

economy overheated as a result. But that is not something the President mentions when he talks about fighting inflation.

So what is the President's so-called plan to fight inflation?

Well, after spending half the op-ed touting his supposed economic successes, the President finally gets to the plan part, and the first part of his three-part plan involves having someone else address inflation. Controlling inflation, the President says, is primarily the job of the Federal Reserve, and he is going to leave them alone to do that job.

The next part of the President's plan involves things like fixing broken supply chains and boosting the productive capacity of our economy over time.

Now, I am a big supporter of improving our supply chains, which is why I have introduced the Ocean Shipping Reform Act, which, hopefully, will pass the House of Representatives and head to the President's desk soon. But given that the President has so far demonstrated little progress in addressing supply chain challenges, I am not holding my breath waiting for the White House to take action.

I am also a big fan of boosting the productive capacity of our economy. My concern is that the President fails to give any examples of how he might actually do that. He mentions high gas prices, but instead of talking about ways to address high energy prices by unleashing American energy production, he pivots to touting his release from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, a highly temporary band aid that did next to nothing to address the cause of high gas prices, except for briefly causing their rise to what are record highs.

He also claims Congress can help by passing his clean-energy tax credits and investments—which he says would result in a \$500 decrease in utility bills for American families. First, nothing about the President's clean-energy tax credits is likely to drive down energy prices, especially in the near term, and Americans can't afford to wait.

In fact, for Americans to take advantage of some of these credits, they would need to spend more money—on an electric car, for example—which is how the administration suggests Americans deal with these historic gas prices.

And the President's claim that his energy tax credits and investments would decrease utility bills for American families by \$500 is 100 percent false.

And you don't have to take my word for it. The Washington Post Fact Checker column gave the President's claim four—four Pinocchios—a rating that the Post reserves for, and I quote, “whoppers.”

And if the President has the idea that his tax credits can somehow magically move the United States to a place that we can abandon gas and oil overnight, well, he has another thing coming. No matter how much Democrats

might wish it were otherwise, the fact of the matter is that clean energy technology has simply not advanced to the point where we can replace all traditional energy resources with renewables. And pretending—pretending that we don't need gas and oil—or discouraging American oil and gas production will only result in higher energy prices for American consumers.

If the President really wanted to reduce gas prices and “boost the productive capacity of our economy over time,” as he said in his op-ed, he would embrace American energy production, including conventional energy production.

Instead, he is doing the opposite. He continues to discourage domestic production of conventional energy sources that Americans rely on. And the result is likely to be continued high energy prices well into the future.

Finally, the President turns to the third part of his plan to fight inflation, and that is reducing the deficit. Unfortunately, it is a little hard to take the President seriously on this issue. The President touts a Congressional Budget Office prediction that the deficit will fall by \$1.7 trillion this year.

What the President doesn't mention is that the reason this year's projected deficit drop looks so substantial is because Democrats inflated the deficit last year with their American Rescue Plan spending spree. Of course, the deficit will look lower this year without a massive \$1.9 trillion piece of legislation financed entirely with deficit spending.

And I am not getting my hopes up about future deficit drops, since many Democrats still want to use reconciliation rules to force through another big, party-line Democrat spending bill. This one is \$5 trillion. If they come up with a proposal that is anything like their original Build Back Better proposal, we will undoubtedly be looking at more deficit spending.

One news outlet had this to say about President Biden's op-ed and his plan to reduce the deficit:

Is it really a ‘plan’ when the President points fingers? While the president's op-ed purports to lay out a plan for addressing inflation, a close read shows that he actually seems to be pushing the burden off on others . . .

That is a fair assessment. Unfortunately, it is pretty par for the course for President Biden. He is happy to take credit for positive economic numbers even when he had nothing to do with them, but when it comes to taking responsibility for a situation, he is frequently nowhere to be found.

He won't acknowledge that his own economic proposal, the American Rescue Plan, helped create our inflation crisis in the first place. Indeed, he largely ignored the inflation crisis until it started to become absolutely necessary for him to address it, if he wanted to survive politically.

And he has displayed a similar lack of ownership of crises on his watch. The actions he has taken to weaken

border security and immigration enforcement have helped create an unprecedented immigration crisis on the southern border.

But from the President's attitude you barely even know that there is a problem, much less one that he has a particular responsibility to address.

His hostile attitude toward American energy production helped drive up gas prices and left families struggling—struggling—to fill their cars. Yet the President is ready to push off responsibility for conventional energy production to other nations, leaving our Nation less secure and even more vulnerable to price spikes.

The President closes his op-ed by noting:

The economic policy choices we make today will determine whether a sustained recovery that benefits all Americans is possible.

Well, the President is right about that. Unfortunately, it is pretty clear that the economic policy choices that he is making are wrong.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### FACT ACT OF 2021

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, today is an important day. This is the day that we are going to take up toxic exposure in the U.S. Senate. It is a day that, quite frankly, should have been two decades ago, three decades ago, five decades ago, but we are where we are.

The bill we are going to be considering is the SFC Heath Robinson Honoring Our PACT Act. This bill is the most comprehensive toxic exposure package for veterans Congress has ever considered and hopefully I can say has ever delivered. It has literally been years in the making.

I am especially proud of this bill because it addresses decades of inaction and failure by our government to do the right thing by the men and women who have served this country in uniform and stood in harm's way.

I want to thank my friend and ranking member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, JERRY MORAN, for being able to work together across the aisle to deliver what is truly a bipartisan bill that will give veterans of all eras the benefits that they have earned but maybe even more importantly, the benefits that they deserve.

As chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, there have been few issues as important as this one is to me. It has been a top priority of mine since I first came to Congress and started hearing from veterans, their families, their advocates, and veterans service organizations about exposures

to chemical, physical, and environmental hazards as they serve this country in the line of duty. So let's talk about military toxic exposures and why we are here today.

In World War I, there was a thing called mustard gas. In World War II, we had radiation. In Vietnam, we had Agent Orange. Now we have burn pits—massive areas used to dispose of plastics, rubber, jet fuel, and other chemicals in Iraq and Afghanistan and other locations around the globe.

Generation after generation, war after war, servicemembers have returned home, only to face yet another battle here at home when seeking the care and the benefits that they have earned and that they desperately need because Washington—we, Congress—has been unwilling, simply unwilling to give the Department of Veterans Affairs the tools they need to take care of our veterans. Our men in uniform answered the call of duty. They held up their end of the bargain, so we need to hold up ours.

I will never forget what I heard from a Vietnam veteran in Montana my very first year on the VA Committee. I was holding a townhall meeting. This gentleman stood up in the back of the room at the townhall, and he said: You are not going to treat this generation of veterans the way you treated us, the Vietnam veterans.

I remember it because it hit home with me. I remember those Vietnam soldiers coming home. I remember the stories of toxic exposure to Agent Orange. I remember how we knew what we needed to do, but, man, it took us a long time to get stuff done. In fact, we still are dealing with Agent Orange, and it is dealt in this bill with hypertension.

But here we are today treating this generation of veterans just like we treated the Vietnam veterans and other generations of veterans who have served this country. As a result of turning a blind eye on the needs of our veterans, they have died, they have died, and they have died due to toxic exposure.

Here are the facts. More than 3½ million post-9/11 veterans may have been exposed to toxic substances overseas during their time in uniform. Seventy-five percent of those men and women report being exposed to burn pits. As a result of these exposures, many veterans suffered from rare, deadly cancers, respiratory conditions, and other illnesses—let me say it again: rare but deadly cancers and respiratory conditions and other illness—sometimes developing years after they served in the military.

Now, it is easy for me to stand up here and talk about cancer—I don't have it; at least I don't think I have it—and talk about respiratory conditions. I don't have to gasp for air. But the truth is, because of these men and women's service to this country in the Middle East and their exposures to toxins, they have developed these illnesses

or if what happens with all the past ones, they will develop them in the future. Because of that, today, hundreds of thousands are going without the care and the benefits they need to treat these conditions.

By the way, we are still not addressing Agent Orange for veterans suffering from conditions like hypertension, where the science is clear, and in the worst cases, folks are paying with their lives.

Veterans and heroes like SFC Heath Robinson, for whom this bill is named—Heath deployed to Kosovo and Iraq with the Ohio National Guard, was exposed to burn pits, and he died. He died in 2020 from toxic exposure. SFC Heath Robinson—he was a son; he was a husband; he was a father. In fact, we heard from his daughter this morning at a press conference that Senator MORAN was at—a beautiful little girl who, in her words, said: I love my dad. But yet we didn't step up. The country failed to deliver for him, and we also failed to deliver for his family. The situation has happened with far, far, far too much regularity, and that is why we are here dealing with this bill.

The SFC Heath Robinson Honoring Our PACT Act will right the wrong for our past, for our present, and for our future veterans. Here is how it is done:

This bill will expand eligibility for VA healthcare to more than 3½ million combat veterans exposed to burn pits since 9/11.

By the way, when I was in Afghanistan and we were flying around with my good friend Jim Webb when he was in this body, we flew to the bases based on the smoke coming out of these burn pits.

The toxic exposure was real, it happened, and it happened to 3.5 million combat veterans exposed to since 9/11.

It will support our post-9/11 and Vietnam-era veterans by removing the burden of proof for 23 presumptive conditions caused by toxic exposure, from cancers to lung disease. It will also establish a framework for the establishment of future presumptions of service connection related to toxic exposures. What does this mean? It means that we have had toxic exposures for over 100 years and maybe even before that, and it has taken an act of Congress to get these folks the benefits they need. Now we are giving the VA the mechanism to deal with toxic exposure.

It will give the VA the tools it needs to bolster its workforce, to establish more healthcare facilities, to improve claims processing, and to better meet the immediate and future needs of every veteran our VA serves.

The bottom line is, this bill is far too important for this country and for those who fought to protect it.

When it comes to our fighting men and women, when it comes to sending our folks off to war, we never talk about money; we just do it because we think it is the right thing to do. They are coming back. This bill is going to cost \$287.6 billion over 10 years, so it is

a big-ticket item. But the fact is, we sent them off to war. We told them we were going to take care of them when they came back home. There shouldn't be a debate about the money.

I would agree that we should try to figure out ways to pay for as much stuff in this body as we can, but the truth is, freedom is not free. There is a price to pay when we send our men and women in uniform to fight wars on our behalf, and you don't have to be a veteran or be exposed to Agent Orange or burn pits to understand that price.

We have been waging war for far too long, and now, right now, veterans across this country are the ones paying for that cost of war, and we can't wait any longer. No more empty promises. We have a unique opportunity to make history with the passage of this comprehensive toxic exposure package that will recognize our veterans' service and their sacrifice. We are too close to fail. It is time for this body to act. It is time we address the true cost of war. Our Nation's veterans and their families are counting on it.

I want to close with one thing. This is a big bill. I have been in this body long enough to know that if there is a big bill, you can always find a reason to vote against it, and you can always find a reason to vote for it. This is more important. If we are going to take into account the future of our fighting men and women, the future of this All-Volunteer military we have, the future of the people who have been hit by toxic exposure, the future of our Vietnam veterans with Agent Orange exposure, this is too important to find a reason to vote against it. This is doing right by our fighting men and women in this country. This is doing right by our military. This is doing right for freedom and democracy.

Our Nation's veterans deserve this, and maybe just as important, our Nation's veterans' families deserve passage of this bill.

With that, I will yield the floor to the ranking member, Senator MORAN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak up to whatever additional minutes necessary for me to complete my remarks before the 11:30 vote.

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

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I certainly rise this morning, going into this afternoon, in advance of a vote on a motion to proceed, a cloture vote, on the SFC Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022, and I would call upon my colleagues to do the same thing.

I appreciate what I just heard from the chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs and how he made the case for why this is important legislation and why we have little excuse not to see its success here in the next few days.

I mentioned last night when I spoke on the Senate floor that I am not a veteran. I mentioned that my experience in high school in seeing those who are just a year or two older than me returning from their service in Vietnam caused me to reach a conclusion that I would do everything I could in my life to compensate for the ill treatment those men and women returning from service in Southeast Asia received from their fellow Americans. I was going to pay respect. I was going to honor them. I was going to say thank you. That is what a 16-year-old kid thought he should do to make certain that we compensate for those who served our country and deserved something better than what they received.

I never envisioned being a Member of the U.S. Senate, never thought that was something that would happen to me in my life, but because I now serve in this capacity, I have an obligation to do much more than saying thank you. There is nothing wrong—it is a good thing to tell those who served “Thank you. I appreciate your service. I respect you,” but that is just the beginning.

Certainly, as a member of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee and a Member of the U.S. Senate, I and all my colleagues owe those who served in Vietnam and every other battle of our Nation more than just saying thank you.

My guess is that nearly all of us, the 100 of us, probably said these words at services across our States on Memorial Day weekend. We have said it hundreds of times: “Thank you for your service.” I will continue to say “thank you for your service” hundreds and hundreds of times myself.

But this week we have the opportunity to do something significantly more and that is to actually provide the benefits that men and women who served in Vietnam and who served in Iraq and Afghanistan and around the globe—the benefits they are entitled to and the benefits which they desperately need.

We were with a group of veterans—certainly a group of veteran organizations—this morning on the Capitol lawn, and, to my knowledge, every veterans service organization, every organization that represents veterans is asking us to pass this legislation. But I also was surrounded by family members and veterans themselves who have experienced horrendous circumstances in their lives and their families’ lives as a result of exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam and toxic burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan.

And you can see the challenge that people face in their lives because of their service. And we no longer have the capability, if we ever did, to say: No, we can’t help you yet; we will wait for—we will wait for more science, more medicine; we will wait until the Department of Veterans Affairs completes another study.

We can’t wait because they can’t wait.

During my time at home over that Memorial Day weekend, a Navy veteran said he and his father were both exposed to toxic exposures in their service to their country and, to their knowledge, they have no consequences, no physical ailments that resulted from that. But they said: Every day we worry about it because we don’t think—we don’t know that if we do develop those symptoms, that the Department of Veterans Affairs and, really, the American people are going to be there to take care of us. So every day of our lives, knowing that we have been exposed to toxic substances during our military service—every day we wonder, if something does develop, what is going to happen to our spouse? what is going to happen to our kids? what is going to happen to me, the person who served, if we don’t know that the VA, the Department of Veterans Affairs, is going to be there with the benefits that we need to care for ourselves, our health, and our family members?

The bill that we take up today is a culmination of years of work, and people across the country have come to their Congress over those years, knocked on our doors, made phone calls, and asked us: Please do something to take care of someone we love who has been exposed to these terrible substances and causing death and ill health in their lives.

So, across the Senate, many of us have introduced legislation over those years, legislation in recent years, and with the leadership of our Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, we had begun the process of sorting out bills that our colleagues were asking us to pass to deal with toxic exposure, and now we have combined the best of those pieces of legislation from many Members of our Senate, members of our committee, into the Heath Robinson Act.

We have incorporated important fixes to the House version of this bill. We have worked to make sure the mitigation—this has been one of my concerns from the beginning is how do we take care of a lot more veterans who desperately need to be cared for and not disadvantage other veterans who are already waiting in line for services at the Department? And we have worked to mitigate, to reduce, to eliminate those disruptions in VA operations.

We have streamlined the disability claims process for toxic-exposed veterans. We have prescribed a lasting framework for the future VA decisions that is transparent and driven by scientific evidence, all with the effort and hopefully the consequence of not negatively impacting veterans already in our system. This lasting framework is a win for veterans, requiring the VA to be proactive in evaluating diseases for service connections.

We have had the opportunity, over a long period of time, to say: Well, the VA has the authority to take care of you. That really wasn’t a very good ex-

planation because it never seemed to happen fast enough, and in the process of us waiting on the Department of Veterans Affairs to act, more and more service men and women became ill and too many died waiting for a result.

With this bill before us today, we are called to act for veterans, and we should answer that call. The Heath Robinson Act is a solution for a problem that has plagued veterans for too long and left way too many families either uncertain about whether they would be cared for or actually left them without the care they desperately need. This is a responsible approach to fix a broken system that has been cobbled together through decades of patchwork fixes. As we all tried to do something, we never got enough accomplished. But we tried, and we have put this patchwork system together that has failed those who need our help. This legislation is our chance to make certain that future generations of toxic-exposed veterans can get the healthcare and disability compensation that they deserve without delay.

Every member of the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs has voted for the original bill in front of our committee, now nearly a year ago. The bill was passed out of committee with the understanding that Senator TESTER and I would work to find some fixes to problems that people recognized. In my view, both Republicans and Democrats had concerns about certain aspects of this legislation, and we have now spent the last year and particularly the last several months trying to fine-tune this bill in a way that certainly reduces some damage and fixes the process, increases the assets in personnel and resources that the Department of Veterans Affairs has for determining disability claims and for providing healthcare for those who serve. This is a better bill as a result of our efforts, and I thank Chairman TESTER and my committee colleagues for their partnership and work to get us where we are today.

There was a lady on the Capitol lawn this morning in the group that Senator TESTER and I spoke to, and she was telling me that her husband was exposed to toxic substances in the Middle East, that he is experiencing growing symptoms of challenges as a result of that exposure. He is waiting to see whether this bill passes, and he is hoping that even if he is the last veteran alive to see the legislation passed that he will have accomplished something that is important for him because he will pass knowing that the problems he is creating for his family due to his service are being addressed.

There is sadness in that, that one who is challenged by these conditions wants to know that we have done our job so that he can know he has done his job as a father and a husband. Today begins the day in which we can demonstrate that we are capable of doing our job, and I ask all of my Republican and Democratic colleagues to join me

in supporting this historic bill for our veterans today and for the generations of veterans to come.

I yield the floor.

#### VOTE ON WAGNER NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Wagner nomination?

Mr. TESTER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY), and the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 76, nays 21, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 214 Ex.]

#### YEAS—76

Baldwin	Heinrich	Rosen
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Rounds
Blumenthal	Hirono	Sanders
Blunt	Hoeben	Sasse
Booker	Hyde-Smith	Schatz
Boozman	Inhofe	Schumer
Brown	Kaine	Scott (SC)
Burr	Kelly	Shaheen
Cantwell	Kennedy	Shelby
Capito	King	Sinema
Cardin	Klobuchar	Smith
Carper	Leahy	Stabenow
Casey	Lujan	Tester
Cassidy	Manchin	Thune
Collins	Markey	Tillis
Coons	McConnell	Tuberville
Cornyn	Menendez	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Moran	Warner
Cramer	Murkowski	Warnock
Duckworth	Murray	Warren
Durbin	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Fischer	Padilla	Wicker
Gillibrand	Peters	Wyden
Graham	Portman	Young
Grassley	Reed	
Hassan	Romney	

#### NAYS—21

Barrasso	Ernst	Marshall
Blackburn	Hagerty	Paul
Braun	Hawley	Risch
Cotton	Johnson	Rubio
Crapo	Lankford	Scott (FL)
Cruz	Lee	Sullivan
Daines	Lummis	Toomey

#### NOT VOTING—3

Feinstein	Merkley	Murphy
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The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the mo-

tion to proceed to Calendar No. 388, H.R. 3967, a bill to improve health care and benefits for veterans exposed to toxic substances, and for other purposes.

Charles E. Schumer, Jon Tester, Benjamin L. Cardin, John W. Hickenlooper, Richard Blumenthal, Jack Reed, Bernard Sanders, Brian Schatz, Tim Kaine, Richard J. Durbin, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Martin Heinrich, Margaret Wood Hassan, Tammy Duckworth, Kyrsten Sinema, Patrick J. Leahy, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Christopher A. Coons.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to H.R. 3967, a bill to improve health care and benefits for veterans exposed to toxic substances, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) and the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 86, nays 12, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 215 Ex.]

#### YEAS—86

Baldwin	Graham	Peters
Barrasso	Grassley	Portman
Bennet	Hagerty	Reed
Blackburn	Hassan	Risch
Blumenthal	Hawley	Rosen
Blunt	Heinrich	Rounds
Booker	Hickenlooper	Rubio
Boozman	Hirono	Sanders
Braun	Hoeben	Sasse
Brown	Hyde-Smith	Schatz
Cantwell	Inhofe	Schumer
Capito	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Cardin	Kaine	Scott (SC)
Carper	Kelly	Shaheen
Casey	King	Shelby
Collins	Klobuchar	Sinema
Coons	Leahy	Smith
Cornyn	Lujan	Stabenow
Cortez Masto	Manchin	Tester
Cotton	Markey	Thune
Cramer	Marshall	Tuberville
Crapo	McConnell	Van Hollen
Cruz	Menendez	Warner
Daines	Moran	Warnock
Duckworth	Murkowski	Warren
Durbin	Murphy	Whitehouse
Ernst	Murray	Wicker
Fischer	Ossoff	Wyden
Gillibrand	Padilla	

#### NAYS—12

Burr	Lee	Sullivan
Cassidy	Lummis	Tillis
Kennedy	Paul	Toomey
Lankford	Romney	Young

#### NOT VOTING—2

Feinstein	Merkley
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The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. SINEMA). On this vote, the yeas are 86, the nays are 12.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

#### HONORING OUR PROMISE TO ADDRESS COMPREHENSIVE TOXICS ACT OF 2021—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Cloture having been invoked, the Senate will resume legislative session, and the clerk will report the motion to proceed.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to H.R. 3967, a bill to improve health care and benefits for veterans exposed to toxic substances, and for other purposes.

#### RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:17 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. SINEMA).

#### HONORING OUR PROMISE TO ADDRESS COMPREHENSIVE TOXICS ACT OF 2021—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

H.R. 3967

Mr. KELLY. Madam President, it is past due for us to address veterans not getting the care they need after suffering an illness caused by toxic exposure. We can do that as soon as this week by passing the PACT Act.

As a retired naval aviator, I know firsthand the sacrifice and hard work it takes to succeed in our military. I knew I wanted to join the military from a young age, and after attending the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, making that choice was easy for me. That is the case for some but not for everyone. Many more will say that this was the hardest decision that they had to make, putting families, school, careers, or all three through major changes in order to serve.

This is a sacrifice for so many, and regardless of how someone comes to serving, what follows isn't easy. We spend years training to go to war. For me, that was training to fly off of and land on an aircraft carrier and put bombs on enemy targets. That is what I did during Operation Desert Storm, flying combat missions off the USS *Midway* in the gulf, to deliver weapons on dozens of targets in Iraq and Kuwait.

War is by its very nature dangerous, and flying airplanes in combat or conducting ground combat operations is very complex. You need to focus on completing the mission while also focusing on your safety and that of your team or your crew. There are many opportunities to be killed or injured. We all get that. The public understands