

systems that can't generate reliable transaction data.

The problem starts at the top and filters down throughout the five quarters of the Pentagon. Let's consider the recent debacle with the TransDigm Group. In February, the Defense Department's Office of Inspector General released a report on spare parts that the Pentagon purchased from TransDigm. The result of that report exposed the rinse-and-repeat fiscal shenanigans corroding the accounting systems at the Pentagon. In the report, the IG analyzed 113 contracts between January 2015 and January 2017. It reviewed 47 spare parts the Defense Department purchased from TransDigm. In that window of time of only 2 years, TransDigm overcharged the Defense Department by more than \$16 million.

I will go out on a limb and suggest that Americans would rather spend \$16 million for the Defense Department on our men and women in uniform rather than overpaying for spare parts rip-offs to a defense contractor.

Congress can't sign blank checks to the Defense Department. We must work to ensure every dollar is present and accounted for. The Nation's strongest military in the world is managed by a Defense Department where taxpayer dollars seem to vanish without explanation, without receipts, and without accountability. Over the years, I have collected a laundry list of Pentagon waste, fraud, and abuse from \$436 hammers to \$640 toilet seats, \$117 soap dish covers, and \$999 pliers. Most recently, I have exposed \$1,200 reheatable coffee cups and \$14,000 toilet seat lids. The dirty laundry just keeps piling up, and at the same time it is piling up, it is soaking the taxpayer.

These wasteful expenditures represent just the tip of an iceberg. The simple truth is the Defense Department can't keep track of or doesn't seem to care where tax dollars are spent. Internal controls are weak and, in some cases, nonexistent. That has been reinforced by this second audit for which the Department of Defense inspector general can't give a clean audit.

For a second time, I would suggest that what the law of 28 years ago tries to accomplish is that every Department get a clean audit—a clean opinion on their audit. Let me repeat for a second time that the Defense Department is the only agency of the Federal Government that can't do that. The Defense Department, repeating again, is the only agency that hasn't been able to deliver a clean audit, despite spending billions of dollars to modernize its accounting system. All of that investment hasn't produced better systems.

No one except me and a few others ever talk about this, but it needs to be talked about and talked about a lot more, and it needs to be talked about in a deliberate way and very often. Congress can't allow the Defense Department to sweep this issue under the rug year after year.

The TransDigm fiasco is just one very small example, even though it cost the taxpayers a lot of wasted dollars. Price gouging has been going on for years at the expense of the taxpayer and military readiness. Top-level managers know all about what I am talking about, but they aren't doing a doggone thing to fix it. People must be held accountable for missing receipts, for lost financial information, for wasteful spending approvals, for questionable contracting agreements, and every other abuse of power that leads to more taxpayer dollars being squandered.

American households across the country scrutinize their spending and keep tabs on their bills. The Defense Department should approach spending no differently. That is why I pushed for an amendment to the latest Defense authorization bill that would have required the Pentagon to keep better track of its contracts and to make sure they do make reports to the Congress. While this amendment was ultimately not included in the bill, I want my colleagues to know that I am going to continue to push for more accountability.

Throughout my years of oversight, the Pentagon officials have claimed they want to reverse the cycle of cost overruns; they want to clean up their books; and they want to hold people responsible. Yet it never seems to happen. Although I am encouraged by the conversations I have had so far with new Defense Secretary Esper, the proof is in the pudding. From one administration to the next, it has been the same story. Business goes on as usual.

From the top of the chain of command to the rank and file, there is a pervasive mindset that assumes no one is watching over them and that no one cares. For four decades, this Senator has been watching, and this Senator cares. I am disgusted each time I discover another example of wasteful spending.

So I am here this very day, as I have been dozens of times before in my service in the Senate, to ask my colleagues in both the Senate and House of Representatives to join me in a crusade to stop wasteful spending at the Defense Department. There is a saying that goes something like this: no guts, no glory. Well, wasteful spending is gutting our military readiness and goring the taxpayers. There is no glory in that, and people might wonder then, why does this Senator bother?

I have fought fiscal mismanagement at the Defense Department for these many decades. I have launched investigation after investigation and come to the floor of the Senate to talk until I am blue in the face. Billions of dollars have been poured into a decades-long effort to right the fiscal ship at the Defense Department. The Pentagon has shelled out billions for several hundred partial orders, two complete audits, and endless technology updates to modernize its IT and accounting sys-

tems. Yet no one can tell us when, if ever, a clean audit might be possible. How can that be? After nearly 30 years of effort, there is no solution.

The Department of Defense can develop the most advanced weapons systems in the world, but it can't seem to deploy something as simple and common as an accounting system that is capable of capturing payment transactions and generating reliable fiscal and financial data. That is why it is a cakewalk for crooks to rip into the Pentagon's money sack from both ends and use a front end loader to freeloading their way through this money pit.

Without a clean audit on the foreseeable horizon, there is no evidence to catch anyone's hands in the Pentagon cookie jar. The only way we will root out fraud and wasteful spending is by knowing where the money is being spent.

That brings me back to square one as I finish. We need a clean audit and a reliable accounting system. As I mentioned earlier, I am Iowa stubborn, and, by God, I am willing to work with my colleagues and go toe-to-toe with any administration, Republican or Democrat. I will work as long as it takes for us to see eye to eye to hold the Defense Department accountable once and for all.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BRAUN). The Senator from Maryland.

UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise to commemorate the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 25th Conference of the Parties, or COP25, which is taking place in Madrid until December 12 this year. I do so despite the cloud cast by President Trump's announcement of his intention to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement.

The Paris Agreement is a landmark effort to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions in an effort to limit the global temperature increase in this century to 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels while pursuing means to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees.

The COP meetings now routinely represent the largest multilateral diplomatic events in the world. This year's conference is designed to take the next critical steps in the U.N. climate change process. Following agreements on the implementation guidelines of the Paris Agreement COP24 in Poland last year, a key objective is to complete several matters with respect to the full operationalization of the Paris climate change agreement.

Article 28 of the Paris Agreement specifies that after joining, no country can withdraw for 3 years, after which a 1-year waiting period must occur before withdrawal takes effect. The Trump administration recklessly filed withdrawal documents on November 4, 2019, making November 4, 2020, the earliest possible date the United States can be out of the agreement.

Withdrawal could not come at a costlier time. In an analysis I requested to review the Federal approach to prioritizing and funding climate resilience projects that address the Nation's most significant climate risks, the Government Accountability Office notes that there were at least 14 disasters whose costs exceeded \$1 billion each in 2018 alone.

GAO, an independent, nonpartisan agency that examines how taxpayer dollars are spent and is known as the congressional watchdog, reported that the total estimated costs reached at least \$91 billion in damage to public and private property.

“The cost of recent weather disasters has illustrated the need to plan for climate change risks and invest in climate resilience,” the report says. “Investing in climate resilience can reduce the need for far more costly steps in the decades to come.”

The Paris Agreement establishes a global goal on adaptation that consists of, one, enhancing adaptation capacity; two, strengthening resilience; and three, reducing vulnerability to climate change in the context of the temperature goal of the agreement. It aims at strengthening the national adaptation efforts, including through support and international cooperation. It recognizes that adaptation is a global challenge faced by all, including the United States.

Because U.S. withdrawal will not formally take effect until November 4, 2020, the U.S. team's posture at COP25 remains largely unchanged. A group of dedicated career civil servants will be on the ground.

Moreover, 2 years ago, numerous U.S. States, cities, Tribal nations, businesses, faith groups, universities, and others enhanced their presence at major international events, including COP meetings, to maintain and encourage American progress toward its national climate goals.

I am proud that nearly 100 Maryland pledgers “Are Still In.” They comprise dozens of businesses—many small. We have over 10 cities, 6 counties, cultural institutions, faith and healthcare organizations, 20 universities, including my alma mater, the University of Maryland School of Law in Baltimore, and investors, such as the State treasurer of Maryland. They are all still in.

Members of the Senate “Are Still In.” I am proud to be leading 38 of my colleagues in S. Res. 404. This bipartisan resolution expresses the sense of the Senate that the United States should be working in cooperation with the international community in continuing to exercise global leadership to address the causes and effects of climate change.

Prior to that, I led a congressional delegation of 10 Senators to COP21 that produced the Paris Agreement in 2015. Then the United States committed to lowering its contribution of greenhouse gas emissions 26 to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025.

Business and labor “are still in.” In a recent letter, 75 major CEOs and organized labor that are represented by the AFL-CIO stressed the importance of the Paris Agreement and the need for the United States to remain in it. This represents one of the most powerful recognitions ever from the private sector of the economic risks and opportunities that climate change presents to the United States and the world. The December 2, 2019, Joint Labor Union and CEO Statement on the Paris Agreement comprises a group of CEOs who employ more than 2 million people in the United States and union leaders who represent more than 12.5 million workers.

In 2009, at the Copenhagen COP 15, the U.S. helped to drive the creation of goals for developed nations to mobilize \$100 billion in public and private climate finance in 2020. The result was the Green Climate Fund, which helps to fund climate finance investment in low emissions, climate-resilient development.

The Paris Agreement affirmed and extended that \$100 billion goal. Although President Trump has stymied its funding, the fiscal year 2020 State Department and Foreign Operations bill the Senate Committee on Appropriations reported is the most favorable, forward-leaning on multilateral climate assistance in years, funding renewable energy programs at \$179 million and resiliency programs at \$177 million. In addition, the bill commits \$140 million to the Global Environmental Facility and \$10 million to the U.N. climate convention.

We must not forget the cooperation President Trump would have us forget. On a bipartisan basis, the U.S. Congress has uniformly rejected the President's repeated calls to zero out climate assistance funding. This rebuke represents the true, cooperative spirit of our country, once a global leader on climate issues.

I urge President Trump to reassert our Nation's strong leadership in implementing the Paris Agreement before the next Conference of the Parties. In the meantime, I applaud the courage of the general public, universities, faith-based groups, nonprofits, labor organizations, private sector companies, and State and local governments that have helped to step into the void President Trump created by his withdrawal from this agreement.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA AGREEMENT

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise to discuss the need to pass the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement.

It is frustrating that we have to continue to speak about this issue. We have been so close for a long time now, but the lack of action on the part of the House leadership continues to unnecessarily delay its ratification.

Our neighbors to the north and south are our natural allies and trading part-

ners; yet our trade policy with them has not been updated in 25 years. The President and his team have worked very hard to get Canada and Mexico to the negotiating table to modernize our trade agreement in a mutually beneficial manner. That hard work has paid off in the form of the USMCA. It is ready for ratification, and the Senate is eager to get that done.

Unfortunately, we are at the mercy of the House, which must act first. The House leadership's refusal to move this trade deal is preventing additional job creation in our country, and it is sending the wrong signal to our trading partners across the globe. We ought to be spurring economic activity by striking fair trade agreements globally, not sitting on our hands and refusing to approve an agreement between two of our top trading partners.

A fair and mutually beneficial trade agreement with our neighbors to the north and south is very important to my home State of Arkansas. Canada and Mexico are No. 1 and No. 2 on the list of the top 10 destinations for Arkansas' exports. Arkansas is one of a handful of States that in recent years has consistently exported more than what it has imported from Canada and Mexico.

The World Trade Center Arkansas, which has played a valuable role in connecting businesses in my State with international partners for over a decade, recently released a report that summarizes trade and jobs data for the Natural State.

The center's report underscores the value trade brings to my State's economy and reinforces the fact that the path to a more prosperous, long-term outlook for Arkansas is through opening additional markets for our farmers, manufacturers, and small businesses. The report notes that, as of September 2019, trade in Arkansas supported nearly 350,000 jobs. This represents approximately 26 percent of the State's total employed labor force. It points to a direct correlation between job numbers and trade, documenting that trade-related jobs in the State have grown six times faster than total employment over the past few years.

More importantly, for our purposes here today, the report underscores just how crucial Canada and Mexico are for Arkansas' economy. The Natural State's exports to Canada amounted to \$1.2 billion last year. Our exports to Mexico totaled \$870 million in that same time span. Combined, these two countries account for a third of Arkansas' total exports. Nearly 69,000 jobs in my State are dependent on trade with Canada, and another 41,000 are tied to trade with Mexico.

Melvin Torres, the center's director of Western Hemisphere and European Trade, praised Arkansas' effective partnership with both countries for creating this “symbiotic and successful relationship.” That relationship will only grow with the ratification of the USMCA.