

waiting for a year or more to get confirmed. People have quit jobs for these posts. Others are waiting inside State, stuck in limbo forever. I heard of someone who considered retiring while waiting to be confirmed."

Eric Rubin, himself a former ambassador to Bulgaria and deputy chief of mission in Russia, is worried about what message this is sending to the two countries most eager to weaken and replace America on the world stage: Russia and China. "The U.S. no longer has the largest diplomatic service, China does," Rubin told me. "The U.S. no longer has the most embassies and consulates abroad, China does. We have to stop tying one hand behind our backs in our efforts to represent our country and advance its security and prosperity."

Or, in the words of the diplomatic insider, "It's malpractice."

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Ambassador Rubin put it very starkly. He said:

The U.S. no longer has the largest diplomatic service. China does.

He concluded by saying:

We have to stop tying one hand behind our backs in our efforts to represent our country and advance its security and prosperity.

It's malpractice.

It is malpractice.

The fact that too many people in this Chamber are dragging their feet on allowing Ambassadors to be confirmed, on allowing diplomats with the Department of State to be confirmed, on allowing other high level people throughout government to be confirmed because, only, of their opposition to the Biden administration is just untenable, and it is against our national security.

So I think it is time now for the Senate to do its job to confirm Dr. Gupta. So let's move forward. Let's get our foreign policy with respect to gender throughout the world back on track.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. HAGERTY. Madam President, I have great respect for my colleague from New Hampshire. I worked very hard on the WGDP initiative that was put in place by the previous administration. It has the potential to do so much good.

I am very concerned about elements of that being dismantled right now, and I would like to remind my colleagues on the other side of the aisle that this is a matter of priorities.

Again, I will reiterate that I was put through 30 hours of cloture. The rules have been improved since then to reduce that amount of time. I think it would be a total of 4 hours in this case, yet the priorities set by the leadership of the other side indicate that they don't care as much about these positions because they won't even schedule it.

It is certainly within the Senate majority leader's power to do that. Rather, the Senate majority leader would rather prioritize seating the Postal Board of Governors than putting Ambassadors into place.

So I have difficulty with this argument, and, with all due respect, my objection stands.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, my colleague from Tennessee was just talking about priorities of this administration and this Senate, and I want to continue on that area of focus, relating to what many of us believe is probably the most important priority we have in the U.S. Senate, and that is defending our Nation.

Budgets are a reflection of an administration's values and an administration's priorities. And as I mentioned, many of us—and I believe on both sides of the aisle—see that the No. 1 priority we should have in the U.S. Senate is making sure we are a strong nation, to defend this great country of ours and to make sure we have the most lethal, well-trained military anywhere in the world, and that we take care of our troops and their families.

But this is not what this administration—the Biden administration—believes at all. In fact, President Biden's budgets clearly not only do not prioritize our military; they put them consistently last. And that is not a one-time thing. This is a pattern with this administration.

Here was the President's proposed budget last year. Take a look at it. We all know it was trillions and trillions. Department of Commerce, 28 percent increase. EPA, 21 percent. Interior, 16 percent—on and on. There are double-digit increases everywhere except—except—in the two Agencies that actually protect the Nation: the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security.

Last year, the Biden budget put forward a budget that, if it was adjusted for inflation, was almost a 3-percent cut to the Department of Defense.

Priorities matter. This administration has not prioritized our military at all.

Guess who was really pleased by that budget, by the way? The dictator in Beijing and the dictator in Moscow. No doubt when they saw that, they loved it.

Thankfully, the Armed Services Committee, on which I sit, said: Do you know what, Mr. President? With all due respect, this is nuts. We are not going to stand for this.

We put forward in the National Defense Authorization Act last year a 3-percent real increase to the Department of Defense budget. It was very bipartisan in the committee, a complete rebuke to the President of the United States, saying: We don't believe in cuts. We are going to increase. The appropriators, thankfully, did the same.

So that was the Biden administration's prioritization of our military last year.

Now, what happened between last year and this year, when the most recent budget came out? Well, I think a lot of us know, but I am going to talk a little bit about it.

Russia invaded Ukraine, and at an April Armed Services hearing, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,

General Milley, said that the invasion was "the greatest threat to the peace and security of Europe and perhaps the world in any of my time of 42 years in uniform."

So this is the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff saying we are likely seeing one of the most dangerous periods anywhere in the world in terms of national security in the last four decades.

That was testimony from the President's own Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

That is Russia. And, of course, their ally China is also taking incredibly aggressive actions all around the world. They are beginning to outcompete our country on many fronts—critical minerals, energy, technology.

Certainly, Xi Jinping, the dictator of Beijing, has increased China's aggression all around the world—in India, threatening to invade Taiwan, economic aggression toward Australia, snuffing out liberty in Hong Kong.

What else has China done? It is dramatically increasing its defense spending—more than 7 percent this year—increasing a navy that is almost becoming larger than ours.

This is how General Milley, again, put it in a hearing last April:

We are now facing two global powers, China and Russia, each with significant military capabilities, both of whom intend to fundamentally change the current rules-based global order. We are entering a world that is becoming more unstable and the potential for significant international conflict between great powers is increasing, not decreasing.

So that is the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, again.

Now, what do you think the President did, seeing we had this incredibly dangerous period internationally, with his next budget? Last year, as I mentioned, he cut the Pentagon defense budget by almost 3 percent and dead last with Homeland Security in terms of Agencies.

So did he listen to his Chairman? Does he really think it is that dangerous? Let's see.

This is this year's defense budget and other priorities from this administration's multitrillion dollar budget, and, once again, you see the EPA coming in at a 24-percent increase. Commerce, HHS, and Labor are all double-digit—Interior, DOJ.

What about the Department of Defense? It is a 4-percent increase with almost 9-percent inflation. We are talking close to a 5-percent real cut to the Department of Defense. This is outrageous.

Last year, the President put forward almost a 4-percent cut to defense spending. In the interim period, we had one of the most dangerous wars that has happened—certainly in Europe and maybe in the world—in a generation. The President's own Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff come before the Senate Armed Services Committee and say it is an incredibly dangerous time—a period, maybe, in almost 50 years in

which we haven't seen so many threats to the international order. And the President does what? He, once again, prioritizes our defense almost dead last—almost dead last. Adjusted for inflation, it is a 5-percent cut.

Now, with this posture hearing for the Secretary of Defense and Chairman Milley, I asked the question: Gentlemen, with all due respect, you just said it is the most dangerous period in almost the last 50 years. How can you come before this committee and put forward a budget that is almost a 5-percent cut to the Department of Defense and our troops?

They didn't have a good answer. The truth of the matter is, I am quite certain that the uniformed military and probably even Secretary Austin do not support this budget, but they are good soldiers. They had to salute the Commander in Chief and try to support it. But we don't have to support it, and I know the American people certainly don't support it. Once again, I do know two people who support it. Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping look at this, and this is something they are very pleased with.

Once again, the Armed Services Committee, when we met to mark up the NDAA, voted in an overwhelming bipartisan fashion—23 to 3—to, once again, dramatically rebuke the President in a bipartisan way and significantly increase the top line for the Department of Defense to make sure we have a strong nation and that our troops are taken care of and their families by almost \$45 billion over what the President requested. It was a bipartisan rebuke, once again, of this administration that won't prioritize our national security and that keeps putting forward budgets that prioritize the defense of our Nation last.

We also started in this NDAA to course-correct, which we need to do dramatically at the Pentagon. We have had civilian leadership, primarily driven by the Biden administration's far-left nominees, who have not been focusing the Pentagon on its top priority, which is to win our Nation's wars and to make sure we have the most lethal military of any country in the world. So I was able in this NDAA to put forward some amendments that I was glad to get bipartisan support on, that are in the current NDAA, to start a course correction.

First, one of my amendments directs the Pentagon to discontinue any further investment in the DOD-wide effort to root out so-called extremism within the ranks. This has been an obsession of the civilian leadership at the Pentagon, many of whom know nothing about the military. It is an obsession, given the incredibly low rate of extremist activity in our military as determined by the Secretary of Defense's own working group on this topic.

The press didn't write about that because they love to kind of weave into the story that somehow our military is full of extremists. Unfortunately, some

of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle play that up too. One Senator, at one point, said 10 percent of the military might be extremist—a ridiculous besmirching of the men and women in our armed services. The actual report from the Secretary of Defense's office found fewer than 100 cases of extremist activity in a total military force of over 2 million people. When you do the math, that is less than .005 percent.

So let me be clear: Extremism has no place in our military and must be rooted out when discovered, but these numbers simply don't warrant the time and investment that our senior military has put into this issue. So, in the NDAA, we have said we are not funding it anymore.

There is a second issue in the NDAA for which I was able to put forward an amendment. The Department of the Army and the Department of the Air Force, according to press reports, were starting to devise a policy that would allow each servicemember to veto their duty assignment if they disagreed with the laws and regulations in a State or in a community where they were going to be assigned by the military.

Could you imagine the chaos that would result if every soldier, marine, sailor, or airman could say: "You know, I don't want to go to California; its regulations on the Second Amendment are overly burdensome on my Second Amendment right," or for any other reason?

So we said, in the NDAA, a policy that gives service men and women the ability to veto their assignments based on whether they want to go somewhere or not is not the way our military is going to operate. That has been nipped in the bud.

Finally, there is a very simple amendment that I put forward that just provides clarity to the men and women of the Department of Defense. All it does is remind them of what their job is. The military is too often asked to do so many different things—to focus on climate change and to focus on so many other issues. The military has one job: to provide combat-credible military forces needed to deter our adversaries, to protect the security of our Nation, and to win our Nation's wars when called upon to do so.

I put forward an amendment that said just that: Here is your priority, and here is what you are supposed to do. It is needed because of all of the things that our top civilian leaders are now telling the troops they should be focused on. They should be focused on prevailing in a war if they are called on to do so, and that is what my amendment did. Believe it or not, a number of Senators voted against it, but that also made the Defense Authorization Act this year.

In addition to significantly increasing the Department of Defense's authorized budget, we are starting to, once again, get the military focused on their primary job: lethality and winning wars.

So we need to bring the NDAA to the floor. We have passed it 66 years in a row. As I mentioned, the administration's priorities are clearly not with regard to national defense and our military. We can tell by the budget that has been put forward. In the Senate, priorities are often determined by the time on the floor to get a piece of legislation moving. It is clear to everybody who has been here that the majority leader does not prioritize the military in the same way that the President of the United States doesn't.

We passed the NDAA in June—the Armed Services Committee did—in a huge bipartisan vote. The House passed its NDAA in the House in July. So we are waiting to bring up one of the most important pieces of legislation we work on every year: the legislation that sets the policy and funds our troops and their families.

Where is it?

Senator SCHUMER, where is it? When are we going to bring it up?

You have Democrats and Republicans who are looking at this floor time in September, saying: We need to bring up the NDAA.

The rumor, right now, is that the majority leader plans to bring it up in December.

Think about that, America.

I don't even know what we are doing right now on the Senate floor—minor nominations. We should be bringing up the NDAA to protect this country and to make sure the men and women in our military know we have their backs. Right now, nobody has any idea—maybe the majority leader does—as to when we are actually going to bring this most important bipartisan piece of legislation to the floor.

This is why I joined in a letter that we sent out today, led by Senator TUBERVILLE, who serves on the Armed Services Committee with me, signed by 20 of my colleagues. By the way, I know it would have been signed by some Democratic colleagues as well. They didn't want to put their names on the letter, but they feel the same. It says to the majority leader: You control the Senate. You control the priorities of this body. Bring up the NDAA by the end of September.

Here is the letter. I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD.

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

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, September 13, 2022.

Hon. CHARLES E. SCHUMER,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

LEADER SCHUMER: At the founding of our nation, then-General George Washington penned, "When the civil and military powers cooperate, and afford mutual aid to each other there can be little doubt of things going well". Two centuries later, that still rings true. Yet should this body fail in its top Constitutional responsibility of providing for a common defense, our armed services will be left directionless, lack stable

funding, and be devoid of civilian Congressional oversight.

Chairman Reed and Ranking Member Inhofe saw to it that the FY2023 National Defense Authorization Act remained bipartisan and the result safeguards the United States. Additionally, the bill invests in technology advancements and procurement through a \$45 billion budget topline increase, provides service members with a 4.6 percent pay raise, and strengthens our forces in cybersecurity, space, the Indo-Pacific, personnel management, and many other areas.

Members of the House passed their NDAA on July 14th, by a vote of 329-101. For the bill to go to conference and make it to President Biden's desk, our colleagues must have the opportunity to debate the Senate version with an open amendment process. As such, we the undersigned respectfully request that you call the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 to the Senate floor before the conclusion of the September work period.

Respectfully,

Tommy Tuberville, John Cornyn, Todd Young, Charles E. Grassley, Mike Braun, Joni K. Ernst, Thom Tillis, Roger W. Marshall, Roger Wicker, Tom Cotton, Kevin Cramer, Rick Scott, Deb Fischer, Marsha Blackburn, M. Michael Rounds, Dan Sullivan, Cynthia M. Lummis, Michael S. Lee, James E. Risch, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Mike Crapo, Ted Cruz, Ron Johnson, U.S. Senators.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, the letter says:

At the founding of our nation, then-General George Washington penned, "When the civil and military powers cooperate, and afford mutual aid to each other there can be little doubt of things going well."

As General Milley said, at one of the most dangerous times in recent history, it is vital that our civil and military powers cooperate.

What we need to do in this body right now is get back to the important work of bolstering our economy, of fighting inflation, of bringing down energy costs, of unleashing American energy, and, most importantly, of passing the NDAA so we can bolster the national security of this great Nation in very dangerous times.

I call on the majority leader, along with 20 of my colleagues and some of my Democratic colleagues, to bring the NDAA to the floor and not wait until the end of the year, which is what we hear he is planning to do.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). The Senator from Minnesota.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, the Senate consider the following nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 1137, 1138, and 1108; that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc without intervening action or debate; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nominations of Travis LeBlanc, of Maryland, to be a Member of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board for a term expiring January 29, 2028 (Reappointment); Richard E. DiZinno, of the District of Columbia, to be a Member of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board for the remainder of the term expiring January 29, 2023; and Shefali Razdan Duggal, of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and 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 PRISONERS OF WAR AND MISSING IN ACTION RECOGNITION DAY

Mr. KING. Mr. President, Friday, September 16, 2022, marks the National Prisoners of War and Missing in Action Recognition Day. On this day, we join together to honor the brave men and women of our Armed Forces who have been prisoners of war and for those who remain missing in action, including the 477 Mainers still unaccounted for. This solemn day is a painful, important reminder of the sacrifices endured by servicemembers and the immense, incalculable loss and uncertainty borne by their families and communities. Let us renew our commitment to bring answers and closure to the loved ones of those missing in action and to care for all those who have endured the painful silence of these losses.

Today, I join people across Maine and our Nation in saying, "You Are Not Forgotten." The phrase is reminder of our duty to leave no American servicemember or veteran behind, no matter where they may be. I stand humbled and grateful to those who answered the call of their Nation to protect our way of life. We also pay tribute to those who have been POW/MIA and have returned to their loved ones. We have a solemn obligation to take care of them and their families so that they can enjoy the freedoms they sacrificed for.

To the families who have lost their sons and daughters and to the comrades who have lost their friends and companions, know that today and every day we stand with you through your hardships and in honoring the selfless service of America's POW and MIA.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO CURTIS D. ROBINSON

• Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, today I rise to recognize Mr. Curtis D. Robinson, a long-time resident of Connecticut and outstanding entrepreneur and philanthropist who turns 80 on September 21, 2022.

As a teenager, Mr. Robinson left Birmingham, AL, and the segregation of the Jim Crow South, arriving in Hartford, CT, in 1958 with little more than the clothes on his back. Mr. Robinson began working two full-time jobs and one part-time job and, after several years, was able to purchase a grocery store at the age of 18. By the time he was 22, Mr. Robinson also owned a restaurant, a cleaning service, an apartment building, and a construction supply company. He used this experience to start the Small Business Development Program in 1969, creating over 100 small businesses in the Hartford and Springfield areas. This remarkable success is a testament to Mr. Robinson's extraordinary industrious spirit and tremendous work ethic.

Today, Mr. Robinson is the owner, operator, and president of C&R Development Company, the largest minority construction management company on the east coast. He also owns several shops within Bradley International Airport and runs other businesses, including R&G Services, which operates the shuttle bus service at the airport, and R&G Parking, which operates one of the largest parking lots in downtown Hartford.

In addition to his entrepreneurial endeavors, Mr. Robinson is also an advocate for health equity. As the co-founder and chairman of the Curtis D. Robinson Center for Health Equity—CDRCHE—he expands the provision of critical health services in underserved communities, serving over 10,000 people since 2010. Expanding on this firsthand experience in addressing health inequities, Mr. Robinson sits on the boards of Trinity Health of New England, Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, and the Connecticut Hospital Association.

Mr. Robinson is also an extraordinary philanthropist and has contributed greatly to the civic life of Connecticut. Along with his wife, Mr. Robinson founded the Curtis and Sheila Robinson Foundation, which provides financial support across a variety of areas—offering assistance with food, rent, clothing, transportation, and scholarship funds for individuals in need. Over the years, they have championed many worthy causes, including efforts to combat food insecurity, domestic violence, and poverty. The Robinsons have also assisted individuals with medical and hospital care, donated buses to churches and schools, and adopted a homeless shelter for displaced children. Their charitable contributions are truly too numerous to list, and I applaud their remarkable efforts to give back to their community.