

I was happy that I used to say, after Obama got out of office, that the war on fossil fuels was over for a while. Look at the energy dominance now. We are the global leader in oil and gas production: a 277-percent growth in crude exports, a 132-percent increase in coal exports, a 52-percent increase in natural gas exports. These are exports. That is what we are doing now in the United States as a result of the efforts of this President and bringing our economy around.

Crackdown on illegal migration. Nobody wanted the wall, they said. Now people realize that is where a lot of the bad people were getting in.

We moved the Embassy. Every Democrat and Republican President, in my memory, tried to move the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. They all talked about it. This President went in and did it.

He enacted the infrastructure bill, the WRDA bill, or the Water Resources Development Act, and the FAA reauthorization.

And on the judges we have, not just Kavanaugh and Gorsuch, but I think our number is up to about 225 new judges.

He repealed the overregulation of the Dodd-Frank rules. Anyone in business will tell you that that was one of the major accomplishments of this President, President Trump—and the record employment.

But then I would say that the 10th and last one I mention to everyone who will listen is what he did for the military. We went from the time of dropping down in the last 5 years of the Obama administration by 25 percent, while China was increasing 83 percent. Now we have rebuilt that military. That is why the NDAA is so significant right now and to make sure that that gets passed and that we are able to have that. That is what this vote is all about.

The NDAA, or National Defense Authorization Act, is the most important bill of the year. That is why we are doing it, and that is why we are here today during this holiday season.

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

TRUMP NATIONAL SECURITY WINS

Identified China as #1 adversary in 2018 NDS; \$2.5 trillion to rebuild military; Increased size of military; Replaced obsolete equipment; New investments in future tech—hypersonics, AI, cyber; 3.1% pay raise—biggest in a decade; Took out terrorist leaders (Baghdadi, Soleimani); Established Space Force; Eliminated widow's tax; Destroyed ISIS caliphate; Historic Abraham Accords; Supported Israel through new security assistance; Withdrew from Iran deal; Withdrew from INF Treaty; Maximized arms sales; Improved military spouse employment; Rescued 55 hostages in 24 countries; Secured \$130 billion in new NATO spending, growing to \$400 billion by 2024.

Mr. INHOFE. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. 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. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is an unusual sight of a Senator in the Capitol between Christmas and New Year's. This is the one time we really try to reserve for our personal and family responsibilities. Our families, like others, look forward to the Christmas season. It is the one time of the year we desperately try to find ways to come together.

Of course, COVID-19 intervened and made that more challenging. But, even so, the notion of coming back to Washington this week and staying, perhaps, more than a day to try to finish our work is unusual, and the circumstances surrounding it are extraordinary, as well, not the least of which is the fact that we have two bills that have to be thought of in the context of our responsibilities.

First and foremost is the National Defense Authorization Act. This month, both the House and the Senate passed, with overwhelming bipartisan majorities, the fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act.

Senator INHOFE of Oklahoma, a Republican, was on the floor before me. He and Senator JACK REED of Rhode Island put in more time than most Members can appreciate to make sure that this bill really served our military and the goal of national security. They came up with a good bill, one I was proud to support it.

This annual legislation has been signed into law for six consecutive decades. When the Senate fails to do anything, they always do the National Defense Authorization Act. It shows Congress can come together, at least on this measure, when it comes to supporting our men and women in uniform and keeping our country safe.

This year, the bill authorized \$740.5 billion in defense spending. It provides another 3 percent, well-deserved, pay raise for our troops. It also recognizes that many in the Armed Forces are on the frontlines here at home, as well, helping fight the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic, providing our troops with necessary benefits and protections, including a 10-percent increase in hazardous duty pay.

The bill also includes a number of provisions that I authored and supported, including language expressing strong support for the Baltic States and Ukraine, especially in the face of continued, unforgivable Russia aggression. It requires the renaming of military bases in the United States which were once named in honor of Confederate generals, those who served in the Confederacy in an attempt to secede

from the Union and to defend the institution of slavery and have been enshrined in the names of these bases for many, many years. This effort to rename them is long, long overdue. It tries to correct and recognize the mistakes of our past and really address the sensitive racial inequities at the Pentagon when it comes to this decision-making.

It places restrictions on the transfer of military equipment to law enforcement agencies. We have to address the issue of the militarization of our police at a time when we are, frankly, making an assessment of the role of police to make certain that the overwhelming majority of law enforcement officers—those who are good, principled, civic-minded individuals—is honored and that those who fail to meet the test are removed from service.

It expands benefits to our veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange during the Vietnam war. There are 191,000 Vietnam-era veterans in my State of Illinois. Many of them were exposed to toxins, such as Agent Orange, during their service and now are paying the price.

It makes it easier for victims of military sexual trauma to report instances of such crime and expand support for survivors. The most recent, horrible incident at Fort Hood was a reminder of what we need to do to bring the military into the 21st century when it comes to respecting the rights of all people, men and women.

It strengthens safeguards against foreign cyberattacks. We know how important that is since the recent revelation confirmed by Secretary of State Pompeo that Russia is at work again in its attempting to compromise our Federal agencies, their data, their information, and the security secrets that they keep for our protection.

It authorizes funding for PFAS-related research. If you have never heard of the phrase “PFAS” before, I can tell you that you are bound to hear it in the future. This was used as a flame retardant and in some other capacities on many Air Force bases and military bases around the United States. We are finding that it is still there and is still dangerous. We need to put money into remediation to help these military installations, including the Scott Air Force Base in Belleville, IL, where PFAS was detected earlier this year.

Still, despite all of the good things in this bill and the bipartisanship that supported it, President Trump decided to veto the bill—one of his rare vetoes. He prefers we continue to honor the Confederate leaders who committed treasonous atrocities in order to preserve slavery. I don't think that this is reflective of the United States of today or its values, but that is his position.

When he was called out for this racist inclination, he changed the reason for his veto. He claimed the bill didn't do enough to fight China or that we should include a measure to address liability issues for tech companies—

never mind that tech company liability matters have nothing to do with the National Defense Authorization Act. He just doesn't like that there was criticism coming down for some of the misstatements and lies and disinformation he has been spreading on social media.

The President also fails to recognize that this Defense authorization bill, in fact, does get tough on China. It creates a new Pacific Deterrence Initiative that puts America back in the seat of leadership in that region, where we need to be. The Trump administration could have started this initiative on its own, but it did not, so Congress stepped up and created this security partnership because the White House was asleep at the wheel. At the end of the day, I suppose we can't expect anything more from a President who has denigrated our troops by calling them suckers and losers.

I voted to support the fiscal year 2021 NDAA. I will support it again to override this President's unforgivable and reckless veto. I am glad the House did so on Monday. I hope we in the Senate do the same. Coming back to Washington was not something I looked forward to this week. I wanted to stay home. Yet I knew, when it came to funding our troops, I had to be here. Many of my colleagues feel the same. I hope, tomorrow, we can take that up quickly.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, there was then the drama around the COVID-19 relief bill.

It was hard to describe what we went through in the last week to 10 days with messages from the White House. I wish that the President and those around him, advising him, would have called to mind the 335,000 Americans who have lost their lives due to this deadly pandemic and the many more who have lost a family member, friend, or loved one. In Illinois, we have lost 16,000 lives to COVID-19—tragic, historic. I extend my deepest condolences to the friends and families of those who have died or who are fighting this virus. Many are my friends.

More than 121,000 Americans spent last night in the hospital—a grim new record of hospitalizations as our heroic nurses and doctors face unrelenting stress from this crisis. I just think, as I reflect on the interviews of these men and women who are on the frontline of healthcare, how stoic they usually are, how controlled they usually are, and how they are losing it now. With the overwhelming numbers they are facing and the terrible prospect of someone's dying with a member of the family being unable to even enter the room in the last minutes of one's life has got to be heartbreaking on a scale that none of us can imagine. Think about doing that every single day. They have done it. I will tell you we will never be able to repay them with our gratitude. They are true American heroes.

Many of us returned to Washington this week. As I said, we are celebrating the holidays in a fashion like never before with social distancing, Zooms, FaceTime, and calls with family and loved ones. It is no substitute for the kids being there to open their gifts on Christmas morning, but it is the reality of what we face today.

There is some hope on the horizon, and though I have been many times critical of the Trump administration, I do want to give the President credit for the Warp Speed Program. It is amazing, as I read the stories, of what they were able to achieve in discovering two vaccines that can treat Americans and people around the world and keep them safe as they face this coronavirus. It broke all the records in the discovery of these vaccines. As I read about it, I continue to be grateful and want to make sure America recognizes the doctors, the scientists, and the researchers.

Barney Graham—I didn't know his name until yesterday—came out of a story published in the *New Yorker*. He works at the National Institutes of Health. He is given a great deal of credit for the breakthrough in the first two vaccines that have been approved. There are others just like him. I salute Dr. Francis Collins, of the National Institutes of Health, and Dr. Anthony Fauci, both of whom have become my friends over the years—and what a job they have done for America. So many more deserve recognition, and I hope there will be an opportunity to give it to them.

The fact is, these doses of vaccines are starting to move across the country. Last week, Illinois—I am proud to say—led the Nation. I congratulated our Governor, J.B. Pritzker, yesterday. More than 100,000 healthcare workers received their first shots last week. I asked him why we led, and he said: I don't know. We just put together our own program of distribution, and it worked. Thank goodness it did. Lives will be saved because of it, but there is so much more to do.

Progress in administering the vaccine has been slow as we still struggle to reach the hardest hit areas. The rosy projections from the administration have not come to fruition yet, but the fact is, we have two viable vaccines. That is miraculous. I look forward to the new administration's—the Biden administration's—new management in this effort, and I am glad Congress came together to pass a relief bill that included \$30 billion for vaccine development and distribution.

When the President said he wasn't going to sign this bill, I thought: How can he say that? He should be taking credit, rightfully, for the Warp Speed Program and his role in seeing that program move forward instead of complicating the distribution of the vaccines by threatening to veto the bill. Fortunately, for us, in the end, he signed the bill.

On Sunday evening, the President signed the bipartisan annual spending

bill and the COVID-19 relief bill. There were complaints about the size of the bill. Well, the entire Federal budget was included in that bill, as well as the COVID-19 relief undertaking, as well as many other bills, such as the Water Resources Development Act. All of these are major pieces of legislation, and they were combined in one bill that went way beyond 5,000 pages.

Unfortunately, the President delayed in signing the bill and created needless uncertainty in America, particularly among the unemployed and others who are suffering from this public health and economic crisis. This agreement provides much needed support for many of them, but they will have some delay in receiving their checks because of the President's period of indecision. Enhanced unemployment benefits of \$300 a week and an extension of the unemployment program, created under the CARES Act, through March 14 will bring more relief to many millions of families.

Possibly the largest single item in the COVID relief bill—\$325 billion—went to provide our Nation's ailing small businesses another chance at survival. The Paycheck Protection Program worked in the initial CARES Act, and it was renewed in this undertaking.

An extension of the Federal eviction moratorium through January 2021, coupled with \$25 billion in emergency rental assistance, will literally mean that people will not be evicted right after Christmas. Approximately, \$850 million is going to Illinois to help keep families in their homes during this pandemic.

The 15-percent increase in nutrition assistance is certainly needed. It goes through the SNAP program, which was historically known as food stamps, to make sure that families have something on the table. I can tell you that I woke up this morning in Springfield, IL, to look at the front page of the newspaper and learn that an anonymous donor had given our local food bank \$500,000. The people at the food bank were, of course, appreciative and said they desperately needed it in my hometown and towns all across America. This increase in food stamp assistance is long overdue, and I am glad it was included.

The bill includes a number of important measures, but we have to go to work to make sure that we deal with the sharp turn of an emergency response to this bill and do more. We address the needs required to respond to this pandemic immediately, but more will follow. It was a tough negotiation and an honest compromise, and I was happy to be part of a bipartisan group of Senators who may have gotten the ball rolling—at least we think we did—in order to hand it over to the leaders to finish the job. I think what we have achieved, on a bipartisan basis, was largely included in the final bill, and it addressed the major elements that were necessary.