

PORTMAN and I got together and we worked on a bill, and we followed in Bill Gradison's footsteps to get that legislation accomplished. That was the beginning of a three-decade relationship that the two of us have had in pursuing legislation.

Perhaps our best known legislation is the PORTMAN-Cardin pension reform legislation. For many years, people thought my first name was Portman because of the association with Congressman PORTMAN at the time.

And I must tell you, we got amazing things done to expand retirement savings opportunities.

We are very proud that several bills were enacted and signed into law, but we are equally proud of the process that was used in order to put that legislation together.

We invited all stakeholders to join us. It was truly bipartisan. We wanted to get the best policy, and it was that process that led to the successful passage of the first Portman-Cardin bill that dramatically expanded retirement savings opportunities. Even though it was not in either the Democrat or Republican leadership package, we were able to get it into the Balanced Budget Act.

I mention the process because that is the process that Senator PORTMAN—Congressman PORTMAN—has always used. He has used the bipartisan process to try to bring us together to get the very best possible solutions to problems. It has been the bedrock of his career, and that is why he has been so successful here in the U.S. Senate, and so many of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle have expressed our gratitude for his public service.

Now, I must tell you, he used that relationship sometimes to move issues that were not necessarily his partner's top priority. As he mentioned on the floor, he got me engaged in the IRS reform bill that dealt with the nuts and bolts of the IRS.

Now, I ask you: How many people want to be known in their district for improving the IRS services for collecting their taxes?

But ROB PORTMAN was the leader on this, and he needed a Democrat in the House, and he was very persistent, and we were able to get significant reform done in the IRS when we were both Members of the House.

Well, as you know, ROB PORTMAN moved on to become the USTR, to become the budget director, and then returned to the U.S. Senate. And I was so pleased to be able to partner with him again when he returned to the U.S. Senate.

On the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, we talked about some of his major accomplishments. The two of us have worked together to promote the U.S.-Israel special relationship, to fight against anti-Semitism and the BDS movement, and there has been no stronger advocate in the U.S. Senate for the defense of Ukraine.

His record has been an unbelievable amount of accomplishments of getting

solid legislation accomplished because he has that ability to work across party line. He is very engaged on the issues. He knows the issues. He knows the substance. He knows your concerns. So we can work it out and reach a common level of agreement so we can get a bill to the finish line.

So that is why he has such a remarkable record in getting retirement legislation enacted into law, getting trade legislation enacted into law, dealing with our National Park Service enacted into law, fighting drug addiction, which has been one of his major passions, making a huge difference on our war against drugs.

And as was pointed out earlier, and I just really want to underscore that, his values of promoting human rights.

In so many cases, he has been the key supporter, initiator, and had the ability to reach the finish line on bills that affect the basic rights of Americans going against such issues as human trafficking and so many other areas.

So I just really wanted to take this time to say to my friend ROB PORTMAN, through the Presiding Officer, thank you so much for your many, many years of public service.

We wish Jane and you and your entire family only the best going forward. You have left the legislature once before and returned. Maybe, you will return again. We will see. But I wish you only happiness and success in what follows your Senate career. Thank you for sharing your talent with the American people.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, we have talked about more important legislative measures, and I just want to say thank you to all of my colleagues and to my colleague from Illinois who spoke and to the others who were overly generous in their comments. I appreciate it. I think my mom would have believed it, and my dad would have liked it.

Seriously, you can see why I will miss this place and why I believe that these colleagues, who talked all about the need for us to find that common ground and make a difference for our constituents, are people I have enjoyed working with and look forward to staying in touch with.

So this is a bittersweet moment. I am looking forward to getting back to Ohio full time with family and friends, as I have said, and the private sector. I have a deep respect for my colleagues, and I thank them for being on the floor today even though the jet fumes can already be smelled and people are already heading back for their weekends and important meetings back home.

So thank you, Madam President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, let me add my thanks to Senator PORTMAN for his tremendous work here. I wish him the very best in his future as well.

PREVENT PANDEMICS ACT

Madam President, I come to the floor today to talk about a very important issue.

Our country has made great progress in the fight against COVID-19. Families have been getting back to their daily lives. The thing I keep hearing from people in my home State is they want to keep it that way. They want to keep moving forward and making sure we never find ourselves in a situation like that again. I couldn't agree more, but that means actually taking action. It means not letting this moment—this Congress—pass us by and, instead, actually delivering the public health reforms that families need, which is why I am here today urging my colleagues to ensure that any end-of-the-year package includes our bipartisan PREVENT Pandemics Act.

Senator BURR and I led the HELP Committee this Congress, and from day one, it was clear to us that pandemic preparedness had to be a priority because the next time there is a crisis like this, we cannot have people asking: Why can't I get a test? Where can I get reliable information? How can we be so unprepared for this?

That means we must learn the lessons of the pandemic and ensure that our government actually works better and smarter in preparing and responding to public health threats, which is exactly what Senator BURR and I set out to do when we crafted the PREVENT Pandemics Act, which passed out of our HELP Committee in an overwhelming 20-to-2 vote earlier this year.

Our bill improves our public health system by learning from what worked and what did not in our COVID response. A big piece of that is establishing the Office of Pandemic Preparedness and Response Policy at the White House to serve as mission control so that we have a team in place, ready to go, 24/7, to guide our Federal response to new and emerging threats.

We have also seen how dangerous shortages have been throughout this crisis, which is why the PREVENT Pandemics Act strengthens our stockpiles and supply chains for drugs and ventilators and testing and components and masks and other lifesaving medical supplies. Of course, with a new threat, the issue isn't just a shortage of tools; it is that the tests and the treatments and the vaccines may not even exist yet. So our bill establishes ARPA-H, which is a new Agency focused on cutting-edge medical research like the kind that made it possible for us to develop a safe, effective COVID-19 vaccine in record time.

Our bill also supports potentially lifesaving research on issues like antivirals for pathogens with pandemic potential, antimicrobial resistance, better coordination in our blood supply, best practices for emergency preparedness and response, and long COVID, which many people are still struggling with.

This pandemic has also put a spotlight on how inadequate data from outdated and often incompatible systems can make it very hard for our health experts to do their jobs. In the 21st century, the CDC should not be collating data sent to them from fax machines, and incomplete demographic data should not hinder our experts in making lifesaving decisions.

Put simply, our government can work better and faster than this. That is why the PREVENT Pandemics Act will finally help modernize and standardize our public health data practices.

Everyone should understand that, with some really commonsense reforms, we can make our public health system work better for everyone—by the way, including our communities of color, Tribes, people with disabilities, rural communities, and others who have really, as we have seen, borne the brunt of this crisis.

We are talking about really basic, bipartisan steps, like making sure we have Tribal access to medical supply stockpiles, better practices for demographic data collection, and improving diversity in clinical trials. That is especially critical.

In fact, the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, in my home State of Washington, just published a new study showing how Black communities, Asian communities, women, and others were underrepresented in many of the U.S. COVID clinical trials. We have to do better for all of our communities.

And we have to do better for parents too. I have heard from too many moms and dads throughout this pandemic who felt like no one was listening to them about the challenges that their kids and their families were facing. As a mother and a grandmother, I pressed for this bill to make sure the National Advisory Committee on Children and Disasters, which directly advises the Secretary of Health, must include parents, caregivers, and teachers as members.

Of course, in addition to all of those commonsense steps to strengthen our public health system for future health emergencies, there is more work to do if we are to fully reckon with the lessons of this pandemic, which is why Senator BURR and I worked with our other Members to include a bipartisan proposal for an independent task force, modeled after the 9/11 Commission, to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the U.S. response to the COVID-19 pandemic and issue recommendations.

While there is more to do to strengthen our public health system beyond these reforms—and I will keep pushing on this reform no matter what—the PREVENT Pandemics Act represents meaningful, bipartisan progress carefully negotiated between Republicans and Democrats over nearly a year.

I should say that it also reflects Senator BURR's longstanding focus on pandemic preparedness. This has been a life passion for him, even before this

pandemic. His thoughtful expertise and his tireless work has been critical to crafting a strong bipartisan bill. I could not have asked for a better partner across the aisle to work with over the past 2 years.

Earlier this week, I listened to Senator BLUNT's farewell speech, and in his address to this body, he said: We don't have to agree on everything; we just have to agree on one thing.

That is how we help people and solve problems. In our PREVENT Pandemics Act, Republicans and Democrats agree on a lot of things.

Families across the country are watching closely. Let's show them that we are taking the lessons of this pandemic seriously. Let's show them that we are taking action so we never go through a crisis like that again. Let's make sure that the PREVENT Pandemics Act is part of our year-end package.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, \$847 billion is a lot of money to spend on anything in 1 year, even in Washington terms. It is enough money, for instance, to make sure that not a single child goes hungry anywhere in the world ever again. It is enough money to end homelessness in America, provide free preschool and college for every American, build high-speed rail between every American city, and make childcare free for families.

Frankly, come up with five problems that plague parts of the world or parts of the country, design a solution, and you could probably solve all five for a year for \$847 billion.

Here is another number that is big: \$80 billion. Now, that is smaller than \$847 billion but still a lot of money.

For \$80 billion, you could build a high-speed railroad from New York to Washington, you could build 4,000 brandnew, state-of-the-art high schools in underserved communities, or you could hire—wait for it—a million public school teachers.

Here is why I tell you this. Next week, likely, this body is apparently going to be on a glidepath to pass an \$847 billion Defense budget authorization for the current fiscal year. That is an \$80 billion increase over last year. That is a 10-percent increase in just 1 year.

There has been very little public debate, and there is going to be very little debate on this floor over whether this is a good idea, about whether we should spend \$80 billion on this or whether that \$80 billion would be spent better on something else.

There is no debate, and there is going to be little debate here, in part, because the process of passing this bill is pretty broken.

Thanks to Senator REED, the Armed Services Committee is a functioning committee. The Democrats and Republicans on that committee write this bill together with an open amendment process. If you are a member of the Armed Services Committee, thanks to Senator REED and Senator INHOFE's leadership, you have a lot of opportunities to weigh in on the size and scope of the U.S. defense budget.

But the problem begins once the bill leaves the Armed Services Committee. Then the bill kind of disappears and gets changed. That is not Chairman REED's fault. That is our collective decision to endorse that process.

The first thing that happens, particularly this year, is that many, many big, important pieces of policy get added to the Defense bill. Some of them are good policy, but some of them aren't. But there is no democratic process in which Members of this body get to review what is added to the Defense bill. There is no notification of rank-and-file Members so that we can provide input.

Again, as I understand it, the Armed Services Committee doesn't want to be in this position. They would rather just have a vote on their original bill, as we did for decades until just recently, when all of this extra policy got added to the Defense bill. But because today there are so few avenues for that other legislation to find a path to the floor, in large part because Republicans are using the filibuster to clog up the floor of the Senate, the Defense bill becomes this kind of evacuation helicopter carrying all the passengers they can fit in it.

For the first time this year, there are more pages in the Defense bill dedicated to nondefense items than to defense items.

This might be acceptable if Senators could offer amendments on the floor, remove parts of the bill we don't like, make other parts better—at least have our day. But the other new normal here is that there is going to be zero amendments, amendment votes, likely in the Senate debate.

It is the same problem. There are a handful of Republicans here who don't want to legislate, and so they are likely going to refuse to give consent to vote on amendments, and, plus, as I mentioned, they clog up the floor with filibuster votes, which means that you can't get big, important pieces of legislation done, and so they all find their way onto the Defense bill.

But I just want to plead with my colleagues for a moment that there is a better way to do this. We don't have to look too far in the past to see what a real debate on the Defense bill could look like. I just want all of my colleagues to think how much more interesting this place would be, how much healthier the Senate would be if we