

something to that. But what's left out of the equation are the social costs of these moves. They can be quite high.

When asked why the people of Norwich stepped in to help Dan & Whit's keep going, employee Dianne Miller said it was "because Dan & Whit's is the heartbeat of this community." Others described it as the "heart of the town." That's the best quick summary of the social benefits of a place like Dan & Whit's I've ever heard. Communities do have hearts. When businesses at those hearts disappear, more is lost than an economic asset. The community loses a place that allows it to be a community—a place where people meet up, congregate, exchange gossip and information, barter, learn about common problems, sometimes decide to take action.

I remember Dan & Whit's as such a place. I can't imagine Norwich without it. Luckily, it won't have to be. But this isn't just a "feel good" story about one country town coming together to save an iconic general store. It seems to me there's an important lesson here for all of us, wherever we live.

American capitalism is the harshest form of capitalism in all of the world's advanced economies. It takes almost no account of social costs and benefits. Businesses swoop in and swoop out wherever and however profits can be maximized and losses minimized.

But communities are different. They aren't nearly as footloose as financial capital. They're built on social capital, which often takes years to accumulate and can't be cashed in.

I think people owe something to businesses that are the hearts of our communities. Maybe we shouldn't allow big chains or Walmarts to drain our main streets of the commerce they need to survive. (Even if Walmart's items are cheaper, the social costs of losing the small businesses that undergird our community are often way higher.) Maybe we should donate some of our own time and labor to account for the importance of these core businesses. Maybe those of us who can afford to should buy shares in them, to give them an added financial cushion. At the very least, we owe them our patronage—rather than, say, the Waltons or Jeff Bezos.

What do you think?

#### NOMINATION OF DILAWAR SYED

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I rise today to reiterate my strong support for Dilawar Syed to serve as Deputy Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration.

For those who are unfamiliar with Mr. Syed, he is a highly qualified and widely-supported nominee for Deputy Administrator, who has the backing of numerous business groups and organizations. In many ways, he is the very picture of the American Dream, a businessowner, entrepreneur, and job creator who was born in Pakistan and educated in the United States. Mr. Syed also has firsthand experience dealing with challenges small businesses have faced during this pandemic.

As Deputy Administrator, he would largely be responsible for running the day-to-day operations at SBA. He has repeatedly made himself available to discuss any concerns Republicans may still have related to his background and qualifications, things that actually matter in his ability to do his job. However, for reasons completely unrelated to his background and qualifica-

tions, Republicans on the Small Business Committee have continued to block his nomination, for months.

Earlier this summer, they disputed the results of a committee meeting we held to advance the nominee based on a technicality, even though Mr. Syed was approved during that meeting by voice vote. Since then, they have taken a different approach, deciding to boycott committee meetings on five separate occasions, denying a quorum to consider the nominee. We are now at the point where Senate Republicans, even on this normally very bipartisan committee, will not even show up to provide fair consideration for this nominee. Not one Republican will show up.

Over the course of the process, Republicans have changed their reasons for blocking the nominee. First, they were concerned about SBA loans his company received during the pandemic, even though these loans were lawfully obtained and fully repaid before he was even nominated to be Deputy Administrator.

Then, they insinuated he was somehow anti-Jewish and anti-Israel, despite broad support he has received from within these communities.

Now, they are concerned about lawful SBA loans to Planned Parenthood health centers. Just to be crystal clear, these health centers lawfully received loans through bipartisan COVID legislation that was signed by President Trump. It is unacceptable to unfairly and unlawfully target organizations for political reasons. And it is even worse to then stall a qualified nominee because of this.

When it comes down to it, Mr. Syed would be an asset to SBA and the businesses they serve. He deserves fair consideration in the U.S. Senate.

If Republicans actually cared about helping the small businesses struggling during the pandemic, they would stop blocking nominees to fill positions that are critical to helping them.

Republicans should do their job and let us consider his nomination. Every day they continue this obstruction, they are doing a disservice to businesses in our country, which cannot afford uncertainty at this time.

Enough is enough.

#### NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2022.

The National Defense Authorization Act provides crucial resources for our Armed Forces and our national defense, including a 2.7 percent pay increase for our servicemembers and DOD civilian employees, parental and bereavement leave for servicemembers, and the creation of basic needs allowance. I am glad that the Senate was able to come together on a bipartisan basis to pass this legislation to support our servicemembers, strengthen our national security, and invest in critical

projects in my home State of Maryland, including over \$500 million in authorized military construction projects across the State. This legislation also includes several important pieces of legislation that I introduced to strengthen our Foreign Service, ensure that all students have a fair shot at attending one of our Federal service academies, and support our Federal firefighters. While there are parts of this legislation that I have concerns with and important priorities that were left out, I believe that, on balance, this bill serves our national interest.

In particular, I am pleased that this NDAA includes the Foreign Service Families Act of 2021, which I introduced with Senator Sullivan, with whom I cochair the Foreign Service Caucus. As the son of a Foreign Service Officer, I know the challenges that Foreign Service families face in accessing education and employment when they accompany our diplomats abroad. That is why I introduced this legislation, which authorizes expanded employment services for the spouses of Foreign Service officers serving overseas. It also extends in-state tuition at public colleges and universities for Foreign Service members and their families after 30 days of residency in a State and allows Foreign Service families to terminate leases without penalty when ordered to move for work. This legislation will make a real difference in the lives of our Foreign Service families and will help reduce attrition and attract the talented and diverse diplomatic workforce we need to compete on the global stage. It is modeled after benefits we extend to military families, who also have to move frequently in service to our country.

I am also glad that this legislation includes the SERVE Act, which I introduced with Senator CARDIN and Representative BROWN. This bill ensures that high school students applying to attend one of our Federal service academies do not lose out on opportunities to be nominated because of a vacancy in Congress. After the tragic loss of my friend and colleague, Representative Elijah Cummings, my office learned that nomination slots at our service academies, like the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, cease to exist if a seat in Congress is vacant at the time nominations are due. This meant that a student from Congressman Cummings' district had one-third fewer opportunities to receive a nomination to a service academy. As a result of this new law, Senators may make nominations on behalf of a vacant seat, ensuring that students do not lose an opportunity to serve their country through no fault of their own.

Further, I am glad Armed Services Committee agreed to include the Federal Firefighter Flexibility and Fairness Act, which I introduced with Senators TESTER, COLLINS, and CARPER and Representatives SARBANES and WITTMAN. This legislation grants additional

flexibility to our Federal firefighters that their State and local counterparts have enjoyed for many years. As a result of this bill, Federal firefighters will be able to trade shifts across pay periods without negatively affecting their pay.

This NDAA also establishes a consortium on irregular warfare threats, a critical step in the transfer of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism—START—from the sponsorship of the Department of Homeland Security to the Department of Defense, which has the resources to maintain this national security research. I previously worked to secure funding for this transition in the FY21 defense appropriations bill. The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, better known as START, is a university-based research and education center based at the University of Maryland and comprised of an international network of scholars committed to the scientific study of the causes and human consequences of terrorism in the United States and around the world.

I am also glad the NDAA incorporates the Enhancing Military Base Resilience and Conserving Ecosystems through Stormwater Management Act, which I introduced with Senators KAINE, CARDIN, and WARNER. This bill authorizes the Defense Department to carry out stormwater management projects on military installations. These projects will improve installation resilience and essential infrastructure that supports military installations and protect nearby waterways like the Chesapeake Bay. In August, I worked to secure language in the FY22 Military Construction-VA Appropriations bill encouraging the Department of Defense to use Energy Resilience and Conservation Program funds to support stormwater management projects in the Chesapeake Bay watershed in order to better protect and conserve the health of the bay.

I also want to thank my colleagues on the Senate Armed Services Committee for working with me to address the Army's incorrect application of the law pertaining to the Prisoner of War Medal, which has negatively affected a Maryland veteran. In 2020, I asked the Army to award the POW Medal to Marylander Ronald Dolecki for his military service in Ethiopia in 1965, which he has been denied for over a decade. Mr. Dolecki clearly qualifies for the Medal under the criteria established by Congress in the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act, but the Army continued to incorrectly apply the previous standard to his case. I am grateful to Chairman REED and Ranking Member INHOFE for including language directing the Army to rectify its incorrect application of the law to ensure that this Marylander who served his country with honor and distinction and others like him are appropriately recognized.

Lastly, this bill includes funding and language that is critical to supporting Maryland's military installations, including more than \$350 million for Fort Meade, more than \$150 million for Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, and more than \$30 million for Joint Base Andrews. The bill also includes report language ensuring the Army's continued support for the demolition of contaminated facilities at Aberdeen Proving Ground and provisions to continue responding to the recent crisis in privatized military housing which affected installations in Maryland and across the country.

While I am pleased with many of the provisions included in this bill and voted for its passage, I do have significant reservations.

I appreciate that this bill codifies the GAO's recommendations related to tactical vehicle rollover accidents in response to the tragic loss of 1LT Conor McDowell, a U.S. marine who lost his life in a training accident at Camp Pendleton. 1LT McDowell showed extraordinary bravery, saving the life of a fellow marine, and Congress has a responsibility to ensure that these preventable crashes end. The bill also includes a directive that the Department of Defense report on the cost and feasibility of a pilot program that Senators CARDIN and Representatives BROWN and WITTMAN and I proposed in the the 1LT Hugh Conor McDowell Safety in Armed Forces Equipment Act of 2021. This simple, straightforward bill directs the Departments of the Army and the Navy to jointly implement a 5-year pilot program to evaluate the prospect of using data recorders to monitor, assess, and improve the readiness and safety of the operation of military tactical vehicles. This commonsense program will improve the safety of our men and women in uniform and save lives. I believe we could have proceeded with this pilot today, but look forward to receiving the mandated report no later than March 1, 2022, as directed, and I will continue to advocate vigorously for the implementation of this program.

I am disappointed that the NOAA does not include my amendment to prohibit the use of funds for the research and development, production or deployment of the nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile—SLCM-N—and its associated nuclear warhead. The United States already possesses an array of nonstrategic nuclear capabilities that fulfill our theater nuclear deterrence missions and reassure our allies of our extended deterrence commitments. In its 2019 cost estimate of U.S. nuclear weapons programs, the CBO projected that the SLCM-N would cost \$9 billion through 2028. This projection does not account for production costs after 2028, nor does it factor in costs associated with integrating the missile on ships, nuclear weapons training for personnel, and storage and security for nuclear warheads on naval bases. Not only is the program a waste of money, it will also dangerously raise

the risk of nuclear miscalculation and escalation.

I also believe that this bill fails to tackle the long-term budget challenges facing our country. In the midst of a pandemic that has taken the lives of more than 800,000 of our fellow Americans, we simply cannot afford to continue this level of investment in defense at the expense of other critical national priorities. I oppose the decision to invest an additional \$25 billion over the President's budget request for defense while we continue to underinvest in diplomacy, development, and a wide range of critical domestic priorities.

Lastly, I am disappointed that the bill did not include my amendment with Representative JACOBS to close a loophole that allows some U.S. security assistance to foreign forces without being subject to Leahy law restrictions that bar U.S. military assistance to units credibly believed to have engaged in gross violations of human rights. This is a simple, straightforward matter of the United States living up to our most basic commitments as a member of the international community. The accompanying NDAA report language does require the presentation of a report detailing the processes through which the Defense Department seeks to ensure that consideration is given to any credible information relating to violations of human rights by such entities, before support is given to them. I will be reviewing that report closely to determine what further action is necessary to safeguard human rights and ensure that no U.S. security assistance is exempt from these commonsense restrictions.

While I am opposed to some of the provisions in this bill and disappointed by the omission of others, I believe that, on balance, the NDAA will strengthen our national security and advance other important national priorities. For that reason, I voted in support of final passage.

REMEMBERING DR. SHERIF R. ZAKI

Mr. WARNOCK. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the life of Dr. Sherif R. Zaki, an exceptional leader at the CDC who passed away on November 21, 2021.

Dr. Zaki, who joined the CDC in 1988, was the founder and branch chief of CDC's Infectious Disease Pathology Branch, IDPB. During his tenure at CDC, Dr. Zaki's vision and determination took the pathology laboratory to the forefront of the Agency's work in responding to public health threats posed by various infectious disease agents and established this team to be as one of the most highly respected infectious disease pathology laboratories in the world.

Dr. Zaki was an internationally recognized expert in infectious disease pathology, whose work over the past several decades transformed CDC's approach to the integration of pathology