

This pandemic has also put a spotlight on how inadequate data from outdated and often incompatible systems can make it very hard for our health experts to do their jobs.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 yearend 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

could have debates on Defense bills that looked like they did just 20 years ago.

I was just curious. So I literally just picked a year out of a hat from a slightly different generation in the Senate. I swear, I didn't cherry-pick the year. I just went back to 2000—the year 2000, right—a nice convenient date.

For the fiscal year 2000 Defense bill debate—which by the way, happened in May, not in December—the Senate took rollcall votes on 13 amendments. There were many amendments on contested, controversial policy that got full debate and full votes, and there were a whole bunch of other amendments that got voice votes in the Senate. But on the amendments that got full debate on the Senate floor and rollcall votes, there was an 87–12 vote on the legality of a new NATO strategic plan, a 49–50 vote to compel information from the Secretary of Health and Human Services on welfare reform, 48–52 on a War Powers Resolution for the war in the Balkans, 90–0 on a measure to encourage Balkan war crimes prosecution, 52–47 on a contested military promotion case, 40–60 to authorize a new round of base closures, 44–56 on a nuclear weapon retirement policy, 49–51 and then 51–49 to remove restrictions on prison labor products, 49–51 to remove restrictions on abortions on DOD property, 21–77 to limit funding for the Balkan war, 11–87 to limit the cost of the F-18 program, and 98–0 to support sanctions on Libya.

That is a lot of debate on really important foreign policy and national security policy on the floor of the Senate. That is virtually unthinkable in the modern Senate, and we are all poorer for it.

Back then, every Senator—not just leadership—saw themselves as having a coequal responsibility to set U.S. defense policy, and they required the process on the floor to reflect that belief.

In just that 1 year, 2000, Senators took three votes on the Balkan war, a vote on fighter costs, a vote on base closures, sanctions, and military promotions.

I go through this exercise just to explain to my colleagues that it just doesn't have to be like this. Those of us not on the Armed Services Committee or not in leadership don't have to be relegated to 70 rubberstamps with virtually no ability to have meaningful, real-time impact on the bill once it emerges from committee.

But I make this point for another reason as well. When there is limited debate and limited input from rank-and-file Members on a bill this big, on policy this important, I would argue that we miss the opportunity to be able to step back from this year-to-year creep of existing policy and ask ourselves: Are we doing it right?

Are we spending hundreds of billions of dollars in a way that actually protects this country and our national in-

terests; or are we simply continuing down a path, continuing to invest and overinvest in weapons of war and underinvest in the tools that are necessary to prevent war?

And \$847 billion is a ton of money, but so is \$80 billion, this year's increase in authorized defense spending.

Now, let me say this: There is no doubt that there are legions of meritorious programs in this defense budget. Frankly, I publicly and proudly support many programs that are built and constructed in Connecticut: our submarine fleet, our helicopters, our fighter engines.

Why? Because I really do believe that the United States is the world's defender of democracy, the defender of the rule of law, the defender of international norms and free navigation. We have to be the world leader in kinetic, hard military power.

Ukraine is an example of why conventional military might still matters. Big nations, like Russia and China, are not content any longer to stay inside their boxes. They are, like pre-World War II times, seeking to revise their borders through invasion; and while the United States is currently at no risk of being invaded ourselves, we do still have a responsibility to step up and help others, to help reinforce that post-World War II order to ensure that wars of aggression do not become normalized.

But that post-World War II order is under threat not just because countries like Russia and China are using or threatening to use their militaries with alarming new frequency. The lion's share of threats to the United States and threats to world stability are often referred to not as conventional military threats but what is commonly referred to as asymmetric threats.

Now, this generally means they are threats that cannot be addressed just through military power—air power, armies, nuclear weapons, the kind of things that are funded in this Defense bill.

Let me give you some examples. Thousands of pages of think tank reports and endless hours of congressional testimony are dedicated to this lament that China's influence around the world is growing due to its willingness to aggressively invest in developing economies, critical mineral supplies, and supply chain routes. For instance, today China owns over 100 different international ports. They own a hundred ports outside of China in 60 different countries.

A new study revealed that China's development bank lent more money in sub-Saharan Africa than the development banks of the United States, Germany, Japan, and France combined. Now, to fix this, we need to be growing the size of U.S. development finance. But it is like pulling teeth to get Congress to extend the authorities or borrowing and capital limitations of the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation.

Last year, DFC announced that it had lent more money than any year before: \$7.4 billion. That is a lot of money, \$7.4 billion. This July, China's largest development bank announced that its 6-month total for a targeted set of urban infrastructure loans in the developing world, just a tiny piece of their overall portfolio, was \$27 billion.

U.S. development finance isn't even playing in the same ballpark as Chinese development finance.

Here is another example of asymmetric power: It is kind of cliché these days to remind policymakers that information is power. But Ukraine's democracy is not just under attack from a foreign army; it is also under attack from misinformation. China, Russia, Iran, nonstate actors, they are spending billions of dollars all over the world spreading messages into democracies to try to create division and undermine faith in the rule of law.

That controversy around Colin Kaepernick's protest, that was mostly a creation of 500 Russian internet bots who posted an incredible 12,000 tweets inflaming public opinion.

China's global disinformation campaign is equally robust. For instance, the largest backer of Philippines' President—former President Rodrigo Duterte's illegal assassination campaign? Chinese social media farms.

But, once again, the United States just chooses asymmetry by letting these countries—Russia and China and others—dominate the information space.

Here is an example: the budget for RT, just one of Putin's international television and online news operations, \$2.8 billion; the budget for the U.S. Agency for Global Media, which funds all of our overseas broadcasting, \$1 billion.

How do you compete with those kind of funding discrepancies?

Here is one more example. A few years ago, I was in Dublin, coincidentally, at the same time of a major telecommunications contract tender in Ireland. Ireland was making this key decision to award its internet backbone to a European firm or to Huawei, the Chinese communications conglomerate.

I was told by a very competent but, frankly, very overwhelmed defense attaché assigned to our Irish Embassy that, over the prior few months, the Chinese Embassy had grown by leaps and bounds as dozens of new Chinese diplomats and provocateurs arrived in town to try to help sway the award for Huawei. Now, matched up against this legion of Chinese diplomats was this one guy, our single defense attaché, maybe supported by a couple diplomats in the Embassy.

Now, he was competent, but he had no background in telecommunications policy—and, frankly, really nobody else there did either, and no extra help was on the way.

The same phenomenon plays out with energy projects. Other nations

seamlessly integrate their energy resources with their diplomatic and national security efforts. There is no separation between the Middle East's oil and their foreign politics. The same for Russia or Iran or Venezuela. But U.S. energy executives are not representing the U.S. Government, which means our diplomats are on their own in conducting energy policy, which means they have an enormous amount of catching up to do against these other petro powers.

But for the first time, today, the United States is not the leading country when it comes to diplomatic posts around the world. That distinction now belongs to—guess who?—China. As our adversaries try to undermine democracies and rule of law and use their energy and technology resources to win allies, we simply don't have the means to keep up, another asymmetric advantage for our competitors.

We have no dedicated anticorruption or technology or energy policy corps within our foreign service. It is not because we don't need this capacity; it is just because we can't afford it. We lament this asymmetric advantage that other countries have on nondefense capabilities, but it is just a choice. It is a choice because we pass, year after year, these massive defense bills, and then we choose not to increase the capabilities that would actually protect us: the investments in nonmilitary capabilities.

Listen, I get it. I know this bill is going to pass, but why on Earth aren't we spending more time asking the tough questions about whether the balance of our spending on national security is right-sized to the actual threats the United States and our democratic allies face?

Yes, the Ukraine war is worth fighting, and it is expensive, but does it really make sense to spend 847 times more money on conventional military tools than we spend on winning the information war? Does it really make sense to add 10 percent to the defense budget while doing nothing to increase the size of our international development bank?

Do we really think that we are adequately responding to the actual array of threats posed to this country with a spending allocation that ends up with America having 11,000 diplomats, total, and 12,000 employees of military grocery stores?

American foreign policy today suffers from a crippling lack of imagination. American leaders complain about these asymmetric threats but refuse to acknowledge that this asymmetry exists only because we choose to do this: pass an \$847 billion defense budget with a 10 percent, 1-year increase and do nothing, at the same time, to build the real capacities necessary to keep up with our adversaries' investments in nonmilitary tools of influence.

We could decide—this Congress could decide—to build a massive, modern international development bank. We

could decide—this Congress could decide—not to let RT dominate the international information space. We could decide—all of us, this Congress—to have enough diplomats around the world to be able to fight the fights that matter to us.

We should imagine this world in which we fight toe to toe with the Chinese and the Russians and other adversaries in the development, information, technology, energy, and diplomatic spheres. We should imagine that world and then put in place a plan to achieve it.

Asymmetry is a choice. It is a choice for our adversaries, and it is a choice for us. And it is a consequence of our entire budget—for development aid, anti-propaganda efforts, democracy promotion, human rights advancement, humanitarian assistance, and diplomacy—being about the same size as the 1-year increase in the defense budget.

And \$847 billion is a lot of money to spend without a real debate on the Senate floor, without the ability to offer amendments. I think this country would be better off, I think our security would be better protected, if we just took a step back, asked some hard questions about how we allocate money within our national security budget, and took the time to have a real floor debate with real input about it all.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WARNOCK). The clerk will call the roll. The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all postclosure debate time on the Douglas nomination be considered expired and the vote on confirmation be at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Republican leader.

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

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nominations: Calendar Nos. 1285, 1286, 1287, and all nominations on the Secretary's desk in the Coast Guard and Foreign Service; that the nominations be confirmed en bloc; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; 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 nominations were confirmed en bloc, as follows:

#### IN THE COAST GUARD

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Coast Guard to

the grade indicated under title 14, U.S.C., section 2121(e):

#### To be rear admiral (lower half)

Capt. Richard E. Batson  
Capt. Michael E. Campbell  
Capt. Russell E. Dash  
Capt. Amy B. Grable  
Capt. Matthew W. Lake  
Capt. Ralph R. Little  
Capt. Jeffrey K. Randall  
Capt. Wilborne E. Watson

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Coast Guard to the grade indicated under title 14, U.S.C., section 2121(d):

#### To be rear admiral

Mary M. Dean  
Charles E. Fosse  
Chad L. Jacoby  
Carola J. List  
Michael W. Raymond

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Coast Guard to the grade indicated under title 14, U.S.C., section 2121(e):

#### To be rear admiral (lower half)

Capt. William G. Dwyer

#### NOMINATIONS PLACED ON THE SECRETARY'S DESK

#### IN THE COAST GUARD

\* PN2677 COAST GUARD nominations (173) beginning WILLIAM C. ADAMS, and ending YVONNE C. YANG, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of September 29, 2022.

\* PN2678 COAST GUARD nominations (83) beginning CRAIG H. ALLEN, JR., and ending NICHOLAS S. WORST, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of September 29, 2022.

\* PN2691 COAST GUARD nominations (5) beginning BRIAN J. MAGGI, and ending LISA M. THOMPSON, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of October 11, 2022.

\* PN2774 COAST GUARD nominations (4) beginning TROY E. FRYAR, and ending JOHN D. HUGHES, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 15, 2022.

\* PN2794 COAST GUARD nominations (9) beginning AMBER S. WARD, and ending CHRISTOPHER ANDERSON, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 17, 2022.

#### IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE

PN2169 FOREIGN SERVICE nomination of Ryan Giralt Bedford, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of May 19, 2022.

PN2775 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (52) beginning Gary P. Anthony, and ending Stephanie A. Bunce, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 15, 2022.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nomination: Calendar No. 1201, Shailen P. Bhatt, of Michigan, to be Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration; that the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.