

Centered Outcomes Research Institute, PCORI. When PCORI was first created, there was broad agreement about the critical need for comparative effectiveness research, CER. The CER research being done through PCORI is helping to generate more personalized, more reliable research that is directly relevant to individual patients and doctors. There are significant evidence gaps about what medical treatments and services are most clinically effective and for whom. We need more information, and that information must quickly get into the hands of patients and providers so they can make better-informed decisions about their health care. PCORI-funded research is helping to fill that gap, and I am pleased that this bill will allow it to continue for another decade.

The bill also includes important policy improvements contained in the PCORI Reauthorization Act, S. 2897, legislation I introduced with Senators WARNER, CASSIDY, and CAPITO. H.R. 1865 will ensure that PCORI-funded research is designed to take into account and capture the full range of clinical and patient-centered outcomes, including the potential burdens and economic impacts of various medical treatments, items, and services like out-of-pocket costs and nonmedical costs to patients and families. Additionally, it adds a requirement that the Government Accountability Office report on any barriers that researchers funded by PCORI have encountered in conducting studies or clinical trials, including challenges covering the cost of any medical treatments, services, and items.

I am, however, disappointed that this bill eliminates Medicare's contribution to the PCORI Trust Fund. Medicare beneficiaries benefit greatly from PCORI-funded research. This includes a number of projects that have focused on helping older adults and their caregivers make better-informed decisions about their health care options, as well as research on diseases and conditions that disproportionately impact beneficiaries. I am concerned that divesting Medicare dollars sends a signal to PCORI that Congress is not interested in this critical research continuing to be funded. I am pleased that this bill increases the mandatory appropriation to help make up for the loss of Medicare funds, but Congress must maintain this investment over the full length of the authorization.

I am pleased that H.R. 1865 includes a number of other bills that I am proud to cosponsor, including the CREATES Act, the Patient Access to Cellular Transplant Act, and the Protecting Beneficiary Access to Complex Rehabilitation Technology Act.

While I support much of this bill, I am deeply troubled by some of its provisions.

I have serious concerns about parts of the tax extenders provisions of the package. It is unfortunate that following on the heels of a tax cut for wealthy households and big corpora-

tions that increased the national debt by nearly \$2 trillion, the tax changes in this bill increase deficits by a further \$426 billion. While I support some of the changes, we should have paid for them by scaling back wasteful tax breaks for those at the very top. And some of them represent additional giveaways to industry without sufficient benefit for everyday Americans. Moreover, I am extremely disappointed that the tax extenders package did not include tax measures for energy storage, solar energy, offshore wind, and electric vehicles. This represents a lost opportunity to take even small steps to address the climate crisis, and I urge my colleagues to address these clean energy tax measures early next year.

I am disappointed that the bill drops House language preventing the Department of Agriculture from physically relocating the Economic Research Service, ERS, and National Institute of Food & Agriculture, NIFA, outside of the National Capital Region. The relocation and reorganization will impact the quality and breadth of the work these agencies support and perform—work that is critical to informing and supporting U.S. agriculture, food security, and rural development. I appreciate that the bill includes no additional funding for the move, and I hope that the Secretary of Agriculture will with us in Congress to repair the damage that this relocation scheme has done.

While I do have concerns about aspects of this bill, I believe it supports critical health, education, and infrastructure needs. I appreciate the hard work of Senators SHELBY and LEAHY and their staffs in crafting the bill and their support for many priorities I have pushed for on behalf of my constituents in Maryland. It is an honor to serve on the Appropriations Committee, and I look forward to continuing our work to responsibly fund the government and its services for the American people in the coming fiscal year.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020.

The National Defense Authorization Act conference agreement provides crucial resources to our Armed Forces and our national defense, including a pay increase for our men and women in uniform. I am proud that the Congress was able to come together on a bipartisan basis to pass this legislation to support our servicemembers, strengthen our national security, and invest in critical projects in my home State of Maryland.

While I have serious reservations about a number of items included in this legislation and am particularly disappointed by the exclusion of important priorities like the DETER Act to prevent Russian interference in our elections, I believe that, on balance,

this NDAA will strengthen our national security. For that reason, I voted in favor of it.

With this bill, the Federal Government will now provide 12 weeks of paid parental leave to its workforce. We have been fighting for years to provide paid family and medical leave to workers throughout the country. Now the Federal Government will finally start to lead by example. Paid leave will reduce employee turnover costs for the Federal Government and help agencies continue to recruit and retain top-notch talent into the civil service. I was proud to help secure this, and we need to keep fighting until all workers around the Nation receive paid family and medical leave benefits.

The NDAA also repeals the military widow's tax. Currently, military widows and widowers who qualify for the VA's dependency and indemnity compensation are forced to take a dollar-for-dollar offset from the DOD Survivors Benefits Plan benefit, even though their retired spouses elected to pay into the program. No other Federal surviving spouse is required to forfeit his or her Federal annuity because military service caused his or her sponsor's death. This is fundamentally unjust. In September, I met with a constituent and military widow who was subjected to this offset after the loss of her husband. Hearing her story hardened my resolve to ensure that we got this done this year, and I am proud of the Congress for coming together to repeal this offset.

Critically, this legislation also includes the Otto Warmbier North Korea Nuclear Sanctions and Enforcement Act, which I introduced with Senator TOOMEY. This legislation offers foreign banks and firms a stark choice: continue business with North Korea or maintain access to the U.S. financial system. Within 120 days of enactment of the law, this legislation mandates sanctions on the foreign banks and companies that facilitate illicit financial transactions for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. North Korea continues to perfect its ballistic missile capabilities and produce more fissile material for nuclear weapons. Our aim is to cut off North Korea's remaining access to the international financial system and create the leverage necessary for serious nuclear negotiations to achieve the goal of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

The NDAA also includes bipartisan legislation that tracks the provision Senator GRAHAM and I included in Senate Foreign Operations appropriations bills over the years to prohibit the transfer of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter to Turkey until President Erdogan relinquishes the Russian S-400 air and missile defense system. Turkey has recently started testing the S-400 missile system, and they have said the system will be operational early next year. The administration must not only continue blocking the transfer of the F-

35s, but—as Senator GRAHAM and I indicated in a recent letter to Secretary Pompeo—it has a legal duty to impose economic sanctions on Turkey.

The NDAA also includes a version of a bill Senator COTTON and I introduced to prevent the President from removing Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei from the Commerce Department's Entity List without certifying to Congress that it is complying with U.S. laws and the administration has mitigated the threat Huawei poses to our national security. While I was disappointed that our original bill was watered down, the final version is still better than the status quo.

This bill also includes a number of measures I introduced to ensure that we give proper recognition to Americans who have bravely served our country in combat. One of them is Col. Charles McGee. Colonel McGee, a distinguished Tuskegee Airman who recently celebrated his 100th birthday, is a living aviation legend and an American hero. From World War II to Korea, Colonel McGee flew more combat missions than any other pilot in the service of his country. The first African American to command a stateside Air Force wing and base, this Marylander's service to our Nation is truly remarkable. That is why I worked with the Air Force and introduced legislation to authorize the honorary promotion of Colonel McGee to brigadier general. And today, on a bipartisan basis, the Congress has authorized this honor. Colonel McGee makes all Marylanders proud and reminds us all of what it means to serve.

The conference report also includes the bipartisan World War I Valor Medals Review Act, which I introduced with Senator BLUNT. This legislation directs the Department of Defense to review the service records of minority service members who fought during World War I and who may have been passed over for the Medal of Honor because of their race or ethnicity. Many of these individuals have never received proper recognition for their acts of valor.

Take, for example, William Butler of Salisbury, MD. In 1916 he was living in Harlem, where he enlisted in the New York National Guard. His regiment landed in France on Jan. 1, 1918. Sargent Butler received the Distinguished Service Cross and the French Croix de Guerre for his bravery in rescuing several members of his regiment from their German captors. Sargent Butler killed 10 Germans, took a German prisoner, freed all the American prisoners, and brought them back to safety. He returned home to a hero's welcome. The Baltimore Afro-American called him "Maryland's Greatest Hero." The New York Tribune called him a "hero among heroes." He and the rest of the Harlem Hellfighters marched through New York City. Upon his return to Maryland, his small community gave him a gold watch as a token of their respect and appreciation. But despite a

recommendation for the Medal of Honor, he never received it. In 1947, after losing the ability to work, he took his own life. He was buried at Arlington—with a typo on his tombstone.

The living descendants of these veterans deserve to know that their government, despite its past failings, recognizes their heroism. I am very proud of the Congress for coming together to honor those who chose to serve their country, even at a time when their country did not treat them as equal citizens. In doing so we demonstrate that it is never too late to right a historical wrong.

I would also like to commend the Valor Medals Review Task Force, jointly established by the United States Foundation for the Commemoration of the World Wars and the George S. Robb Centre for the Study of the Great War, which has worked tirelessly to identify World War I veteran service records for this review. I applaud the NDAA conferees for encouraging the Secretaries of the military departments to consult with the Valor Medals Review Task Force to identify those service records that warrant further review to determine whether such veteran should be recommended for an upgrade to the Medal of Honor for valor.

The NDAA also addresses serious concerns with the oversight of privatized military housing. Over the past year, I have engaged with leaders at Fort Meade and Aberdeen Proving Ground as they have addressed woefully inadequate maintenance by private housing contractors. The NDAA includes key provisions of the Ensuring Safe Housing for Our Military Act, of which I am a cosponsor. This includes withholding payment of the basic allowance for housing under certain circumstances, the creation of a Tenant Bill of Rights and the position of Chief Housing Officer, a uniform code of basic standards for privatized military housing, and access for tenants to an online work order system, among other improvements.

Lastly, I am pleased that the bill includes language requiring congressional notification and a 120-day waiting period before the President gives notice of his intent to withdraw from the New START and Open Skies treaties.

While I am pleased with many of the provisions included in this bill and voted for its passage, I do have significant reservations.

First, the unchecked growth in the defense budget is unsustainable, and the continued use of the overseas contingency operations budget to fund elements of the Pentagon's regular base budget activities with war funds is a blatant abuse of the budget process. We have a duty to ensure the readiness of our forces, and I support efforts to rebuild our Armed Forces after years of costly overseas engagements. But massive spending increases without clear strategic direction do not make us

safer, and the use of off-budget accounts to boost Pentagon spending is a disservice to our children and grandchildren, who will pay for these spending increases regardless of whether or not they are properly accounted for today. Especially in a post-Budget Control Act environment, where we are not constrained by artificial caps, we need to be thoughtful about our spending choices, recognize that every dollar spent on defense is a dollar not spent on health care, education, workforce training, and other critical areas of need. And we need to use OCO in a responsible manner consistent with its original purpose, and not as an off-budget slush fund.

Second, I am extremely disappointed by the Congress's failure to act to prohibit U.S. military support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen. This brutal war has raged for more than 4 years. Thousands have lost their lives in this conflict. Millions are displaced from their homes. The cycle of desperation, destruction, and death continues unabated. Earlier this year, Congress voted to end U.S. support for the war in Yemen—legislation that President Trump vetoed. The refusal of Republicans to address this issue as part of the NDAA is shameful.

Third, this legislation supports the President's effort to spend \$1.3 trillion dollars on nuclear weapons. It contains no prohibition on fielding low-yield nuclear warheads on submarine-launched ballistic missiles, near-full funding for research and development on INF-range missiles, near-full funding to build new ICBMs and associated warheads, and full funding to retain the B83 megaton gravity bomb, which the Obama administration had intended to retire as part of its modernization efforts. And while it affirms the benefits of legally-binding verifiable limits on Russian strategic nuclear forces, it does not explicitly endorse the extension of New START. This, like so much else in this bill, is a missed opportunity. Senator YOUNG and I have introduced bipartisan legislation urging a 5 year extension of the New START agreement, and the Senate should pass it expeditiously.

Fourth, Republicans blocked a provision in the House NDAA that prevented the President from waging a war with Iran without an explicit authorization from the Congress. President Trump's Iran strategy has been blind unilateral escalation with no end goal. That is why his actions have produced exactly the opposite result of what his so-called "maximum pressure" campaign intended. President Trump has dismembered the multilateral coalition that forged the Iran deal. He has frayed our alliances in Europe and empowered our adversaries. All the while, the administration has raised the specter of a possible military intervention with Iran. By blocking this provision, Republicans are enabling the President to subvert Congress's constitutional prerogative with respect to decisions of war.

Finally, Majority Leader McCONNELL blocked the inclusion the bipartisan DETER Act, which I introduced with Senator RUBIO to deter future Russian interference in U.S. Federal elections. The DETER Act sends a clear message to Russian President Putin or any other foreign adversary: If you attack American elections, you will face severe consequences. Leader McCONNELL blocked this measure from the NDAA, even though the Senate unanimously passed a resolution in the fall instructing the NDAA conferees to support its inclusion. In addition, Republican leadership removed a related provision in the House-passed NDAA imposing sanctions on Russian sovereign debt in response to interference in U.S. elections.

Leader McCONNELL's decision to block the DETER Act and the House sanctions on Russian sovereign debt effectively green-lights Russian interference in future U.S. elections. It is a gift to Russian President Vladimir Putin and a subversion of the clear desire expressed by both Chambers of Congress to hold Russia accountable for future interference. It reinforces Putin's belief that the costs of attacking our democracy are low and the rewards are great. It is a dereliction of his duty, as a representative of the people, to protect our Nation from foreign adversaries. I will continue fighting for the passage of the DETER Act. The next national election is less than a year away, and we must make clear to Putin that Russia will pay a steep price if they interfere in another election.

While I am strongly opposed to some of the provisions in this bill and disappointed by the omission of others, I believe that, on balance, the NDAA will strengthen our national security and advance other important national priorities. For that reason, I voted in support of final passage.

TRIBUTE TO JOHNNY ISAKSON

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON from the great State of Georgia. I, like all of my colleagues in the Senate, am saddened by his retirement. His departure leaves a big hole in this Chamber that may never be truly filled.

JOHNNY is a Senator's Senator. He embodies the best qualities of a public servant. He is smart, hard-working, determined, effective. He is humble, not at all self-important, and never seeks attention for himself. He has integrity. He is a man of his word.

He is known throughout the Senate as ready to reach across the aisle to seek bipartisan solutions—one of the main reasons he is so effective. As he put it during his farewell speech on the Senate floor, "I tell you, I am big on bipartisanship." JOHNNY encourages us to take his lead and listen to and work with the other side. We all can learn from his example.

JOHNNY is kind. His heart is big. He always has a smile or greeting for the

Senate custodians, Capitol police, cafeteria workers, Senate pages. He always has the time to be kind to others.

JOHNNY is Georgian through and through and loves his State and its people. He has served them for 45 years—in both State houses and both Congressional Chambers—and is now Georgia's most senior elected official. JOHNNY is as beloved by the people of his State as he is in the Senate—and for good reason. He has worked to build Georgia's economy, its rural communities, its international trade, its harbors, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, and on and on.

But JOHNNY is not only a champion for his State, he is a champion for the Nation, and he gets things done for our country. JOHNNY's legislative fingerprints are everywhere. From protecting workers' pensions, to fighting childhood hunger, to increasing affordable housing so families have a roof over their heads, to helping people with disabilities, to making sure children with rare diseases get their medications, to getting treatment for victims of the opioid crisis—JOHNNY has been working for the American people because he cares deeply and genuinely about humanity. It is not show for JOHNNY. You see what you get. He is the real deal.

It is important to thank JOHNNY for his extraordinary work on behalf of veterans. He is a veteran himself, having served 6 years in the Georgia Air National Guard after college, and veterans have no stronger champion than JOHNNY. As chair of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, he shepherded an amazing 57 bills through the Senate. He helped extend the GI bill so that veterans aren't met with an arbitrary cutoff to take advantage of their educational benefits. He made sure veterans have access to community- and home-based health services. And his signature VA Mission legislation ensures that healthcare for veterans is more responsive and more effective.

As I said, JOHNNY's heart is big, and he welcomes all people. Atlanta hosted the 1996 summer Olympics. Cobb County is a suburban county of Atlanta and was set to host some preliminary Olympic events. But the Cobb County Commission had passed an anti-gay, discriminatory resolution. At that time, JOHNNY was a Cobb County Republican, serving in the State senate. It might not have been the most popular position in his county, but he urged the County Commission to rescind the resolution.

One of JOHNNY's best friends is civil rights icon JOHN LEWIS. On February 25, 1996, Representative LEWIS introduced JOHNNY as the newest member of Georgia's congressional delegation, and on November 19, 2019, he gave JOHNNY a warm farewell, explaining to the House that "when JOHNNY served in the House of Representatives, we always found a way to come together, and we continued that tradition when he was elected to the Senate. . . . We always found a

way to get along and to do the good work the people deserved. Time and time again, he stood with us, he worked with us to uplift African Americans in the State of Georgia, to recognize individuals like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Jackie Robinson, natives of Georgia." At the end of the tribute, Representative LEWIS called JOHNNY his "brother," and they gave each other a long embrace.

During his farewell speech, JOHNNY said:

We still have some people in the United States of America who will play the hate card. We have some politicians who will dance around the issue of hate. They will not use the buzz words, but they will get awful close to it. They did it in Charlottesville. . . . We have to stand up to the evils of society today. If we don't do it, nobody will.

JOHNNY has stood up for over four decades for what he believes in. We will miss his honesty, his integrity, and his fine character. Jill and I wish JOHNNY and Dianne, their three children, and eight grandchildren the very best. Enjoy life. And we will do our best to follow your example in the Senate.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I wanted to spend a few moments to recognize my colleague and friend, Senator ISAKSON from Georgia.

When I first came to the Senate in 2009—a decade ago, it surprises me to say—I was on the Banking Committee. We were in the middle of the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, and millions of Americans were losing their homes each month.

We held a hearing on housing, and I remember Senator ISAKSON coming to testify because, before he was in politics, he had spent several years in the private sector working in real estate. I appreciated that moment because, one, I had also spent some time in business before politics, and two, because it was so refreshing to hear from someone who actually knew what they were talking about.

Over the past 10 years, I have had the benefit of Senator ISAKSON's experience, friendship, and wisdom on both the HELP and Finance Committees.

In JOHNNY, so many of us have had a model for how to get things done even in this moment of partisan division. He was a welcome throwback to a time when people didn't come to this town just to spend every moment on cable news but to get things done for the people they came here to represent.

JOHNNY's record suggests there is nothing quaint or naïve about that approach to the work because over his 15 years in the Senate, he has managed to secure quite a few bipartisan accomplishments, including several things we have worked on together.

I remember JOHNNY really digging in and getting his hands dirty on the SAVE Act, our bill to make Federal mortgage loan agencies consider the returns from energy efficiency when they determine your ability to make your monthly payments. We passed that out of the Senate, and it was a