

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I think it is important that we acknowledge what is going on right now. What is going on is that the most significant vote of the year is taking place. It is called the Defense authorization bill, the NDAA. It has passed every year for 60 years now. This will be the 60th year it is passed. Nothing else has a record like that.

Yet there is always trauma at the tail end, and the reason there is trauma is that everyone knows it is going to pass—and it is going to pass—so anything they can't pass during the normal process of the year, for any number of reasons, they try to put on this as an amendment. Some things are not acceptable because they have the effect of killing the bill.

Now, we have two people who have been working with the committees putting this thing together. I know that the Presiding Officer knows this, but these people have worked an entire year and many, many more than half the weekends. People have this idea that people don't work in Washington on causes. They do on this one.

John Bonsell in my office has been the director, the support of the bill, with Liz King on the Democratic side. They have worked hand in hand together. People talk about how Democrats and Republicans fight with each other. Not on this bill. We all support it. We all want it. We all want to make sure it is done and it is done right.

So we have a defense authorization bill. It will be the largest one that we have had in the history of the Defense authorization bills. It is one that, without it, we are not going to be able to take care of our kids in the field.

We have to remember that, while there are a lot of hitchhikers on this bill on causes that we have determined to be worthwhile causes, we don't do it if it is going to be something that will take down the bill. So we want to make sure that nothing would jeopardize passing the Defense authorization bill.

Now, the key is December 31 of this year. If we don't have the bill passed by December 31 of this year, I mentioned that we have problems, that any of the specialist groups—and I talk about the pilots; I talk about those involved in hazard occupations—the SEALs—the individuals who are out there risking their lives to a greater extent than others do in the military. And they are out there doing it for this reason, and we want to make sure that they are willing to take these risks. We want to make sure that we are taking good care of people.

I run into people all the time who say: You are always so concerned about our military. Yet the chief competition that we have is with whom: Russia and China? Russia and China actually, after the last administration—that was the Obama administration. In the last

5 years—that would be from 2010 to 2015—he knocked down the military budget by 25 percent. It had never happened before—not since World War II anyway. Yet we found ourselves in a situation where we couldn't compete.

Now, they will argue with you, and they will say: Well, we spend more money on defense than Russia and China put together. That is true, but there is a big difference, and that is that in Communist countries they don't care about taking care of their troops. Our job is to make sure that our kids have a prosperous career. They want to defend their country, but they also have families. They have to take care of their families.

Housing has been a huge problem in the military, so we want to make sure that we have good housing for our troops—not just here in the United States but around the world—and we are doing that.

Now, in Communist countries they give them a gun and say: Go out and kill people. They don't care about the troops. They don't spend any of that money.

So the largest expense, the largest ticket on running a military operation is taking care of the people. So that is why it is important that people understand this.

There is also a document that nobody reads anymore. It is called the Constitution. You read that and say: What are we supposed to be doing in Washington? We get involved in so many different things. Yet, when you read the Constitution, it says that our primary concern should be to defend against an outside enemy, and then other areas—transportation and a few other areas—are mentioned. But the No. 1 concern is that we have to have a military that is second to none. We want to make sure.

Let me say this about our President. When he first came into office, President Trump recognized what had happened to our military and had recognized that there are things like hypersonic—that is a very recent, modern technology that they are working on in China and Russia and other places, and we are actually behind them at this time.

People assume that America has better everything in the military than China has and Russia has, and that is not true. They have artillery systems that are better than the artillery systems that we currently have.

So we have a job that I consider to be the most significant job—significant job for the defense of our country, and it is just that: to defend our country.

I want to applaud all of these people who work long hours. We are now to the point where they are what they call turning the page. We are ready to pass a bill. We are in the process of getting signatures from the committees.

There are a lot of people who don't like the idea of having to sign a bill and sign on to a bill, yet they know that in order to maintain a superior position over China and Russia, we

have to do that, and we have to show our superiority, and we have to make it last. That is what we are doing right now. It is a very significant time.

I anticipate that we are going to be able to get this done, and I applaud the President for the time that he has spent and the money that he has spent on rebuilding our military. You hear him say all the time that we now have the strongest military that we have ever had and we are in great shape. But we are still rebuilding. We still have areas where our adversaries have better equipment than we do.

So that is what is going on today. That is what is taking place. It is a very proud time that we can say that we are now addressing those things that are the most significant things going on in Washington today.

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

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

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, the postcloture time on the Waller nomination expire at 11:30 a.m. tomorrow and the Senate vote on confirmation of the nomination; I further ask that if cloture is invoked on the Hardy nomination, the postcloture time expire at 1:45 p.m. tomorrow and the Senate vote on confirmation of the nomination; finally, that if any of the nominations are confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

ALS DISABILITY INSURANCE ACCESS ACT OF 2019

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I have an amendment to offset the costs to the Social Security's disability insurance trust fund associated with S. 578. Eventhough my amendment did not gain the 60 vote threshold, I want my colleagues to know that you just can't tap into the Social Security disability trust funds without dire future consequences.

S. 578 waives a waiting period in the disability program for the compelling case of patients with ALS.

There are, of course, other compelling cases.

And we have to be mindful of the disability trust fund which will eventually face depletion.

As the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities, which is an umbrella organization representing advocates for a number of disabling conditions, puts it:

"Bills that only fix the problem for some people who meet the strict eligibility standards for SSDI are likely to lead to interest groups requesting waiver of wait periods for other impairments."

So it is likely that Congress will see more requests for waivers of waiting periods for those afflicted with disabilities arising from conditions other than ALS.

Waiting periods in the disability insurance program were put into law for various policy reasons.

When we waive waiting periods for specific conditions, some of which are terribly disabling and even fatal, we change the nature of the disability program.

We change benefits and don't have any offsetting change to the tax that funds the disability insurance trust fund or any offsetting change to other benefits.

However compelling it is to waive waiting periods, whenever we do it, we accelerate the exhaustion of the disability trust fund.

And that affects people with all forms of disability.

In order to help make Social Security combined disability and retirement trust funds whole, my amendment would offset the cost of the ALS bill.

My amendment simply changes the minimum monthly withholding threshold for recovery of any overpayment of Social Security benefits to reflect the increase in benefits we have seen since SSA established the current minimum of \$10 in 1960.

My amendment simply changes the threshold amount from \$10 to 10 percent of the monthly benefit payable, as is already done in the SSI program.

With this change, SSA would recover overpayments more efficiently and better fulfill its stewardship obligations to Social Security's trust funds, while retaining safeguards for beneficiaries surrounding overpayments.

Guardrails to protect beneficiaries to ensure that collections don't create hardships are maintained.

Nothing in my amendment leads to benefit cuts of even a penny that a retiree or disabled worker has earned.

This policy is something that has been in numerous budgets of the President, including President Obama and now President Trump.

I urge my colleagues to support my amendment, to ensure that we protect the integrity of Social Security's trust funds while also protecting beneficiaries.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO MARK DAVIS

• Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize Mark Davis on the occasion of his retirement.

Mark dedicated over five decades to broadcast journalism, including an impressive near 37 years with News 8. An award winning-radio news director in Boston, Mark quickly adapted to TV news when he arrived in Connecticut. Throughout his career, he set an example with his honest, unstinting reporting. Mark covered the administrations of seven Connecticut Governors, always speaking truth to power.

His thorough, efficient responses to stories earned Mark the respect of his colleagues. Holding himself to the highest standard, Mark was always a consummate professional. Mark's outstanding and reliable work leaves a remarkable legacy in Connecticut journalism.

As chief political correspondent, Mark remained nonpartisan while demonstrating tireless grit. He was courageous and never shied away from asking the tough questions. At the same time, Mark had an uncanny ability to put politicians at ease, facilitating discussions and ensuring he could provide a thoughtful, complete story. Trusted by constituents, he was voted our State's best local TV reporter 2 years in a row by Connecticut Magazine.

Mark's exceptional record as an insightful, driven, and honest reporter leaves a historic mark and emphasizes the vital role he and his fellow reporters play in keeping people well informed in Connecticut and across the Nation. His professional partnership with Joe Sferrazza established a model of unmatched teamwork that will have an impact for years to come.

I applaud his lifetime of tenacious commitment to comprehensive, fair work focused on uncovering the truth, and I know my colleagues will join me in thanking Mark for his extraordinary contributions to regional reporting.●

TRIBUTE TO JANICE DONALDSON

• Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, as chairman of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, today I recognize and honor the career of Janice Donaldson, Director of the Small Business Development Center—SBDC—at the University of North Florida, UNF. At the end of this month, she will retire after serving the small business community for 31 years.

Since 1981, Mrs. Donaldson has supported small business owners and entrepreneurs in the Jacksonville area. After graduating from the University of Georgia in 1980, Janice joined the SBDC at UNF as editor of the office newsletter. After 21 years with the office, Mrs. Donaldson took over as director in 2002 and has been a resilient leader throughout her years of service.

During her tenure as director, the center's service area grew immensely,

from one office serving five counties, to seven offices serving 18 counties. Additionally, SBDC expanded its services from supporting entrepreneurs, to now enabling clients to grow their existing small businesses.

In her final year as director, Mrs. Donaldson faced one of her most difficult challenges yet. The COVID-19 pandemic forced her office to work remotely where they had to quickly acclimate to the ever-changing economic conditions. Under her leadership, the SBDC team worked diligently to help small businesses adapt to the pandemic, advising on financial assistance opportunities available, including the Paycheck Protection Program and Economic Injury Disaster Loans through the U.S. Small Business Administration. This year alone, the center has participated in more than 20,000 consulting hours and facilitated the awards of approximately \$50 million in capital to small businesses in her region.

Over the years, Mrs. Donaldson has shown paramount dedication to small businesses. She has played a critical role in the economic growth of northeast Florida and has nurtured the American dream. Mrs. Donaldson will be greatly missed by her colleagues and the thousands of business owners she has assisted throughout her notable career. I wish her the best of luck in all of her future endeavors.●

RECOGNIZING LUCKY GOAT COFFEE COMPANY

• Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, chairman of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each week I recognize a small business that exemplifies the American entrepreneurial spirit at the heart of our country. It is my privilege to recognize a family-owned business that invests heavily in its customers, employees, and community. Today, it is my honor to name the Lucky Goat Coffee Company of Tallahassee, FL, as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

In 2010, Ben Pautsch founded Lucky Goat Coffee Company as a coffee wholesale and distribution company. Ben, a graduate of Florida State University—FSU—focused on providing high-quality beans to local coffee cafes. The Tallahassee-based business grew quickly as orders poured in. Their reputation for roasting the best grounds led to the creation of the first Lucky Goat coffee shop in 2015. The appealing storefront and large warehouse allowed Lucky Goat to spread their knowledge and passion for coffee through various classes and tours, strengthening their customer relationships in the process.

Today, Lucky Goat Coffee has grown to include five coffee shops in Tallahassee and a franchise location in Jacksonville. Their Tallahassee-based headquarters provides more than 350 wholesale customers across the country with