not a single Senator voted against it.

Since we passed the legislation in May, the House of Representatives has

sat on its hands and has done nothing. After repeated requests from myself, our other colleagues, and countless victims' advocates, Speaker PELOSI has refused to bring the Debbie Smith Act up for a vote.

Earlier this week, the Fraternal Order of Police, which represents more than 348,000 members, sent a letter to Speaker PELOSI and Leader MCCARTHY urging the House to move this legislation.

We also heard from the National District Attorneys Association, RAINN, the Sergeants Benevolent Association, and several other law enforcement and victims' rights groups which are fully supportive of this legislation. All of us are ready for the House to act.

I urge Speaker PELOSI to take up the Debbie Smith Act once the House returns to Washington in September and before it expires or lapses. It is simply unconscionable to let unrelated partisan bickering stop a bill that brings justice to victims.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

BIPARTISAN BUDGET ACT OF 2019

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, first, I want to compliment the leadership in being able to come together on a budget agreement. This was a good day for the Senate, a good day for Congress, and a good day for the American people.

We now have predictable spending caps not only for the fiscal year that begins October 1 but for the following year. This is good news. It provides the predictability we need in order to have early process for the consideration of the appropriations bills. When we return in September, it is our anticipation that the House and Senate Appropriations Committees will be hard at work, and we will have an opportunity to get our work done prior to the beginning of the fiscal year on October 1.

I want to explain why I think this was the right vote and why I proudly supported it. It provides a reasonable growth rate for discretionary spending. If you look at the trend line over several decades, you will find that discretionary spending has become a smaller and smaller part of the Federal budget. We held back on discretionary spending in this country, whether it is defense or nondefense needs, and those needs have grown.

We have not kept up with the needs of funding these programs. This budget agreement will now give us the opportunity to set priorities and move forward with many important programs that are funded by discretionary spending. Once again, discretionary spending has grown much slower than the growth rate of our budget, generally.

It is a reasonable expectation that we can meet the needs of the people of this country by allowing some growth. What does it mean? Well, this past week, the Environment and Public Works Committee has recommended a

transportation reauthorization bill for service transportation that would grow by about 10 percent. I think everyone in this Chamber understands that we have tremendous unmet needs in transportation infrastructure in this country. These caps give us a better opportunity of meeting those types of needs.

Tomorrow I will be in the city of Bowie—which is not far from here—meeting with the mayor who has a simple request: His drinking water pipes need major maintenance or replacement. There is not enough capacity within the ratepayers in order to be able to do that work. He needs the Federal partnership, State-revolving funds, or other areas in order to help fund a modern water infrastructure so we have safe drinking water in our community.

These budget caps, again, give us the opportunity to move forward on programs like that so the Federal Government can help us meet our needs.

I am proud, in the State of Maryland, that we have the National Institutes of Health located and headquartered in our State. We are all very proud of the work they do. They are unlocking the mystery of diseases in this country. We need to fund them. At the present time, so many worthwhile grant applications go unmet and unfilled that could discover how we could deal with some of the most dreaded diseases in our country. Funding NIH is in our national interest, but we have been held back because of the budget caps that have been in place. This allows us now to move forward with that priority.

This is the year we prepare for the census. We only do that every 10 years. We take the census of our country. This budget will allow the Census Bureau to have the tools so we can accurately count the people in this country. Why is that important? The Constitution says it is important. It is important so we have proper legislative representation in the congressional districts as well as in the State legislatures. That gives us the numbers so the communities are properly represented and so their voices can be adequately heard. It is also used for distribution of Federal funds so proper distribution can be made to the people of this country. I can go on with a whole list of issues that are important. Each one is important.

We will set the priorities, whether it is childcare or dealing with our veterans. We all talk about how we want to do what is right for our veterans. We know there are a lot of unmet needs. This budget will allow us to move forward in that area.

I am proud to represent the State of Maryland that has major urban centers. This bill will allow us to deal with some of the challenges we have in our urban centers.

I also represent rural Maryland. This bill will allow us to move forward with their needs. We will be able to move forward on education, which should be our top priority. It is a great equalizer in this country.

Now the appropriators have to make those judgments on the priorities, and we will have to reconcile between the House and Senate and get the President's signature.

That is what we should be doing—setting the priorities for our country but having a reasonable pool of money to deal with discretionary spending. We have been denied that for many years. Now we have the opportunity to do what Congress should do and set the priorities for this country.

In addition, we have the drug problems. I probably have more meetings in my State on dealing with the drug crisis. It is in every community in Maryland and this Nation. I hope we will see increased Federal participation in that area.

Another part of the budget agreement was to extend the debt limit for 2 years. This, to me, is one of the absurdities of what we do on debt limits. We incur money—we incur debt—and then we put a limit as to whether we will pay for the bills we incurred. You don't default on your debt. That is not what America is about. We have to control what we spend, but we have to pay for what we spend. We have to honor our debt. Our credit ratings were at risk. The Secretary of Treasury made this one of his top priorities. I agreed with him on this issue. Now we no longer have the fear that America will not honor its debt.

The bill also gets rid of sequestration. Good riddance. This was put in as a placeholder for us to deal with the budget deficit. It didn't work in that way. All it did was cause uncertainty, and in many respects, it would have required across-the-board cuts. That is not the way we should do business. We have to make decisions. Sequestration could have been used for us to avoid making the tough decisions. We have to do that ourselves.

The bottom line is the budget agreement gets rid of that and gives us a much better chance of avoiding a government shutdown, which makes absolutely no sense at all, and of, hopefully, not having to deal with continuing resolutions. Continuing resolutions put us on autopilot because we can't pass a budget. Now, I hope we will be able to pass budgets and avoid not only shutdowns but continuing resolutions.

I want to emphasize this point. Discretionary spending has become a smaller part of the overall budget of this country. It has been a shrieking song. So why do we have growing deficits? By the way, discretionary spending is at historically low levels in this country. Revenues, unfortunately, are also at historically low levels. In other words, we are not raising the traditional amount of revenue that is necessary for us to pay our bills.

I come from a family who believes you have to pay your bills. I think it is wrong for us to spend money today and ask our children and grandchildren to pay for our current spending. We should have the courage to provide the

revenues that are necessary to pay our bills. Instead, what have we done? We have cut revenues again and again so our deficit today is not sustainable. We have to deal with it.

The major culprit has been these irresponsible tax cuts, the last of which went primarily to the wealthiest people in the country. According to the Congressional Budget Office, it will add \$1.9 trillion to the deficit over the next decade. That is the culprit of the deficits, and that is what we should be dealing with.

I have heard a lot of my colleagues come in here and lament this agreement. They have said it is going to add to the deficit. Some of these people are the same people who voted for the tax cut. Let's be direct about this. We have to have the revenues that are necessary to pay for what we incur in spending.

Yes, there is another area in which we can do better, and that is in healthcare spending, much of which is mandatory spending, not discretionary spending. These are the appropriations that have to be made. We can do a much better job of reining in the cost of healthcare. We had a chance to do that this week, but we didn't take full advantage of that.

I am a member of the Senate Committee on Finance. We passed a bill to deal with the escalating costs of prescription drugs. Today, in Maryland, I have been told one out of every four healthcare dollars is spent on medicines. We pay so much more in America for medicines than do the other industrialized nations of the world.

Yes, we have recommended to the Senate body a bill to deal with the cost of prescription medicines. It will deal with the issue of putting a cap on the escalation of the current drug prices. It will put a cap on the out-of-pocket costs that the people on Medicare Part D will have to pay. That is good. Those are two good things.

We had a chance to really make a difference by eliminating the prohibition in the current law that prevents Medicare from negotiating the costs of medicines. Think about that for one moment. Where else do we do that? We tell businesses they can't leverage all of their buying to get the lowest possible prices, and we tell Medicare it can't leverage the total market it is paying in order to get the best price on prescription medicines.

What does that mean? That means we are overpaying. Whether you are paying it in Part D premiums, whether you are paying it in private insurance premiums, or whether you are paying it as a taxpayer, we are paying too much for medicines. It is the primary reason the international price on medicines is so much lower than what we pay in America.

We had a chance to deal with it this week, and we didn't. We will have another opportunity when the bill comes to the floor, and I hope we will do the right thing by removing the prohibi-

tion that is in the current law on negotiating price.

I am very pleased we got this budget agreement done. No, I am not pleased about the deficit, but I recognize that we need to deal with revenues and that we need to deal with costs like prescription drugs, which were not part of today's vote. I hope, when we return in September, the good will we have used in order to get this budget agreement done will continue and that the appropriators will be able to reconcile their appropriations bills before October 1 so we will not need continuing resolutions and so there will be no threat of a government shutdown.

I hope we will have the same type of bipartisan commitment by which people have expressed their outrage on the growth of the deficit in order to deal with the real causes of the deficit. We will have a chance on prescription medicines to deal with those costs. Let's have the courage to sit down and make sure we raise the revenues we need in order to pay for our expenses.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SPECIALIST MICHAEL ISAIAH NANCE

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I rise on my behalf and on the behalf of Senator TAMMY DUCKWORTH to express my condolences to the family of SPC Michael Isaiah Nance. He and fellow paratrooper, PFC Brandon Jay Kreischer, of Ohio, gave their lives in service to our country on July 29 in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan.

The early reports on their deaths are that they were shot by an Afghan soldier at a military base—a so-called green on blue attack. The incident is under investigation. Isaiah was 24 years old. Isaiah was the 96th Illinois servicemember to have been killed in Afghanistan since our invasion began in 2001, and he is 1 of 2,289 American troops who have died there since that invasion. He was a proud and outstanding member of the 82nd Airborne. Since enlisting in 2017, he earned the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, and the Combat Infantryman Badge, and he qualified as a Basic Parachutist.

As a member of the Nance family noted, "He loved his country and wanted to serve his country. He died doing something that he loved."

Isaiah arrived in Afghanistan just a few weeks ago, shortly after a trip to Europe with his mother Shawn Gregoire. He and thousands of other Americans who are still there were deployed in support of our NATO-led mission to train, advise, and assist the Afghan Army, a mission known as Operation Freedom's Sentinel. As fate would have it, when uniformed Army personnel arrived at his house to break this terrible news to his family, much of the family had already gathered after having attended the funeral of the Nances' great-grandfather, Sam