

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, after months of delay, I am glad Senator SCHUMER has finally indicated he will allow the National Defense Authorization Act to come to the Senate floor this week.

For each of the last 60 consecutive years, Congress has passed an NDAA to ensure that our servicemembers and military leaders had the resources they need to safeguard our democracy and our freedoms.

This bill is how we maintain our military bases, modernize our force, and invest in the next generation of weapons that we hope we will never need to use but which are necessary for deterrence. It is how we strengthen our relationship with old allies and forge strong partnerships with new ones. It is how we address the global threat landscape and ensure our troops have the training, equipment, and the resources they need to counter adversaries of today and tomorrow.

From threats by an increasingly hostile Iran to those by an unpredictable North Korea, there are many challenges on the horizon, but there is no question that the greatest threat to the world order and to peace itself is the People's Republic of China.

The Chinese Communist Party has made no secret of its desire to continue to squash democracy, as they did in Hong Kong, and impose its economic, political, and military power on the rest of the world.

Here at home, we are intensely aware of how China's aggression can impact our economy and supply chains for critical components of everything from cell phones to our fifth-generation stealth fighter, the F-35. Our dependency on advanced semiconductors manufactured in Taiwan and in Asia is a threat to America's economic and national security, but the most urgent and grave threats are against countries closer to China's borders.

Last week, I had the chance to lead a congressional delegation visiting Southeast Asia to gain a better understanding of the threats and challenges in the region. The area spanning from Pearl Harbor all the way to the western border of India is the largest military theater in the world and is overseen by the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and is home to 40 percent of the world's population. My colleagues and I had the opportunity to hear from our military leadership and key foreign partners in the region and gain a better understanding of ongoing and anticipated security threats, mainly from China.

China has already co-opted, as I said, a formerly democratic Hong Kong.

It is building missile batteries and aircraft runways for its bombers on artificial islands. It threatens freedom of navigation in international waters. It is guilty of gross human rights abuses against its own people; namely, the Muslim minority Uighurs. It is engaged in a border war with India. And it threatens to invade the Republic of China, otherwise known as Taiwan.

Here at home, there is no question that China is a looming presence, but it is not in our backyard. We don't see its warships on our coastlines, or worry about an imminent military invasion on our shores.

But that is not the case in the Indo-Pacific. In the Philippines, we caught a ride on a Navy P-8 aircraft over disputed waters. Within minutes of leaving Philippine airspace, we spotted a Chinese spy ship engaged in intelligence gathering operations off the Philippine coast.

We traveled to India, where we met with Prime Minister Modi and Cabinet officials to discuss threats posed by China, as well as other shared priorities. But one of the main topics was the timetable for a Chinese invasion of Taiwan.

In every way possible, Taiwan is a stark contrast to the People's Republic of China. It is a true democracy, with elections whose results are not predetermined. It is a free-market economy that adheres to the rule of law. And it shares the same basic values we embrace in the United States: freedom of speech, freedom of press, religion, and assembly.

Despite the fact that Taiwan has been a self-governing entity for more than 70 years, the Chinese Communist Party continues to claim the island nation as part of its territory. But as the Indian Minister for Foreign Affairs said, Taiwan isn't just a Taiwan problem; it is a China problem.

In other words, what is at stake here is much larger than the future of one nation; it is the entire scope of Beijing's power and ambitions in the region. If China is able to capture Taiwan, there is no reason to believe that the Chinese Communist Party would stop there.

China also has territorial claims against the Philippines, Japan, Vietnam, and India. We shouldn't view Taiwan as the CCP's ultimate goal, but as the first domino in a quest to reach regional and global dominance. If Taiwan falls, it will not be the end, but, rather, a beginning.

As the Taiwanese Minister of Foreign Affairs told us, Taiwan is democracy's outpost standing watch against authoritarianism.

I believe we have a legal and moral obligation to stand with Taiwan and deter China from invading. And we also have our own national security at stake.

There is an old saying that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. In defense parlance, that means peace through strength; deterrence. There must be a strategy to dissuade China from an attempt to seize Taiwan. And there is no question that time is of the essence.

Our delegation met with the commander of the Indo-Pacific Command, who described the current power dynamic rather succinctly. He said it is not a question of if China invades Taiwan, but when.

According to our top military leaders, we have an idea of how long that might happen, because Xi Jinping himself has said he wants to be ready to invade by 2027.

But we have been wrong before. I remember when people said that the Taliban—the intelligence community said it would take 2 years for the Taliban to take over Afghanistan, and we saw that happen almost in the blink of an eye. No one thought that country would fall to the Taliban before we even hit the withdrawal deadline, and we certainly did not expect the withdrawal in Afghanistan to turn into a rapid emergency evacuation mission.

Taiwan might be safe for 6 years, but we can't operate on that assumption. We need to work with Taiwan and our friends and allies in the region to raise the costs, such that the PRC decides it is not worth its time and effort.

The defense authorization bill is one critical way we can do that. It includes a bipartisan bill I introduced with Senator DUCKWORTH, called the Taiwan Partnership Act. It would establish a partnership between the U.S. National Guard and Taiwanese defense forces to strengthen Taiwan's preparedness.

Should troops need to deploy quickly in the event of a crisis, they would be armed with the same knowledge and skills as our dedicated U.S. National Guardsmen.

The NDAA includes other provisions to increase defense cooperation with Taiwan and equip the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command with more resources. I appreciate my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have championed these provisions.

As I said earlier, we have a moral imperative to stand with Taiwan and show China that the costs of invading are far greater than the benefits. But we have our own national security interests at stake because, if the supply of semiconductors from Taiwan were cut off, it would be a body blow to the American economy and our national security.

I am glad Australia has already signaled its support for Taiwan, and I hope more of our international partners will follow suit—particularly the quad composed of Australia, Japan, and India and the United States.

Beijing can try to exert its muscle around the world, but the United States has one thing that China never will have, and that is friends and allies.

I am grateful to our partners in the Indo-Pacific and around the world who have fought and who will continue to fight to preserve freedom and democracy. It is an honor to spend time with them. And on behalf of our entire delegation, I want to thank all of our hosts for their hospitality.

Our trip to the Indo-Pacific was a timely reminder of the critical need to invest in our national defense and support our allies, new and old.

As the Senate prepares to begin consideration of the Defense authorization bill, I would encourage all of us to keep

in mind our solemn responsibility to support our national defense. That is our No. 1 priority. All of our other freedoms flow from our ability to protect and defend the American people.

Whether our servicemembers are guarding against threats from China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, or terrorist groups, they need the backing of a strong National Defense Authorization Act to succeed.

I appreciate the bipartisan work of the Armed Services Committee, chaired by Chairman REED and Ranking Member INHOFE, and appreciate their hard work in getting this bill ready for our consideration. The committee, during its markup, adopted 143 bipartisan amendments and reported out the final bill by a vote of 23 to 3. You don't get much more bipartisan than that around here.

This legislation has been waiting in the wings for months, and I am glad we can finally begin consideration of this critical legislation this week.

I hope we can continue the legacy of bipartisanship that guides this legislation through the Senate. This debate should be about how to defend our national security, how to deter tyrants and bullies from around the world, and guarantee the blessings of liberty to all democracies—those that share our values.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). Under the previous order, the Senate will now proceed to the Kanter nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Jonathan Kanter, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Attorney General.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 10 minutes of debate, equally divided.

The Senator from Connecticut.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I will admit that I have some level of confusion when I listen to my Republican colleagues come to the floor and register their complaints when matched against the actual policy positions that my Republican colleagues hold. And I want to present two examples of my confusion this morning.

First, I have heard many of my Republican colleagues come to the floor of the Senate and talk about their concern about price increases in the economy today—and then register votes against the measures that would help families afford things.

Many of my Senate Republican colleagues voted for the bipartisan infrastructure, but more voted against it. In the House of Representatives, there is discussion of purging from the Republican Party any members of the House Republican conference that voted for the infrastructure; notwithstanding the fact that in that bill is funding

that will have a deflationary impact on the economy: money for ports, money for infrastructure, money to be able to move goods and people more quickly across this country.

The Build Back Better agenda—the bill that is going to move before the House and the Senate this month with no Republican support—is all about reducing costs for average, regular Americans: reducing the cost of healthcare, reducing the cost of energy, reducing the cost of childcare.

Childcare expenses are driving American families crazy today—absolutely crazy. The Build Back Better Act will reduce the cost of childcare by 10 to \$15,000 for families in my State.

Republicans oppose the Build Back Better Act because it increases some taxes on billionaires and millionaires. It asks every corporation to pay a minimum amount of tax so that companies, like Amazon and Google, don't get away with paying nothing or next to nothing in tax.

The reason why so many Republicans oppose the Build Back Better agenda is because it is about transferring economic power from the haves—from the economic elites to folks who have been getting the short end of the stick, who have been getting fleeced by this economy.

When Republicans had the chance to cut costs, they did it only for billionaires and millionaires. Eighty percent of the Republican tax cut went to the richest 1 or 2 percent of the economy.

When Democrats have control of the Senate, we deliver tax cuts for the middle class and for the poor. We deliver cost reductions for average American families.

Wages are going up higher than the rate of personal consumption inflation. Right? Personal consumption inflation is just under 5 percent. Wages in the last 12 months have gone up by over 5 percent.

People are making more money. Part of the consequence of people making more money is that some costs go up. But when Republicans were in charge of the White House and the Congress, we just were, largely, flat. Wages are finally going up. People are making more money.

And we are going to have legislation on the floor of the Senate that dramatically cuts costs for average American families, and that legislation likely will get not a single Republican vote.

Republicans' priorities, historically, have been to deliver benefits to the wealthy, to the elites, to their corporate friends. And so when faced with a very different agenda—an agenda that is all about cost reduction, tax cuts for average families, for families making \$30,000 a year, for plumbers, for teachers, for factory workers, for janitors—not a single Republican vote.

So therein lies my confusion that I hear a lot of my Republican colleagues—Republican colleagues that I like, that I respect—come to the floor

and complain about costs and then refuse to deliver a single vote for the most significant legislation to reduce costs for families that this body has considered during my time in the Senate.

Here is my second reason for confusion. Now, encounters with migrants without documentation has come down at the border 3 months in a row—pretty dramatic reduction, in fact, when it comes to unaccompanied minors and families. That is because this President's policies are working.

That is probably the reason you don't hear as many Republicans coming down to the floor talking about the surge at the border. But Republicans have been down here consistently for months talking about the crisis they described at the border.

And so my confusion here is connected to their avowed concern about the surge at the border and then their decision to oppose a Homeland Security budget that would help us address those escalating numbers at the border.

Right now, Senate Republicans are refusing to negotiate with Democrats on a budget for 2021 and 2022. That is what is going on right now. Historically, we always had differences when it comes to our priorities in the budget, but we always sat down and negotiated. Right now, Senate Republicans are boycotting discussions over a budget. And one of the theories is that many Republicans would like to see a continuing resolution—the Trump spending levels continued for the rest of 2021, 2022.

Let me tell you what the impact of that would be when it comes to our operations at the border. I want to explain this because I have the honor to chair the Appropriations Subcommittee overseeing the Department of Homeland Security, and we, just a few weeks ago, introduced a budget for the Department of Homeland Security for fiscal year 2022. But if this budget or a version of it negotiated with Republicans doesn't pass, the result is catastrophe at the border.

This budget includes \$178 million for medicine and medical contracts for unaccompanied children that arrive at our border—desperately needed medical care for all of these children and families that are arriving at the border. None of it would be available if we went on a continuing resolution. We would have a health crisis at the border.

There is \$130 million for three permanent multipurpose, multiagency facilities, which will streamline the processes of individuals who present at the border. Right now, we have these megaexpensive, inhumane, soft-sided facilities. That significant investment at the border cannot happen if we have a continuing resolution.