

States District Judge for the Western District of Louisiana.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, yesterday, after putting the Senate on pause for 3 months and after months of blocking nearly every Democratic attempt to pass legislation related to the coronavirus, the Senate Republicans finally revealed their long overdue proposal for the next phase of COVID relief.

In my many years of serving in this Chamber, I have never seen a Republican majority—a Senate majority of any type—respond to a national emergency in such a disorganized and disoriented fashion. Weeks of infighting among Senate Republicans and the White House caused unnecessary and harmful delays.

Instead of presenting a single, unified bill, the Republicans released several separate drafts last night, and there might be more today. They can't agree on one bill. They can't get 51 votes for anything that is comprehensive and that deals with the very real problems the American people face. Even before the Republicans announced their bills, senior Republican Senators admitted they lacked the full support of the Republicans. Two Republican chairmen have said that probably half of the Republican Senate will vote against their own proposals. Worst of all, the Republican plan falls dreadfully short. It is ununified, unserious, and completely unsatisfactory.

My Republican friends, this is the greatest crisis America has faced in generations—100 years since the last health crisis of this magnitude, 75 years since the Great Depression—and you are paying attention to your corporate friends and not answering the needs of the people.

We Democrats want a real bill that answers people's needs, that deals with the serious problems we face. That is what we are fighting for. We will keep fighting for it, and our Republican friends are nowhere to be found.

While the Republican proposal fails to provide crucial relief for families, workers, and the unemployed, it is littered with corporate giveaways, K Street handouts, and Presidential pet projects. The Republican bill includes a \$20 billion slush fund for large agribusiness and tax breaks for three-martini lunches, but it doesn't provide a dime in food assistance for hungry kids. It includes an unprecedented, sweeping provision to shield corpora-

tions for 5 years from liability for negligent treatment of workers and consumers, but there is no new, sweeping provision to shield Americans from evictions or foreclosures.

It includes a \$30 billion wish list for defense contractors but no funding to make sure Americans can vote safely in November. There are reports that the Republican proposal may include a provision to lower capital standards at the Wall Street big banks but nothing to help State, local, and Tribal governments keep teachers, firefighters, and busdrivers on the job.

The Senate Republicans managed to sneak in nearly \$2 billion in taxpayer funds for a new FBI building, the location of which will increase the value of the Trump hotel and enrich the President and his family. Yes. In this proposal, the Senate Republicans reward the President and his family's business interests but not our essential workers.

Whom do my Republican friends need to help more—President Trump, who proudly claims he is a billionaire, or a worker who is about to lose his job, a small businessperson whose business is going under, or a family who can't feed hungry children? Who needs the help more—they or President Trump?

Perhaps, worst of all, in the middle of the pandemic, the Senate Republicans and the White House want to give out-of-work Americans a 30-percent pay cut. If you have lost your job through no fault of your own and you can't go back to work because the administration bungled this crisis, the Senate Republicans propose taking \$1,600 out of your pocket every single month.

Well, let me show my colleagues what New Yorkers think of the Republican proposal: Let them eat cake. GOP plan slices \$600 check and rejects aid to states. Let them eat cake. That is what New Yorkers think. That is what Americans think. Let them eat cake. Shame. Shame on our Republican friends.

The cover of the New York Daily News sums it up. Let them eat cake. "Let them eat cake" sums up the Republican proposal in response to the greatest economic crisis in 75 years. Let them eat cake.

People can't feed their kids. People are losing their homes, getting kicked out of their apartments. Small businesses are going under. The Republican response? Let them eat cake.

Who are the Republicans fighting for in this proposal? Tax breaks for three-martini lunches but no food assistance for the poor? Immunity for corporations but no immunity for Americans facing eviction? Twenty, thirty million unemployed Americans and Republicans say take a 30-percent pay cut? Who are the Republicans fighting for in this proposal?

If you are a big bank, a defense contractor, a member of the Trump family, the Republican proposal has some good news for you, but if you can barely afford the rent, can't find work, can't feed your kids, or are fighting for

your family's future, the Republican plan leaves you out in the cold.

The consequences of the Republican policy on unemployment alone would be disastrous. Those enhanced benefits have kept 12 million Americans out of poverty. Those enhanced benefits are the one bright spot in this declining economy—that consumer spending is going up now, in large part because of pandemic unemployment insurance as well as PPP.

One of the few things that has kept our economy from deteriorating further is that these unemployment benefits have boosted consumer spending. That is why economists say the Republican proposal could cost over 1 million jobs this year and 3.4 million jobs next year. The Republican proposal is causing us to lose even more jobs.

States have warned us that the Republican plan on unemployment is unworkable, to boot. We called State unemployment offices yesterday to ask them what would happen if the Republicans passed this new scheme. One State office simply said: Chaos. Chaos. Office after office said it would take weeks, months to even implement the new plan. What are people going to do during those weeks and months when they are not getting unemployment insurance?

The idea on the Republican side that we have to slash unemployment benefits because otherwise Americans won't go back to work is exaggerated. Americans want to work, are ready to work, and are desperate to get back to work. Such little faith in the American people. Such a bad outlook on human nature. People want to work, Republican friends; they just don't have jobs to do it, and we are not going to let them starve while that happens.

God forbid we provide tens of millions of unemployed Americans a lifeline until we defeat this disease and get our economy back on its feet seems to be the Republican attitude. The Republicans seem to think the American people are a bunch of loafers. Well, they are not.

Now, we Democrats want to get something done. We are certainly frustrated with the dithering, the disunity, and the lack of understanding of the depth of the crisis coming from the Republican side, but that will not stop us. We must press on with bipartisan negotiations. Time is running out. We cannot afford to fail. But the Republican new proposal is not an adequate starting point.

History is repeating itself. Each time we came together in the past to pass COVID 2, COVID 3, and COVID 3.5, it was because both parties sat down with each other and negotiated and did the hard work. But that was only after Republicans dared us and put an inadequate proposal on the floor and said: We will blame you. We held firm. They came back. We negotiated a much better bill. My hope, my belief, is that they will have to do that again.

Leader McCONNELL is in his "Alice in Wonderland" characterizations here on

the floor. I can't believe them. He keeps insisting that a bipartisan spirit led to the CARES Act, but he skips over the fact that he dropped a partisan bill on the floor, and Democrats had to insist on continuing negotiating to make the bill significantly better. There is a lot of revisionist history going on on the other side of the aisle.

This morning, MCCONNELL continued with his "Alice in Wonderland" logic, suggesting that Democrats are going to be the ones standing in the way of more relief. Let's not forget that Republicans dithered for 3 months while Democrats pleaded for action on COVID. Speaker PELOSI and I wrote to Leader MCCONNELL 3 weeks ago and said: Let's sit down and talk. We didn't hear a peep out of him.

When Republicans finally woke up to the calamity in our country, they bickered among themselves for a week, as the country approached several cliffs—unemployment, eviction, State and local government, and more. Now that the Republicans finally have a proposal, it is corporate-focused, doesn't meet the needs of the American people, and half of their own caucus probably won't support it anyway.

Leader MCCONNELL, a few minutes ago, said: If Democrats don't want to negotiate a bill—I will remind the leader that last night, Chief of Staff Meadows, Secretary Mnuchin, Speaker PELOSI, and I were in the Speaker's office negotiating. Why didn't Mnuchin and Meadows bring MCCONNELL along? Because the Senate Republicans can't get their act together and produce a unified position.

So, Leader MCCONNELL, I have a suggestion: Instead of blaming Democrats, how about Senate Republicans and Leader MCCONNELL get their act together, roll up their sleeves, and actually get to do real work and solve these problems.

Every time—every time we have come to pass critical relief, Democrats have forced our Republican colleagues and the White House to come to the table and negotiate in a serious way. That is what we have to do again. We need bipartisan, bicameral negotiations to produce a bill that meets the needs of the American people. We Democrats will continue to do that.

Speaker PELOSI and I will be meeting with Mnuchin and Meadows again tonight in an effort to try to get a bill because the needs of the American people, the American economy, and the American health are so great. Let's come together and get something done. America desperately needs our help.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I want to thank my colleague and leader on the Democratic side, Senator SCHUMER, for his specific, articulate, and direct analysis of where we stand today in the Senate.

Faced with the worst public health crisis in 100 years, faced with the worst

economic crisis in 75 to 80 years, the message from the Republican side of the aisle is "Think small. Do as little as possible. Let's see how this works out."

At a time when we have unemployment figures breaking all records, when we have 10 times the unemployment claims in Illinois that we did a year ago—I might add, 10 times the unemployment claims in the Commonwealth of Kentucky that they did a year ago—we, instead, are hearing from the Republican side of the aisle that the problem with our economy is not unemployment; it is the fact that the people who are unemployed are being given too much money.

Right now we have a Federal benefit package worth \$600 a week that was enacted in the CARES Act on March 26. That expires in 3 days. It is a \$600-a-week Federal supplement over the State payment. What the Republicans have suggested is to cut that \$600 Federal supplement to \$200, and then they turn and say: Well, what we really want to do is to compensate the workers with 70 percent of what they were earning when they were laid off.

There is a real serious problem here that they are not disclosing to the American people. Back in March, when we proposed a similar approach or one that took into consideration the previous wages of an unemployed worker, who told us to stop that consideration? President Trump's Secretary of Labor. Secretary Scalia came to us, and I was at the meeting when he said: You don't understand. You cannot make this kind of change in the States because there are 50 different computer systems in the employment security offices across each and every State in the Union. They cannot make this adjustment. They cannot make this change.

The only way, they told us—Secretary Scalia told us in March—is a flat dollar amount to each unemployed worker, which is exactly what we did.

Now the Republicans come to us and ignore that advice, ignore that guidance that led to \$600 a week, and say: We will come up with an elaborate formula of 70 percent of what you were paid before.

As Senator SCHUMER from New York said earlier, we surveyed a dozen States, and they all told us: Impossible to 5 or 6 months before we are ready to do something in that manner. And that means, for millions of Americans currently unemployed, the possibility of only receiving \$200 a week until someday in the future when the State unemployment systems can possibly change. That is the Republican approach.

They have made a big point, as Senator MCCONNELL did this morning on the floor, of a \$1,200 check, a cash payment such as we had back in March. I am not opposed to that. The President is desperate for it because he gets to sign the checks. He wants his signature on the checks that are going out to these individuals.

Well, Mr. President, if that is what you want, be my guest if it is going to

help working families. But make no mistake—a \$1,200 check to a family who was receiving \$600 a week, \$2,400 a month, is cold comfort, and it won't help them pay the bills they face every single month.

I only wish that the Republicans who are calling for these dramatic cuts in unemployment compensation for millions of Americans—30 million Americans—I only wish they would go home to Kentucky and other States and sit down for a meal with an unemployed family and let them tell these Republicans what they are facing each and every month, trying to get by, even with this unemployment check.

You see, there is an assumption that these people have a lot of money in savings. It is not reality. In the real world, half of American families have little or no savings to turn to—even before this current economic downturn. Imagine what they are going through now and the sacrifices they have to make.

Surely the Republican leaders have heard the stories or seen firsthand, as I have, the families showing up at food banks and pantries, looking for a helping hand to put something on the table to feed their families, some of them with their eyes down to the ground, tears in those eyes because they never dreamed they would be in this position in life. And what is the alternative suggested from the Republican side? Cut the unemployment compensation for millions of Americans at this moment in history. Think small, Republicans say. We can get through this by doing as little as possible.

That is not true. We have been told over and over again that if we take our foot off the accelerator to try to move this economy out of the ditch, it will crash even further, and we don't want that to happen. We want people to get back to work and businesses to reopen and schools to reopen, but we have to do the right thing in terms of providing compensation to individuals.

I reject the premise that many Republicans bring to this conversation that if you are not rich, you must be lazy in America. I don't think unemployed people in this country are lazy people. I think they are hard-working people who have been dealt a tough hand of cards. They are trying to keep their families together until they can get back to work and to a decent job. Cutting unemployment compensation at this moment in history is cruel, inhumane, and insensitive to the realities these families are facing every single day.

There is one provision that came out yesterday that I want to speak to for a moment. For months, literally for months, Senator MCCONNELL has come to the floor and criticized Speaker PELOSI for her efforts to pass the Heroes Act almost 10 weeks ago. Ten weeks ago, the House of Representatives, under Speaker PELOSI, passed legislation to provide COVID-19 relief that we knew was coming because we

knew the unemployment benefits were going to expire in just a few days. She saw that coming and 10 weeks ago did what was the right thing to do. She mustered her troops and provided a majority to vote for a package that moves us forward, helps State and local governments face the reality of this economy, helps hospitals, and helps individuals pay for their health insurance—a good package and one that I could readily support.

Senator MCCONNELL came to the floor frequently, regularly, several times a week, saying how bad that package was, how terrible it was, while he did nothing, while the Republicans proposed no alternative. It is just like the Affordable Care Act. They have done everything they can 150 times to try to repeal it and never once proposed an alternative. The same thing is true when it comes to this COVID-19 relief. In this circumstance we received finally, yesterday, this proposal that was brought by Senator CORNYN on behalf of himself and Senator MCCONNELL to address the issue of the immunity of corporations from lawsuits that have any relation to COVID-19—immunity for these corporations so that they will not be held liable if, in fact, they are not performing up to the standards necessary to protect employees and customers.

It is 65 pages long. It is a big giveaway to the biggest corporations in America. The Republican corporate immunity bill does nothing to protect workers, improve safety standards, or give business incentives to take proper precautions to reduce the spread of the coronavirus.

In fact, this bill does the opposite. It views workers and victims as the problem, and it sets high hurdles that prevent meritorious COVID-related crimes from having their day in court. What the bill would do is impose sweeping Federal preemption on the rights of workers and victims to bring cases in State courts for COVID-related harm. It would supplant State laws that require businesses to act with reasonable care. Then it would say that businesses are shielded from liability in Federal court if they merely make an effort to comply with the weakest available mandatory safety standard that applies to them so long as they are not grossly negligent.

So what are the kinds of safety standards that the bill would urge businesses to follow? Well, it certainly wouldn't be the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control because those aren't mandatory. So, amazingly, a business can get shielded from liability under this Republican approach even if they make no effort to comply with the Centers for Disease Control guidelines. How does that make us any safer?

Not only that, but if workers or sick Americans want to try to bring a meritorious COVID-related case in this bill, this bill puts them through a gauntlet of tort reform obstacles that will make it nearly impossible to prevail: a

heightened burden of proof, heightened pleading requirements, limits on discovery, damage caps, restrictions on joint and several liability, and so much more. The Republican bill also creates sweeping Federal preemption of medical malpractice cases, including claims under medical malpractice not even related to COVID-19. It would upend the medical liability laws of all 50 States for 5 years.

Instead of sending a strong, clear, and enforceable Federal safety standard like an OSHA emergency temporary standard, the Republican bill would actually shield businesses from regulatory enforcement proceedings under OSHA, the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and more.

The liability immunity under this bill would last for 5 years, from December 2019 to 2024. The fact that Republicans are proposing 5 years of liability immunity for corporations while promising just a few months of assistance for workers tells the whole story about priorities and values.

Let's be clear. Republicans have not made the case for why we would even consider Federal liability immunity for corporations. Remember, under current State tort law, if a business has taken reasonable precautions, it will not be held liable for negligence. State laws give incentives for businesses to act reasonably, and most businesses do. Also, time and again, I have heard Senator MCCONNELL and Senator CORNYN come to the floor and talk about the tsunami of lawsuits. This morning Senator MCCONNELL said "an epidemic" of frivolous lawsuits.

It so happens we keep track of lawsuits filed in the United States of America, and we can look to the pleadings in those lawsuits to see how many times they mention coronavirus or COVID-19. We know how many lawsuits have been filed since the first of the year related to this pandemic. We know that despite the fact that 4 million—at least 4 million—COVID-19 infections have been established in the United States—4 million—do you know how many medical malpractice cases have been filed by any of those 4 million Americans or anyone else against doctors, nurses, hospitals, and providers? What is the epidemic number? We have it. Here is the exact number of medical malpractice cases filed in the United States in the last 6 months: six—six. An epidemic? A tsunami?

How about personal injury lawsuits, Senator? How many have been filed listing COVID-19 or coronavirus as one of the reasons for these lawsuits? Fifteen. With 4 million infected Americans, there are 15 lawsuits, and the Republicans have come to us and want to turn upside down the immunity and liability questions before the States and the Nation.

How about unsafe workplace lawsuits? Now, that has to be a big category. With 4 million infected Americans, how many workers have brought

lawsuits? Seventy-one. In the entire 50 States of America, there are 71 lawsuits.

There is no flood of worker or victim lawsuits. It is a figment of the imagination of Senator MCCONNELL, Senator CORNYN, and K Street. But we certainly shouldn't, at this moment in time, ignore the obvious. Over 20 States have stepped forward and established their own standards for lawsuits when it comes to the pandemic they face. This effort by the Republicans would preempt that State action. There have been hundreds and hundreds of COVID lawsuits that have been filed, business to business, on questions like insurance liability. You don't hear the Republicans wanting to stop businesses from filing lawsuits—no, just workers and the people who get sick.

There is no need for the Federal Government to step in and override 50 States' liability laws, especially after the Federal Government has been deferring to the States on every other aspect of this pandemic: testing, PPE, masks, stay-at-home orders. Time and again, this President has said to leave it to the Governors and leave it to the mayors, except when it comes to protecting big corporations. If States need to adjust their liability laws, they can do so, and 28 States have already done it.

So here is the bottom line. The Republican immunity bill would upend State laws, give businesses incentives to cut corners, jeopardize the safety of workers and families, and risk further spread of this virus. It is a big business giveaway, and that is not what America needs.

This is not a small challenge; it is a historic challenge. We shouldn't take the Republican lead and play small ball. We ought to address this head-on.

First, we need leadership from the top, which we have not had from the President. He has deferred time and again to Governors and mayors and other officials at the local levels, telling them: Find your own masks. Establish your own testing regimes. Find your own way out of this crisis.

When we needed Federal leadership from the President, we did not receive it. America knows that. Why is it that this Nation, with 5 percent of the world's population, has 25 percent of the COVID infection cases in the world? Why? What happened here? Why didn't we follow the lead of other countries that stepped up with Presidential leadership—countries that have found dramatically less infection, dramatically fewer deaths. That is the reality of where we are today with this pandemic.

The reality of our economy—we stepped in on March 26 and passed the CARES Act. We have managed to keep some businesses going. We have managed to keep millions of unemployed Americans together with their families through the most difficult period in their lives. Now, at this moment, the Republican leadership says: Think

small. This is all going to pass quickly. Don't worry about these families who don't have enough to provide food and shelter and the basics for their families. They will get by with a lot less—from \$600 a week to \$200 a week. They will do just fine, according to Republicans.

I disagree. Our first obligation should be to these working families who are going through the toughest period they could ever imagine. Stick with them. Stand with them. Be prepared to put the money on the table, which we know they will spend right back into the economy.

We will see more unemployment if we follow the Republican approach. It is estimated that some 3 million jobs will be killed by the Republican approach of cutting unemployment and the consequent downturn in spending by these same families.

Let's stick with those families now. They need us.

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. GARDNER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. GARDNER. Madam President, Congress has no greater responsibility than providing for a strong national defense and keeping Americans safe. The National Defense Authorization Act is one of the most important pieces of legislation that is considered each year by the U.S. Senate. It authorizes the weapons systems, programs, and resources that support the men and women who serve our country in the Armed Forces as well as their families.

Last week, the Senate completed its work on the fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act for the 60th consecutive year. The bill received, as it should, wide bipartisan support in an 86-to-14 vote. I was proud to support the NDAA.

In my home State of Colorado, our military installations, including Fort Carson, the Air Force Academy, Buckley, Peterson, and Schriever Air Force Bases, along with Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station, are on the cutting edge of space operations, military training and readiness, and protecting our national security.

I want to thank Chairman INHOFE and the ranking member for their bipartisanship at the Senate Armed Services Committee and for doing such a great job in fulfilling their tremendous responsibility in providing for national defense. It cannot be overstated enough how grateful we all are, and I appreciate the time and work they dedicated to this effort. The security of the United States should always be more important than any partisan politics, and I appreciate their commit-

ment to placing national defense above partisan bickering. We have seen how even in the most rancorous political times Republicans and Democrats can come together through the Defense Authorization Act to renew the country's commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific region, such as when the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act became law in December 2018.

As was stated in the U.S. Department of Defense "Indo-Pacific Strategy Report," which was released in July of last year, "This legislation [ARIA] enshrines a generational whole-of-government policy framework that demonstrates U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific region and includes initiatives that promote sovereignty, rule of law, democracy, economic engagement, and regional security."

Now the U.S. Senate has taken the next step toward renewing the country's commitment to the Indo-Pacific region by passing this NDAA bill, enshrining and establishing a new Pacific Deterrence Initiative, PDI, that will complement ARIA and implement its vision of a more robust U.S. military presence in the Indo-Pacific. This initiative will enhance the security commitment set forth in ARIA and help guide the Congress and the Pentagon in making the tough choices necessary to prioritize the Indo-Pacific and to extend critical deterrence initiatives to check our adversaries.

Earlier this summer, Chairman INHOFE and I authored an op-ed entitled "Renewing America's Commitment to the Indo-Pacific." It described the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, which will complement the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act and implement its vision of a more robust U.S. military presence in the Indo-Pacific.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have the op-ed in the Diplomat of July 2, 2020, be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Diplomat, July 2, 2020]

RENEWING AMERICA'S COMMITMENT TO THE INDO-PACIFIC—A NEW PACIFIC DETERRENCE INITIATIVE WILL COMPLEMENT ARIA AND IMPLEMENT ITS VISION OF A MORE ROBUST U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

(By Jim Inhofe and Cory Gardner)

As China brazenly tries to impose its own system of rules and order in the Pacific, the United States and our allies in the Indo-Pacific confront a time for choosing. We must choose to advance our vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific. We must choose to ensure the success of the principles of regional and global order that remain essential to our shared security and prosperity. These are difficult choices that will come at increasingly greater cost. Beijing will do its best to make sure that the right choice and the easy choice are never the same, but we believe Americans and our allies are up to the task.

For instance, U.S. allies like Australia are already making the tough choices, while braving Beijing's bluster and bullying. By standing by its calls for an independent in-

quiry into the origins of the coronavirus and by remaining open to trade while refusing to trade away fundamental values, Australia has set a proud example for all the world. As Beijing lashes out across the region from the Himalayan Mountains to the South China Sea, Australia's actions serve as a reminder for our other allies that in a free and open Indo-Pacific, right makes might—and not the other way around.

Australia should not be alone in this effort. The United States stands with our allies, and we are prepared to make our own tough choices.

In the United States, we have seen how even in the most rancorous political times, Republicans and Democrats have joined together to renew the country's commitment to the Indo-Pacific region, like when the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA) became law in December 2018. As was stated in the U.S. Department of Defense Indo-Pacific Strategy Report, released in July 2019: "This legislation enshrines a generational whole-of-government policy framework that demonstrates U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific region and includes initiatives that promote sovereignty, rule of law, democracy, economic engagement, and regional security."

In the coming days, the U.S. Senate will take the next step toward renewing the country's commitment to the Indo-Pacific region by passing the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, which establishes a new Pacific Deterrence Initiative that will complement ARIA and implement its vision of a more robust U.S. military presence in the Indo-Pacific. This initiative will enhance the security commitments set forth in ARIA, and help guide Congress and the Pentagon in making the tough choices necessary to prioritize the Indo-Pacific and extend critical deterrence initiatives to check our adversaries.

Last year, a seminal report from the United States Studies Centre (USSC) at the University of Sydney provided one of the clearest explanations of why the need for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative is both real and urgent. The report shows how China is attempting to "undercut America's military primacy" and "sowing doubt about Washington's security guarantees in the process." In the face of this development, the report describes an "increasingly worrying mismatch between America's strategy and resources," especially in the Indo-Pacific. Even as "America's military services have started to implement much needed changes," the report warns, it's not clear that America will have the "budgetary capacity or strategic focus to deliver these in a robust and timely way." We share these concerns, and the Pacific Deterrence Initiative is designed explicitly to address them.

First, the Pacific Deterrence Initiative will enhance budgetary transparency and congressional oversight by organizing our defense budget around critical Indo-Pacific priorities. The initiative will make it easier to translate regional priorities into budget priorities, and ensure that security requirements are being matched with the necessary resources.

Second, the Pacific Deterrence Initiative will focus resources on key capability gaps to give U.S. forces everything they need to compete, fight, and win in the Indo-Pacific. The initiative would focus new resources in many of the areas recommended by the USSC report, including a more distributed regional defense posture, resilient logistics networks, fuel and munitions storage, missile defenses for U.S. bases, and more experimentation to test and prove new operational concepts.

Third, consistent with ARIA provisions, the Pacific Deterrence Initiative will