

You did something right. Good for you.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. President, I have been asked several times in the last couple, 3 days where we are with regard to what I consider to be the most significant bill of the year every year, which is the Defense authorization bill, and I have been having to give the same answer for the last 3 or 4 days, and it is unfortunate, but I think it is going to ultimately happen.

Last week, I came down here and I talked about why we needed to pass the National Defense Authorization Act and why a full-year continuing resolution is totally unacceptable and would be devastating to us. I am back here again because in the last week, nothing has changed. That is not OK. The reason it has not changed is because many of the Members of the House are off someplace. I think they are in Afghanistan or someplace on a trip when we are in the middle of negotiating.

Let me just make sure we all understand what I am talking about. For 58 consecutive years, we passed the national defense authorization bill, so we will ultimately pass it. We did that. And I have to say that this is not a partisan statement I am making about this because the House and Senate Democrats and Republicans did a good job.

I particularly want to thank JACK REED. JACK REED and I—I am the chairman of the committee, and he is the ranking member—did our bill in record time. We set a record, actually, a year ago. We did this in a shorter period of time than has been done in 40 years, and we were anticipating doing that again. We did our bill in the Senate, and everything came out fine. We ended up passing it with only two votes in opposition to it. So there is no reason we are not doing it right now.

The reason this is critical is that if for some reason we didn't get this done until December, our kids over there would not be funded. I am talking about payroll and everything else. Our military would stop in its tracks. That is not going to happen. One reason we know it is not going to happen is because we introduced the short version of the bill that upset everyone. That was taking everything out of the bill that had nothing to do with defense and just doing it. That is getting kind of in the weeds, and it is complicated. Nevertheless, we need to get to it just in a matter of days now, as soon as the members of the committee in the House are back in town.

What kind of a message do my Democratic colleagues think they are sending our troops who lay their lives on the line every day if we don't prioritize their pay, their housing, and their programs to care for their families while they are away? What kind of a message do our Democratic colleagues think we are sending our allies and our partners, those who depend on us? What kind of a message are we sending those who are not our allies?

This is the problem we are having. I say to the Democrats in the House—because it is not the Republicans in the House, and it is not the Democrats in the Senate. This is just the Democrats in the House. We passed our bill in a bipartisan way here in the Senate, and we just need to get this finished. It is the most important bill of the year.

Now they claim we are not supporting our partners in Syria, and then they turn around on a dime and refuse to authorize the very funds that keep our partners safe and effective in the fight against ISIS.

I am concerned about the kind of message our colleagues are sending to our adversaries. Our adversaries enjoy this dysfunction. They want defense funding mired in partisan debate. They don't want us to catch up.

If we don't take action now, partisan bickering over supporting our troops and investing in national defense will be our Achilles' heel.

At the end of the day, these challenges won't go away because we want them to go away. They are out there. To meet these challenges, our troops need equipment, training, and weapons.

Everything is outlined in this blueprint. This is the blueprint that is the National Defense Strategy of the Nation. This was put together by an equal number of Democrats and Republicans well over a year ago as to how we want to handle our national defense and what our strategy is going to be. The President adopted this, it is a good strategy, and we have been following this in our committee to the letter.

We have this National Defense Strategy Commission report. There is a quote from GEN Creighton Abrams, a military leader from World War II on through Vietnam. His name may sound familiar because the Abrams tank was named after him. He talked about how after World War II the United States failed to properly modernize and train our military. And who paid for it? Our soldiers, airmen, Marines, and sailors. They paid for it with their lives. He said: "The monuments we raise to their heroism and sacrifice are really surrogates for the monuments we owe ourselves for our blindness to reality . . . for our unsubstantiated wishful thinking about how war could not come."

That is exactly what happened. It was true then, and it is true now. So to say that these things can wait while the House goes on another recess or to use them as a bargaining chip or to forgo them to instead wage war on our own President is at best a waste of time and resources and at worse a dangerous abdication of our constitutional duty.

Unfortunately, the truth is, if we kick the can down the road on these defense policy and funding bills, we are just adding another challenge to our defense.

We were off to a great start last year. Defense appropriations were enacted on time for the first time in a decade, and,

as I said, we passed the NDAA over here faster than we had ever done in 40 years.

All of the service leaders who came before the Senate Armed Services Committee said that having on-time appropriations and authorization is critical to rebuilding the force. We have the National Defense Strategy and the commission report as a roadmap. We have a budget deal. There is no reason we can't get this done. There is no good reason our Democratic colleagues are dragging their feet. Our senior military leaders said that a continuing resolution is absolutely the worst thing we can do.

By the way, a lot of people don't know what a continuing resolution is. If you pass a continuing resolution because you can't get appropriations bills passed, then you are continuing what you did the previous year. That doesn't work when you are carrying on a military because the needs we have in the coming year are not the same needs. We could have those programs already complete. Yet we would still have funding for them under a continuing resolution. It is a separate issue, but it is one that is critically important today and is being considered today.

So I am surprised that the Democrats in the House—not the Senate. The Senate Democrats and Republicans worked very well together. I am surprised that the Democrats in the House are willing to resort to a full-year CR. It is throwing in the towel. It is quitting when our troops need us the most.

My Republican colleagues in the House, led by House Armed Services Ranking Member THORNBERRY, put out this document that talks about how America's military will be damaged under a full-year CR. No one has talked about this before. I am glad he came out with it. I will mention five examples that he mentioned.

It would extend the pilot shortage in our Air Force—extend, because we are still climbing out of the current shortage. We have a problem. We have a problem in the Air Force, and we have a problem everywhere we are using flying equipment, whether it is fixed wing or otherwise. This is a problem, and it is a serious problem. If we were to somehow have to do a full-year CR, that problem wouldn't be solved.

It would prevent the military from managing its personnel, including necessary efforts to grow the force, pay for military moves, and lock in bonuses for our troops. That won't happen if we end up with a full-year CR.

It would force the Navy to cancel ship maintenance and training. Repairs for 14 ships would be canceled.

It would worsen the existing munitions shortage by preventing DOD from buying more than 6,000 weapons.

Finally, we would fall even further behind our competitors on hypersonic weapons, artificial intelligence, and next-generation equipment that we need to face all the challenges I just talked about.

With regard to hypersonic weapons, as an example, I saw the other day for the first time—in fact, I used this picture down on the Senate floor. A hypersonic weapon is kind of the weapon of the future. It is one that works at 5 times the speed of sound. It is a type of artillery. It is a type of munition.

Prior to the last administration, the Obama administration, we were ahead of our peer competitors, which are China and Russia. Now we are actually behind China and Russia. That is how serious this is.

I talk to people in the real world. When I go back to Oklahoma, I talk to people, and they assume that we in the United States have the very best of everything. We don't. We have allowed other countries—primarily China and Russia—to catch up with us and actually put us behind in some areas, not to mention the waste of taxpayer dollars.

A CR wastes billions of dollars by creating repetitive work, injecting uncertainty into the contracting process, and forcing rushed work at year's end. It is something that is totally unnecessary and is something that should not be happening.

I have been meeting with my fellow conferees regularly—more than we ever have before NDAA negotiations. I am making sure we have a backup plan if we can't reach an agreement on the NDAA, but time is running out.

Here is the reality. We only have 20 legislative days left in the Senate. The House has even less than that because of the recess week they took. If the House sends us articles of impeachment, that would eat up all the time in December and could spill into January. That would mean we go beyond the deadline our troops need to be funded, and that is a reality we never had to face before.

We don't have time left. We need to make these bills a priority the way we always have done before. The NDAA has passed for the last 58 years. It is the most important thing we do each year.

In June, the Senate bill passed 86 to 8. That is a landslide, and that was not down party lines; that was on a bipartisan basis. I am grateful to the Senate Democrats for their partnership and their work in creating and passing this bipartisan bill. JACK REED is my counterpart over there. He is the ranking member in the Senate Armed Services Committee. We worked hand in glove throughout this process and even set records. We did our job, and it has to be completed in the House. This happened in line with the best traditions of the Senate Armed Services Committee—a tradition that spans almost six decades.

Usually, this is a bipartisan process; both sides give and take. So it concerns me to see partisan politics being inserted into this must-pass bill when we go to conference between the House and the Senate. It concerns me to see Democrats filibustering Defense appropriations to prove a political point. It

concerns me to see them prioritizing their misguided attempts to undo the results of the 2016 election through impeachment, instead of taking care of our troops with the NDAA. If we can't keep Defense authorizations free of partisan gridlock, what kind of message does that send to Americans who rely on our troops for protection and our allies who rely on us?

I said before: The world is watching. We are sending a message. We need to make that a successful message.

Let me say one more thing about the skinny bill. This is now a reality. When I filed this, we thought the chances we would have to use that were very remote. If they should go through with this thing they are threatening to do over on the House side—an impeachment process—people don't realize that if you want to impeach somebody, it not a simple vote of the majority. It is the second step that is significant. If they impeach, they don't have to have any evidence, any documentation, any problem at all if they just want to get the majority of people and say: Let's impeach the President, they can say: We will impeach the President.

The problem there is, then it comes over to the Senate, and the Senate has to go through this long process, and that is what we would be competing with when we are not getting the Defense authorization bill done. The skinny bill is important. It is now filed. It is ready to pass, if we should have to do that. Nobody wants to do it, but we may end up having to do it. That is the good news and the bad news. This is the most important bill of the year. We need to get it passed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I thank the chairman of the Armed Services Committee for his bipartisan work with my senior Senator, JACK REED, year after year on the National Defense authorizations.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. President, this 257th "Time to Wake Up" speech reports on my trip to Colorado to see how climate change is affecting the Centennial State and to learn more about the remarkable action that Coloradans are taking to confront climate change.

Colorado is the 18th State I have visited on my climate road trips. Typically, these trips land me in States where people fighting for climate action need some bucking up. Often, I remind those people that there is hope, even if their State legislature may be captured by fossil fuel interests, even if climate change is a dirty word in local hangouts. That was not the case in Colorado. In fact, it is a State on a major climate change winning streak.

Coloradans were the ones bucking me up. I saw that right off the bat at the Alliance Center in downtown Denver. The center's chief operating officer, Jason Page, took me around this LEED-certified space, which is part

business incubator, part rallying point for an array of organizations fighting for climate action in Colorado and throughout the country. Jason and his colleagues hosted me and local environmental leaders to discuss the work they have done, and they have done a lot.

Just in the last year, Colorado passed and signed into law seven important climate and clean energy bills. They include legislation to set targets for cutting the State's climate pollution relative to 2005 levels by at least 90 percent by 2050. The legislature passed four measures to boost the adoption of electric vehicles, and it passed bills to help move to new energy-efficient home appliances, to ease the transition to renewable energy for Xcel, Colorado's largest utility, and to collect long-term climate data so the State can craft even more smart legislation to combat climate change and build resiliency to climate consequences.

To hear how Colorado is going to hit its renewable targets, I met with Xcel, State public utility commissioners, and Gov. Jared Polis. Their message to me was simple: It is a challenge, and we are going to do it. They certainly aren't backing away from the challenge. On top of the State's renewable goal, Xcel has committed to an 80-percent cut in carbon emissions across its portfolio by 2030 and to reach 100 percent carbon-free energy by 2050. Xcel, supported by the Colorado Public Utilities Commission, is now incorporating the social cost of carbon—a key measure of the long-term damage done by carbon pollution—into its planning process.

On top of forward-looking policy, Colorado is fortunate to be a leader in developing clean energy technology. For that, I visited Panasonic's Pena Station NEXT project, they call it. It is a collaboration between the city of Denver, the utility Xcel, the Denver International Airport, the State Department of Transportation, and Panasonic. The project is designed to show what a smart city powered by renewable energy looks like. It includes two megawatts of solar, a massive battery storage system, which I am looking at right here, a facility to test autonomous vehicles, and an operation center that can integrate all that technology for better efficiency.

At the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in Golden, I saw some of the most advanced wind, solar, and other renewable energy technologies in the world. This National Lab is testing the next generation of wind turbines, hydrogen fuel cells, autonomous vehicles, solar panels, smart grid technology, and more. NREL's job isn't just to develop these technologies but also to help private industry adopt them, bringing clean energy to scale and creating jobs in the process.

This is me at NREL. I am painting a solar-activated fluid that they have come up with onto a plate and instantly generating energy from the