

I hope no Senator will stand in the way of our finishing our work. We cannot afford a shutdown. More importantly, the American people need us to act quickly. As I said, the American people need us to act quickly to avert the looming danger of a government shutdown. Nobody wants a shutdown. Nobody benefits from a shutdown. So I hope nobody here will stand in the way of funding the government ASAP.

Now let's turn to the omnibus itself. This funding bill is overflowing with very good news for our troops, for the Ukrainian brave fighters, for American jobs, for our families, and for American democracy.

After a lot of hard work, Democrats will fulfill our promise to pass reforms to the Electoral Count Act into law. Two years after January 6, the attack on our Capitol remains an indelible stain on our democracy, and updating the Electoral Count Act is one of the ways we can prevent another January 6 in the future. It is so important to do.

I want to thank Senators MANCHIN and COLLINS and the group they put together to put the ECA together and Senators KLOBUCHAR and BLUNT on the Rules Committee for their help in making this happen.

I said months ago we would do everything possible to pass ECA reform, and now we are following through. Many thanks, of course, go to all my colleagues who made this possible.

The omnibus is also going to fulfill our promise to stand with our friends in Ukraine with billions more in emergency economic and military aid. The bitterness of winter has descended on Eastern Europe, and if our friends in Ukraine hope to triumph over Russia, America must stand firmly on the side of our democratic friends abroad. They are not asking for, nor do they want American troops, but they do need the weaponry to defend themselves against a brutal Putin.

On the homefront, the omnibus will make healthcare more affordable and more expansive for millions upon millions of Americans. For the first time ever, every child in America who qualifies for Medicaid or CHIP will now be guaranteed at least one year of continuous health coverage. This is a major change that will make a big difference in improving healthcare for millions of kids.

We will permanently extend a policy from the American Rescue Plan that let States give a full year of postpartum coverage for mothers on Medicaid and CHIP. This is something huge, something I have so strongly believed in and fought for. It is a major step to address America's crisis in maternal health and mortality.

Many elements of the Momnibus are in this bill, good elements of the Momnibus, particularly for women of color, who have long been discriminated against when it comes to birth and postpartum coverage.

The omnibus also represents a new offensive in the battle against Amer-

ica's mental health crisis. We all know that crisis is at record levels. We all know we have to do something about it. This omnibus does. Overdoses and substance abuse are at record levels. I fought hard to make sure this package will allow seniors to get Medicare coverage for counseling, funding to train new psychiatrists, create new mental health mobile crisis units, and instruct Medicare to cover intensive outpatient mental health care.

We are also going to attack the opioid crisis head-on by expanding options for medication-assisted treatment while also making never-before-seen investments in suicide prevention, maternal mental health, pediatric mental health, and so much more.

We will also keep making healthcare more accessible than it was in years past. We will ensure Medicare beneficiaries can keep using telehealth through 2024. That is huge, particularly in rural areas.

We will invest new resources to hire and train more doctors, nurses, and other healthcare workers, who have been in high demand over the past couple of years.

We are also increasing support for rural and low-income hospitals that very often have to get by with precious little help.

So on the healthcare front, the omnibus is an aggressive, generous, and far-reaching package, and I salute all those, including Chairman MURRAY and Chairman LEAHY, for their work on this.

On the manufacturing and science front, the omnibus secures the first major downpayment in building the tech hubs across the country that we have authorized through the CHIPS and Science Act. This means real dollars to create the silicon valleys, the silicon forests, the silicon heartlands and prairies of tomorrow. Again, I want to thank Chair CANTWELL for her steadfast leadership on this issue, as well as my colleague on the other side of the aisle, TODD YOUNG.

Under the omnibus, we will also secure the largest increase for the National Science Foundation of all time, including a surge in funds for the new Technology Directorate and for STEM workforce training that will spur chip growth across the country and give training to millions who have been left out of the increase in jobs in tech.

Also included are billions to support universities, national labs, manufacturers, entrepreneurs, and workers with the support necessary for the United States to beat back China and remain technologically competitive on the world stage.

That is not all. There is much more to celebrate in this package. We will keep our promise to our veterans by fully funding provisions of the PACT Act so veterans suffering from burn pit exposure can get the care they deserve. We will help veterans with their mental health needs, reform VA long-term care services, and support veterans who struggle with homelessness.

We say to our veterans: You have been there when we needed you; this omnibus is there when you need us.

For students, we have secured the largest increase in Pell grants in over a decade—an increase of \$500; the maximum Pell Grant will now be \$7,395, providing ladders-up for millions of kids who come from poor and working families. That is a great thing.

For the first time in history, we will also bring Indian Health Services into parity with all other healthcare providers. This historic provision helps fulfill the Federal Government's trust responsibility to our tribes. We will provide more resources, healthcare coverage, and the dignity they deserve.

We have secured billions for more childcare access, billions for homeless assistance grants, billions for Rural Housing Services, over a billion for HOME Investment Partnership Programs, and over a billion for the Housing for the Elderly and Housing for Persons with Disabilities Program. So from start to finish and from top to bottom, this omnibus is bold, generous, far-reaching, and ambitious.

It is not everything we would have wanted, of course. When you are dealing in a bipartisan, bicameral way, you have to sit down and get it done and that means each side has to concede some things; but it is something that we can be very proud of—all of us.

Now we must get this done before Friday—well before that, if possible.

I want to thank every single colleague and staff Member who worked relentlessly to put this piece together; not only Senators LEAHY and SHELBY but their subcommittee chairs and ranking members. It was a herculean feat for our dedicated appropriators. The process may have been difficult, but I am confident we are now in a position to pass this bill quickly. And I am even more confident that once we finish our work on this package, America will be a healthier, more prosperous, and more secure country thanks to the work we have done here and now.

Thanks to my colleagues. Let's finish the bill very soon.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

OMNIBUS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, President Biden's proposal for fiscal 2023 was a massive real-dollar increase for liberal domestic spending and a significant real-dollar cut for our national defense. Thanks to the tireless work from Senator SHELBY and a number of

our colleagues, the Government funding bill that we will be taking up this week does exactly—exactly the reverse of what the Biden administration asked for. This bill will significantly grow the baseline for defense and significantly cut the baseline for non-defense, nonveterans, after inflation, a big real-dollar increase in the defense baseline, and a big real-dollar cut for the nondefense, nonveterans baseline. This is an impressive outcome for the Republican negotiators; and, more importantly, it is the outcome that our country actually needs to keep helping Ukraine and our other friends, to keep out-innovating and out-competing Russia and China and to keep our brave men and women in uniform equipped with the best training tools and technologies the world has ever seen.

The administration's original version for the Federal budget—starving defense while shoveling cash into miscellaneous domestic spending—was so out of whack that Democrats in Congress actually joined us in rejecting it.

Then there was some discussion that Democrats might only agree to make sufficient investments in our Armed Forces if they got to jack up domestic spending even higher as compensation. Of course, that didn't make any sense either. The Commander in Chief's own political party does not get to take our troops hostage in order to demand even more unrelated goodies.

The Republicans' position all along was quite simple: Defending America and out-competing our rivals is a fundamental governing duty. It is the basic business that we are supposed to take care of, not something for which Democrats get special rewards. And that is precisely what is finally happening. Compared to where the negotiators started, we transferred huge sums of money away from Democrats' spending wish list, toward our national defense and Armed Forces, but without allowing the overall cost of the package to go any higher.

There is no question that an omnibus spending bill less than 1 week before Christmas is not the right way to run the appropriations process or the Senate Chamber. Things should be done differently—more responsibly, with more foresight and more planning.

And when Republicans controlled the majority, things were, in fact, done differently—more responsibly, with more foresight. When Republicans last controlled both chambers, we worked to conduct a more normal appropriations process. The subcommittees were more empowered to do their work. We worked to break things into multiple bills and move minibuses across the Senate floor before the 11th hour.

Instead, as Republicans spent this whole year calling on the Democratic leader to prioritize his basic responsibilities like government funding and the NDAA, this majority spent literally month after month chasing shiny objects while procrastinating on core duties.

So I share many of my colleagues' dissatisfaction with the dysfunctional Democratic-run process that has brought us here. But, unfortunately, as we stand here today, going back in time and forcing Democrats to spend the last 11 months running the Senate more responsibly is certainly not an option. From where we stand today, there are literally two options before us: No. 1, we can pass this bill, give our servicemembers and commanders the resources they need, flip the President's broken budget request on its head and actually cut baseline, non-defense, nonveterans spending in real dollars while we are at it; or we can fail to pass this bill and give our Armed Forces confusion and uncertainty while the Chinese Communist Party continues to help their military commanders pour money into new research and new weapons.

Between the two actual options before us, this is not a close call. The Senate should pass this bill.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. President, now in a related matter, last week, the Senate passed the National Defense Authorization Act, a landmark step forward for our Armed Forces. This year's bill was named for our distinguished departing colleague, Ranking Member INHOFE.

As I have discussed at length, this year's NDAA was a major step in the right direction to keep the U.S. the world's preeminent superpower. But another aspect that doesn't get enough attention is the ways that Congress's role in defending America also directly benefits military communities across each of our home States.

My home State of Kentucky is home to major Army installations like Fort Campbell and Fort Knox, the Kentucky Air and Army National Guard, and indispensable pillars of America's defense industrial base. This year's NDAA provides record resources for those Kentuckians who support and serve in our Armed Forces.

Of special note in this year's bill is its full funding of the Chemical Demilitarization Pilot Program at the Blue Grass Army Depot in Richmond, KY. If all goes according to plan, the Depot could wrap up its chemical weapon destruction mission by next year. That will be a landmark milestone in Kentucky history.

When I took office, many of America's most potent chemical munitions were languishing at the Richmond facility. Community activists were understandably concerned about the dangerous weapons in their backyard and asked me to help coordinate the massive effort needed to get rid of them. Working with these local leaders, I have spent the past four decades securing Federal funding for the chemical munitions destruction mission, and now the end of that project is within sight.

This year's NDAA also authorizes the feasibility study to help local authorities plan for the future of the depot

after—after the chemical weapons destruction mission wraps up. That study will identify opportunities to enhance Richmond's role as a defense logistics node and identify new missions for its world-class facilities once chemical weapons are gone.

That is just one of the many important initiatives this year's NDAA will support in the Commonwealth. Kentucky's servicemembers and military installations stand ready to protect America from its enemies.

The Defense bill also impacts a huge number of America's efforts for good around the world that don't always make top headlines. For example, I am glad this NDAA makes headway on behalf of the people in Burma and the decades-long struggle for democracy in that country, which I have been proud to support throughout my career.

Since Burma's military junta launched a coup in early 2021, the country has plunged deeper into catastrophe—more than 1 million people displaced; sham trials and executions; the extrajudicial torture and murder of many more; indiscriminate shelling and airstrikes against ethnic villages. Burma's former leader and my good friend Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is reportedly being held in solitary confinement following a sham trial at the hands of her depositors.

In the absence of strong international condemnation, the junta is literally getting away with murder. When Secretary Blinken visited Southeast Asia this summer, I called for less talk and more action. The people of Burma don't have the luxury of waiting around for American assistance.

Now, with the passage of the Burma Act as part of this year's NDAA, Congress is stepping up where the administration has dithered. This landmark bill mandates sharp sanctions against senior Tatmadaw officials and the state-owned businesses that keep their coffers full. It compels the administration to make decisions about whether and how to unravel the junta's lucrative grip on Burma's energy sector. It codifies U.S. support for organizations that actually represent Burma's people and authorizes new engagement with ethnic organizations that are defending the people against the brutal hand of the Tatmadaw as well as new nonlethal and humanitarian assistance for society organizations. It directs the President to improve coordination with America's allies and partners to increase pressure on Burma's illegitimate leaders and direct support to the people.

But Congress can only do so much through the legislative process. The ball is now in the Biden administration's court, and time is ticking away. Russia and other bad actors are actively courting the junta. The ongoing humanitarian disaster in Burma is already spilling over into neighboring countries. Congress has given President Biden the tools to institute sweeping sanctions against our adversaries