

having been read and spread upon the Journal in full and that the message be printed in the RECORD.

The veto message is ordered to be printed in the RECORD as follows:

To the Senate of the United States:

I am returning, without my approval, S. 906, the Driftnet Modernization and Bycatch Reduction Act. America's fishermen have made great sacrifices to ensure that our Nation's marine fisheries are a sustainable economic engine for coastal communities. Under my Administration, the number of United States fish stocks subject to overfishing is at a historic low. This achievement is the result of a transparent and collaborative regulatory process that is supported by regional fishery management councils. At council meetings, fishermen work with Federal Government and State government representatives to meet their statutory obligations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

In passing S. 906, the Congress has ignored the fact that the regional fishery management process has had strong, bipartisan support since its creation. By forcing the West Coast drift gillnet fishery to use alternative gear that has not been proven to be an economically viable substitute for gillnets, the Congress is effectively terminating the fishery. As a result, an estimated 30 fishing vessels, all of which are operated by family-owned small businesses, will no longer be able to bring their bounty to shore. At a time when our Nation has a seafood trade deficit of nearly \$17 billion, S. 906 will exacerbate this imbalance.

Further, S. 906 will not achieve its purported conservation benefits. The West Coast drift gillnet fishery is subject to robust legal and regulatory requirements for environmental protection that equal or exceed the environmental protections that apply to foreign fisheries. Without this fishery, Americans will import more swordfish and other species from foreign sources that frequently have more bycatch than our own fisheries. If the Congress wants to address bycatch, it should insist on a level playing field for imported seafood instead of crushing American fishing families.

My Administration has done more for American fishermen than any President before me. On May 7, 2020, I signed an Executive Order on Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth to bolster our domestic seafood industry while curbing illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing abroad. On June 5, 2020, I issued a Proclamation on Modifying the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument to open it to commercial fishing that is conducted in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable laws, regulations, and requirements. And as fishermen struggled to stay on the water during the pandemic, I issued a Memorandum on Protecting the United

States Lobster Industry and later made approximately \$530 million available, through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Seafood Trade Relief Program, to support the United States seafood industry and fishermen affected by retaliatory tariffs from foreign governments.

My Administration would support provisions of the enrolled bill, if passed separately, which would authorize fee collection in a different fishery—the Pacific Halibut fishery. This authority is needed to implement a provision of the International Pacific Halibut Commission Convention, to which the United States is a party. However, for the sake of American fishermen nationwide, I will not let the Congress circumvent the fisheries management process by effectively terminating a fishery without appropriate consultation and input from fishery management councils. If this occurred, it would increase our reliance on imported seafood and take away the livelihoods of hard-working Americans and their family businesses. It is my duty to return S. 906 to the Senate without my approval.

DONALD J. TRUMP.

THE WHITE HOUSE, January 1, 2021.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in 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.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, the time has come to declare victory and come home from the war in Afghanistan—the longest war in the history of our country.

Over 4,000 Americans have died fighting in Afghanistan, and over 20,000 have been wounded. It is time to bring our soldiers home.

After the 9/11 attacks, I supported going into Afghanistan. We were absolutely justified in rooting out the Taliban who harbored al-Qaida.

Had I been in Congress at that time, I would have voted in favor of going into Afghanistan.

But the people who attacked us on 9/11 have all been killed or captured. They are long gone. But we are still there.

Most of the people fighting us in Afghanistan today are the successors or children or the children of their children.

The cycle shows no sign of ending. The war shows no sign of ending. It is not sustainable to keep fighting in Afghanistan generation after generation.

Here is some perspective: We have been fighting in Afghanistan for so long that when the 9/11 attacks happened, our youngest soldiers fighting

there today weren't even born yet. American fathers who fought in Afghanistan are now watching as their sons fight in Afghanistan.

We have spent about \$1 trillion to establish an Afghan government—a government that is rife with corruption and dysfunction. It is a government that cannot perform much of any government function on its own. So we spend more to do for them what they still cannot do for themselves.

A trillion dollars and we have hardly progressed from where we started.

Yet instead of outrage—which is how most Americans feel—the reaction from Congress is, gosh, maybe let's spend a trillion more.

After World War II, much of Europe was reduced to rubble. It was utterly destroyed. So we rebuilt Europe through the Marshall Plan.

We have now spent many times more to rebuild Afghanistan than we did under the Marshall Plan. What has that money gotten us?

We have built infrastructure in Afghanistan and then watched it deteriorate and watched the Afghans be unable to even maintain the infrastructure we built for them, and then they ask us for more money to maintain the structure. So we rebuild the infrastructure we just built for them.

Meanwhile, our roads and our bridges here at home crumble as we spend millions upon millions to rebuild the infrastructure in Afghanistan.

I want to walk through some examples of how our money has been used in Afghanistan.

Several years ago, we reportedly hired a local security consultant to help secure road construction projects, at a cost of \$1 million per year. But according to the report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, American officials came to suspect that the money was being funneled to insurgents to stage attacks on our infrastructure, which could be used to justify the security contract.

So our money was going to a guy who was apparently paying insurgents to stage attacks against him so he could justify his security contract. It is crazy.

We spent \$43 million on a natural gas, gas station. Guess how many vehicles in Afghanistan run on natural gas. Zero. You can't even find the gas station. My staff actually went there to see how the money had been spent, and they were told they couldn't go there because it was too unsafe. Now the report is that the gas station has been abandoned—and with it \$43 million flushed away.

We spent nearly \$80 million on a luxury hotel. Why is the American taxpayer building luxury hotels in Kabul? Guess what. It was abandoned halfway through. It is a skeleton. The Taliban are now said to climb up into the structure and shoot down at our Embassy.

We spent about \$400 million on equipment and other things to create an Afghan Army Corps of Engineers. Except

all the equipment we bought was lost. Gone.

We spent hundreds of millions on electrification projects in Afghanistan, but the system wasn't working. Afghans didn't understand that you had to pay for electricity and that you couldn't climb up utility poles. So, we spent almost \$2 million on a public awareness campaign to tell Afghans that they did, in fact, have to pay for electricity and to please stop climbing on the electrical wires.

There was a multimillion-dollar highway project that also required \$32 million in community outreach. This is basically an attempt to help locals understand what is happening, since they have no experience with a giant highway or what it is for.

The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction examined this "community outreach" and found that one Regional Coordinator was given cash—\$75,000—to help with outreach with locals, but SIGAR found that they could not account for the \$75,000 which had been filed as used for "goat distribution." Now, I don't know a lot about goats, but that seems like a lot of "goat" money.

The guy giving out the goat money mysteriously disappeared. The inspector general reports that the money is unrecoverable.

My subcommittee held an oversight hearing on Afghan war spending, and Ambassador Boucher, one of the witnesses, recounted that the Afghan Finance Minister told him 80 to 90 percent of the money Congress approves disappears before it gets to Afghanistan. It is not just corruption. He said: You know, we hire a contractor who hires a subcontractor, who hires a bunch of consultants, who hires a bunch of security personnel, who flies in airplanes, etc. And by the time you get somebody on the ground in Afghanistan receiving a benefit, it is a very small portion of all those billions and billions of dollars that Congress allocated for whatever that purpose was.

We continue to pour good money after bad into Afghanistan, hoping that the outcome will somehow change, hoping that maybe the next 20 years will produce better results than the last 20 years did.

The American people say "Come home," and now is the time. A Pew poll from last year found that 59 percent of Americans—and 58 percent of veterans—thought the Afghanistan war has not been worth fighting. One poll from this year shows far more Americans support withdrawal from Afghanistan than support continuing the war, and almost three-quarters of veterans support ending the war.

We should be listening to those who have been on the ground in Afghanistan. There are so many veterans who have witnessed firsthand the rudderless direction of the war.

We should listen to Army combat medic Shane Reynolds, who served in Iraq: "For all of us that went over

there and worked so hard, and put our families through so much, and there was never a strategy. We were just going through motions, chasing ghosts through mountains . . . We felt that there was no plan, there was no strategy and there was no will to change anything about that."

Maybe the Senate should listen to Infantryman Jay O'Brien, who served in Kandahar:

"Now I realize that no one above us knew what the hell was going on either. It's systemic willful ignorance all the way up to the top."

Army Intelligence Officer Gregg Frostrom, who served four deployments overseas over an 11-year period, captures the perspective of those who served:

"There's a lot of feeling like you're Sisyphus, like you're just pushing the rock up the hill, and you go home for six months, and you come back and the rock's at the bottom of the hill and you're like, well, now I've got to start pushing it again."

President Trump ran for the President promising to end these forever wars. The American people want to end the Afghanistan war. Yet the establishment powers in Washington and Congress have fought him at every turn.

This bill explicitly tries to tie the hands of all Presidents and make it difficult if not impossible to declare victory and come home.

Not only does this bill make it harder for any President to end a war, we already have high-ranking officials of our government directly defying the President's orders to deescalate war.

Take Syria for example. President Trump ordered troop levels to decline from around 2,000 to approximately 200. Former Ambassador Jim Jeffrey not only defied this order, he lampooned it later by saying, "What Syria withdrawal? There was never a Syria withdrawal."

According to Defense One, "outgoing Ambassador Jim Jeffrey, the U.S. special envoy for Syria acknowledges that he routinely misled senior leaders about troop levels in Syria."

Jeffrey's admitted to "playing shell games" to obscure from the President and his generals how many troops were really left in Syria. In reality, Trump's order to reduce the troops was countermanded by an unelected bureaucrat.

As Becket Adams explains, "Obscure federal workers have reportedly been in control of the U.S. military presence in northern Syria, and all in direct violation of explicit orders from the President."

Adams continues: "Nothing to worry about here, folks. Just some nameless federal drones allegedly misleading the commander of the U.S. military in order to keep troops stationed overseas in conflicts that said drones believe are necessary and winnable. People laugh when they hear the term 'deep state,' but it is no joke."

President Trump has ordered troop levels to be reduced in Afghanistan, so

Congress responded by passing an NDAA which actually restricts his ability to withdraw troops.

That is right. Congress, which has spent decades lecturing any and every one that we don't need 535 generals and that there is only one Commander in Chief who has absolute powers to wage war however he sees fit, has now reversed course and decided that we actually do need 535 generals in order to stop the Commander in Chief from withdrawing troops from Afghanistan.

President Trump vetoed that NDAA, and now we are here today in an attempt to override that veto, to add a 20th year to this war.

This is a mistake. But Congress has had it wrong for a long time, so this is nothing new. They just passed a \$1.4 trillion omnibus bill that no one saw until hours before it was to be voted on, and they paired it with a \$900 billion coronavirus bailout, paid for with money borrowed from our children.

We are told all the time that there is simply no more fat left to cut in the budget, that we have to borrow because we can't cut our high priorities. What are those high priorities, you may ask? Let's start with a look at this bill that just passed.

There is \$25 million for Pakistan in there. Pakistan puts Christians on death row when they are accused of blasphemy, except that allegations of blasphemy are often based on petty disputes among neighbors or coworkers. There are reportedly 80 people on death row in Pakistan for blasphemy-related charges.

There is \$700 million for Sudan in the bill, where freedom of expression is restricted.

There is another \$500 million to address the root causes of migration from Central America. I doubt the report mentions the allure of all the free stuff you can get after you break in to America.

How about \$575 million for "family planning" in the third world?

How many businesses, struggling to make payroll because their Governor closed them down, could have used that \$575 million?

Congress is borrowing a trillion dollars a year so that they can keep spending money on these kinds of things. They don't want to set priorities.

This is hardly new. I have been watching this for years and called out the big spenders in Congress for approving: \$250,000 to send kids from Pakistan to Space Camp in Alabama and Dollywood in Tennessee; \$1.8 million to improve the international perception of Afghan artisans and craftsman; \$10,000 to improve Pakistan's film industry. Really? U.S. taxpayer money to subsidize Pakistan's version of Hollywood; a \$2 million venture capital fund in Bosnia for businesses that couldn't get their own financing; almost \$8 million for foreign dance residencies. Really? Ballet for Bolivia; more than \$9 million to ease medical

debt in Cambodia. What about Americans' with medical debt; more than \$23 million to help college graduates in Morocco find jobs. How about college grads in Kentucky; \$273 million in grants to help people learn how to apply for grants. Really? U.S. taxpayers are being fleeced to teach people how to get more of our money; \$20 million to teach Laotians how to speak Laotian. Makes me want to utter Laotian profanities. But I will likely need a government grant in order to learn to swear in Laotian; \$1 million to produce a comedic variety TV show in Afghanistan. I don't know about you but I don't find that funny at all; almost \$15 million to produce foreign versions of "Sesame Street" that would teach children in other countries about climate change. Next year, I am sure the taxpayer will be sending Muppets in Masks to Madagascar; and \$153 million in development assistance that included subsidies for low-income mortgages in Nigeria.

So Americans are losing their homes, but Congress has already spent the money buying Nigerian mortgages.

Americans are losing their livelihoods, but Congress has already spent the money on economic support funds in places like Bosnia.

American infrastructure is crumbling, but Congress spends billions on roads in Afghanistan.

We could have rebuilt the Brent-Spence Bridge in my State, which has been a priority for some time, but Congress can't stop spending the money overseas.

Again, the war in Afghanistan costs \$50 billion per year. Our mission is complete. Al-Qaida is diminished. Osama bin Laden is dead. It is time to declare victory. The American people want the war to end. So many of our veterans want the war to end. The President is trying to bring it to an end. But Congress is standing in the way.

Today we have the chance to act as the people's representatives instead of acting like 535 generals. We should not override the veto. We should remove the language that tries to block the President's drawdown of troops.

I urge a vote against the veto override.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I voted against the motions to proceed and invoke cloture on overriding the President's veto of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 because, at this time of national crisis, the Senate's first order of business should be getting more relief to struggling American families. That means the Senate should have held a clean up-or-down vote on the House-passed measure to increase the amount of the individual stimulus payments from \$600 to \$2,000. The Senate could have easily passed both the additional payments and completed the business of the NDAA veto override this week had Senator McCONNELL and the GOP majority been willing to do so. Given

the President's purported support of this relief, it could have been signed into law this week. But instead of delivering this additional help to struggling American families, the Republican majority repeatedly blocked requests to pass the additional relief by unanimous consent and refused to schedule an up-or-down vote.

That said, I support the underlying National Defense Authorization Act. The President's veto of this legislation put at risk a number of important measures, including a pay raise for our troops; critical investments for Maryland's military installations; a process to rename those military facilities that bear the names of individuals who fought with the Confederacy to preserve slavery; limits on the transfer of military equipment to local police forces; and support for key national security priorities. While the NDAA bill is not perfect and includes a number of provisions I oppose, on balance it is an important measure for our country. That is why I voted for it in the first place and why I voted in favor of overriding the President's veto.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING ED GOMES

• Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I rise today with a heavy heart to pay tribute to Edwin "Ed" Gomes, an exemplary public servant, community leader, and advocate for equality and justice. Sadly, Ed passed away on December 22, 2020, at the age of 84. He will be remembered for his outstanding legacy of dedication to Connecticut as a statesman and an activist.

Ed began his impressive career on behalf of our country in the U.S. Army, serving for 5 years. A dedicated steelworkers' union representative, he was first elected to the Bridgeport City Council in 1983. Throughout his decades on the council, Ed quickly earned the respect of constituents and colleagues, alike.

In 2004, Ed was elected to the Connecticut Senate, where he served for a total of 12 years. As State senator, Ed fought tirelessly for the people of Connecticut, always going the extra mile to help his constituents. He knew that government could instill positive change for working families and constantly advocated on their behalf.

Committed to social reform and civil rights, Ed participated in the March on Washington in 1963. His activism touched countless lives across our State and was an inspiration for all of us. Known for his passionate efforts to help others and strong principles, Ed was also respected across the aisle and warmly recognized for his positive spirit. Those who had the chance to work with him know well his respected, straightforward style and readiness to bolster advocacy by pulling from his personal experiences.

I had the privilege of attending the annual L'Ambiance memorial cere-

mony, recognizing those workers who died in a horrific construction accident, with Ed, who unstintingly continued his advocacy for workplace safety. There was always an opportunity to do more and raise greater awareness of issues facing Connecticut's working families. His dedication to fighting injustice was a model across our State, and he never hesitated to initiate change from the frontlines. I can attest firsthand to Ed's unfailing attitude, which was equal parts joy and determination. His commitment to bettering our State and loyalty to his friends and family have left a lasting, positive mark on Connecticut's legacy.

My wife Cynthia and I extend our deepest sympathies to Ed's family during this difficult time. May their many wonderful memories of Ed provide them solace and comfort.●

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message from the President of the United States was communicated to the Senate by Mr. Pate, one of his secretaries.

PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE

REPORT OF THE VETO OF S. 906, THE DRIFTNET MODERNIZATION AND BYCATCH REDUCTION ACT—PM 63

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In passing S. 906, the Congress has ignored the fact that the regional fishery management process has had strong, bipartisan support since its creation. By forcing the West Coast drift gillnet fishery to use alternative gear that has not been proven to be an economically viable substitute for gillnets, the Congress is effectively terminating the fishery. As a result, an estimated 30 fishing vessels, all of which are operated by family-owned small businesses,