

In a world this dangerous, uncertain funding and continuing resolutions will not cut it for our national defense. Our men and women in uniform do not deserve to have the funding for their tools, their training, and their own pay raise, by the way—pay raise—used as leverage by Senate Democrats to try to extract concessions from the White House.

So, look, I would urge each of our colleagues to join me today in taking the first step toward fulfilling our obligation to keep this country safe and secure.

ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, we are closely monitoring events in the Middle East following that provocative and dangerous Iranian attack on Saudi energy facilities, which included the largest oil processing facility in the entire world.

As I said on Monday, Iran's reckless behavior is not just a threat to the region but to the entire global economy, and it must be met with swift consequences from the international community.

As the United States and our allies continue to learn more and weigh our options, there has already been one positive lesson that should not go unnoticed. While the attack has shaken global energy markets, to be sure, the United States is in a much better position to weather the storm than we might have been in past decades.

For years and years, an international attack of this magnitude would have been virtually guaranteed to roil the U.S. economy and send gas prices soaring for Americans at the pumps, but so far, this time around, analysts don't expect this event to yield the significant impacts we would have seen back in the seventies or even in the nineties. Why is that? The answer is three words: American domestic energy.

Over the last decade and often over the strenuous, strenuous objections of Democrats, our Nation has made incredible strides toward energy independence. We have explored new technologies, new methods, and new ways to fuel America's prosperity right here at home, and it is paying off big time. By 2015, our production had become so robust that I led the charge to lift the outdated ban on crude oil exports. Late last year, thanks in part to Republican policies, the United States became a net exporter of oil for the first time in decades.

Get this: Across all forms of energy, the Department of Energy projects that next year our Nation will export more energy than we import for the first time since 1953. Let me say that again. Thanks largely to Republican policies, our Nation is poised to become a net energy exporter for the first time since the Eisenhower administration.

That is huge progress, not just for our economy but, as we have just been reminded, for our national security as

well. You would think the country would be united in celebration, but not everyone is happy. Oh, no. Last week, just days before this massive disruption in the Middle East, House Democrats sent us several bills designed to limit domestic energy development and literally tie America's hands. One of those bills would have shut off exploration in a small portion of ANWR in remote Alaska. They want to reverse something that had been sought for 40 years until Republicans secured it in 2017.

So, as far as I can tell from the bills the House keeps sending us, the socialists who are calling the shots over there have never seen a pipeline they didn't want to cancel. They have never seen a pipeline they didn't want to cancel, a responsible development they didn't want to kill, or a step toward American energy independence they didn't want to reverse.

Along with the Democratic House, this also seems to describe their party's Presidential candidates. Almost all of them have endorsed the radical idea of ending oil and gas exploration on Federal lands not only offshore but onshore, too. Let me say that again. Almost all of them have endorsed the radical idea of ending oil and gas exploration on Federal lands, not only offshore but onshore, too. That is today's Democratic Party. This ideology has consequences for American prosperity, but it also weakens our Nation's footing in the world.

Just days after these Democratic votes, we were offered a sobering reminder of just how important American energy really is.

So here is the good news: This Republican Senate is on the job, and we won't let Democrats take us backward. We won't let them reduce our prosperity or make us more vulnerable to overseas chaos. Republicans will keep working to help our Nation thrive.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert A. Destro, of Virginia, to be Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

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

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

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, defense funding is always an imperative. There are always going to be bad actors who threaten our country, whether they are major powers like China or Russia or terrorist organizations like ISIS or al-Qaida. We have to be prepared to counter those threats.

In the United States, we are used to having the most outstanding military in the world. In fact, we have come to rely on it. We assume our military will always be the best because it has been the best for as long as we can remember, but we can't forget that our military preeminence is the result of sustained investment. While our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines constitute the most advanced and proficient fighting force in the world, they can't do their jobs or maintain our military superiority without adequate resources. That includes funding, not just the weapons, equipment, and technology of today, but also the weapons, equipment, and technology of the future. It is too late to modernize our military when the threat has reached us. We need to invest in the equipment and technology of the future now so that when the threats of tomorrow materialize, we will be ready. This means delivering platforms like the future B-21 bomber on schedule and making robust investments in the cyber and space domains.

Right now, our military is rebuilding after years of underfunding and the strains in the war on terror. Here in the Senate, Members of both parties have worked together over the past couple of years to meet our military's funding and rebuilding needs. I hope that trend will continue.

In November 2018, the bipartisan National Defense Strategy Commission released a report that warned that our readiness had eroded to the point at which we might struggle to win a war against a major power like Russia or China, and the Commission noted that we would be especially vulnerable if we were ever called on to fight a war on two fronts. That is a dangerous situation for our country to be in, and we need to keep working to rebuild our military so that we are not trailing behind other nations.

Other countries are certainly not holding back when it comes to military preparedness. Russia and China are busy investing in their militaries as we speak, and they have recently conducted joint military exercises. As the leader noted on the floor on Monday, military spending in China over the

last decade has nearly doubled. Meanwhile, these countries have continued to flex their military power outside the borders of their countries, underscoring the need for other nations to be prepared to deter their aggressions. Of course, while we may be in a new era of great power competition, we still face threats from rogue states and terrorist organizations. We need to be prepared to meet multiple threats on multiple fronts if we want to ensure the security of our Nation.

Later today, the leader is planning to have the Senate vote to begin debate on a package of appropriations bills, including this year's Defense appropriations bill. Less than 2 months ago, the Democrats in both the House and the Senate agreed on an increased funding level for our military, which is reflected in the Defense appropriations bill.

The Defense appropriations measure funds current military priorities and invests in the research our men and women in uniform need to be prepared for the future. It also provides for a 3.1-percent pay increase for our military, which is the largest pay increase in a decade. So it would be very disappointing if the Democrats chose now to play politics and put their personal political agenda over the security of our country and the welfare of our men and women in uniform.

The military needs to be funded through regular order appropriations bills, not through temporary funding measures that leave the military in doubt about funding levels and unable to start essential new projects. So I hope that our Democratic colleagues will honor the commitment they just made and will work with the Republicans to pass the Defense appropriations package before the end of the fiscal year.

Likewise, I hope the Senate Democrats will resist the temptation to play politics over this year's national defense authorization bill and will work with us to initiate a conference with the House to resolve our differences. Our colleagues have the opportunity to take both of these important steps this week.

RECOGNIZING THE U.S. AIR FORCE AND SOUTH DAKOTA AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Mr. President, before I close, I wish a happy 72nd birthday today to the U.S. Air Force, most especially to the airmen of Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota.

I also wish a happy birthday to the South Dakota Air National Guard, which celebrates the 73rd anniversary of its establishment on Friday.

The Guard's 114th Fighter Wing recently had a change of command. Col. Mark Morrell assumed command from Col. Nathan Alholinna on September 7.

I wish the Fighting Lobos continued success under its new leadership, and I wish Colonel Alholinna the best and thank him for his many years of service.

While investing in equipment and technology that are essential to our

Nation's defense, as always, our greatest strength is found in the men and women of the U.S. military. It is, first and foremost, because of their dedication and sacrifice that all of us live in freedom.

I hope the men and women of Ellsworth Air Force Base and the South Dakota Air National Guard enjoy their celebrations this week. They are well deserved.

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

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

E-CIGARETTES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it started sounding too familiar to me. For a long time on Capitol Hill, I have been involved in public policy debates about Big Tobacco, about nicotine and cigarettes, and about the public health consequences of smoking. It is a personal issue, of course, for me and for so many of us.

Our families have been touched by tobacco-related disease and death. I lost my father to lung cancer. He was 53 years old. He smoked two packs of Camels a day. I stood by his bedside when I was just a high school student and saw what tobacco could do.

When I was elected to Congress, I decided to try to take on Big Tobacco. It was not an easy task. Those in Big Tobacco had very many friends in high places, and they made it clear in both political parties in the House of Representatives that tobacco was untouchable.

I offered an amendment, quite a few years ago now, to ban smoking on airplanes. It was really because of my irritation and strong feelings that the people who were on the plane who were nonsmokers shouldn't have to breathe in secondhand smoke. To my surprise, we passed it in the House by a handful of votes even though the leadership of both political parties opposed it. Then it came over here, and Senator Frank Lautenberg, of New Jersey, passed it as well. It became the law of the land.

Neither Frank nor I could have predicted what would happen next, but as the American people noticed that secondhand smoke was taken off of airplanes, they started asking a lot of these questions about why you wouldn't take it off of trains and buses and out of offices, hospitals, restaurants, and on and on. The net result was that of a change across America when it came to standards for smoking and tobacco cigarettes.

Then I enlisted a group that was showing extraordinary leadership in Washington. It was called the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. Matt Myers, the director, still works for that organization. We went to the

heart of the issue, and that was the fact that Big Tobacco was doing its best to make teenagers its customers. It had to. It was losing too many of its best customers because they were dying from Big Tobacco's product.

It tried to addict children, and it was successful with ad campaigns. The Joe Camel ads, the Marlboro cowboy, and all sorts of cartoon figures were really appealing to children. It worked. It was able to replenish its smokers with kids who started smoking at earlier and earlier ages.

We went after them. Eventually, there was a national lawsuit against the tobacco companies. We changed the standards for selling tobacco in America. We made it much more difficult for kids to get their hands on cigarettes, and, over time, we reduced the percentage of kids who were using these tobacco products.

The tobacco companies faced a dilemma. They were losing their best customers—the kids. What were they going to do to maintain their profits?

Several years ago, it became pretty obvious that they had found an alternative product called e-cigarettes and vaping. What was good about this was they could make health claims about e-cigarettes and vaping. They could argue that since you were taking tobacco out of the equation, merely sucking in some form of nicotine vapor was preferable from a health perspective. Yet, when it came right down to it, there was no proof of that whatsoever.

JUUL is the biggest e-cigarette/e-vapor device maker in America. Its full-page ads in newspaper after newspaper have made these health claims that, in fact, e-vaping is a healthy alternative to tobacco cigarettes. Yet there is no proof—none.

Then something else started happening. We started noticing that all across America, kids—the same kids who once used to be the targets of Big Tobacco—were now the targets of Big Vaping. Vaping targets kids. The numbers tell the story. As of 2 years ago, 11 percent of high school students in America were vaping. A year later, there were 20 percent, and there are 27 percent today. More than one out of four high school students is using e-cigarettes and vaping today. Even worse, 10 percent of middle school students—10-, 11-, and 12-year-olds—are vaping.

The numbers are growing, and you wonder why. The people in the vaping industry know how to target kids. They target them with flavors that are designed just for kids—Razzleberry, Gummy Bears, Bubble Gum, Unicorn Milk. How many 50-year-old chain smokers can't wait to get Unicorn Milk flavoring for their vaping devices? It is all about kids. The vaping industry, despite all of its public denials, has targeted these kids and has, effectively, recruited our children to be the next generation of vaporers for life.

How much nicotine is in that little vaping device, the one that looks like