

wonder if we can follow through on our promise to protect them if they themselves do not acquire nuclear weapons. Take our friends in South Korea. They announced their doubts earlier this year. South Korea has considered developing its own weapons because its leaders do not know if America's arsenal is ready to answer the call if, God forbid, South Korea ever faces an imminent nuclear threat.

Now, our friends in South Korea—and they are dear friends—they are not going to say that in stark terms, but we know from our diplomatic relations that is how they feel. The good news is that after some recent negotiations, our friends in South Korea—our ally, South Korea—reaffirmed its commitment to work with the United States.

But this situation, I bring it up because it showcases the severity of our problem. The people of South Korea are our friends. They are our allies. They embrace democracy as we do. But if they are doubting our capabilities, our adversaries are, too. You can bet on that. Look no further than China.

Now I don't hate China. I don't hate the Chinese people. They are wonderful human beings with souls like all of us, and they have the right to freedom and self-determination. I don't want a Cold War with China. I don't want a hot war with China. But according to the Pentagon, China already has more intercontinental ballistic missiles than the United States.

In 2001, China had 400 nuclear warheads. At the rate it is growing, by 2035, China will have 1,500—far outpacing—far outpacing—the Pentagon's initial projections.

China is also rapidly innovating. The Chinese military has been testing nuclear-capable hypersonic missiles. These nuclear-capable hypersonic missiles can fly five times the speed of sound. That is roughly 3,800 miles an hour. A few weapons that China is also testing could leave its intended target only minutes to respond.

The United States of America cannot continue inching along while China quadruples its arsenal with newer and faster nuclear weapons.

The days when we could neglect our nuclear stockpile without risking our national security are over. Our ability to deter unstable nuclear powers and maintain a peaceful world relies on our ability to continue innovating in ways only freedom-loving Americans can. But these vital projects rely on our plutonium pit production, and failing to produce pits at full capacity is just not acceptable.

As the ranking member on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, I know we will continue our focus on this issue. As we modernize, we must modernize our nuclear stockpile for the peace and safety of generations to come, and I urge my colleagues to make it a priority as well.

We cannot fix this problem overnight. We didn't develop this problem

overnight. But if we continue to work in a bipartisan fashion, we can restore our stockpile.

We must restore our stockpile. It is time for the United States to get serious about revitalizing its nuclear arsenal so that we can continue to have the most reliable and sophisticated defense systems on the planet.

Why is that important? Let me end as I began: because peace through weakness never works. Peace through weakness never works. Never.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NATIONAL DEBT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I come to the floor today referring to a speech that Senator Biden gave on this Senate floor 39 years ago today. The scene was this: It developed over several months of that year before May 2, 1984.

I had this idea which would be considered crazy today, that we need to get control of the budget by just freezing everything across the board. And I recruited Nancy Kassebaum, a Senator from Kansas, and Senator Biden to help in that effort.

Senator Biden gave the longest speech that day on justifying it, and most of his comments at that time were trying to justify that you could actually freeze the defense budget, and also it included the freeze on the COLAs for Social Security.

But Senator Biden spent most of his speech fighting off giants of the military industrial complex at that time, by the names of Senator Goldwater, Senator Towers, and Senator Stevens of Alaska. So that is the background of what I am talking about today.

So on this day, 39 years ago, then-Senator Biden spoke on the Senate floor saying that he was "outraged"—that is his words—that our national debt would soon be near \$2 trillion. He urged fellow Senators to "do something . . . before the debt limit increase comes up." The "something" that he advocated for was a Federal spending freeze.

Today, our national debt stands at \$31.5 trillion compared to that \$2 trillion in 1984. But in a few years, public debt as a share of our economy is expected to exceed record levels set in the wake of World War II. However, instead of urging immediate action this year, President Biden wants to kick the can down the road. I think, today, we would all consider that to be irresponsible and unacceptable.

In contrast, House Republicans are tackling our debt crisis head-on. Legislation the House passed last week would rein in excessive government spending, lift the debt ceiling, and im-

pose meaningful fiscal controls moving forward. President Biden and Senate Democrats must get off the sidelines and negotiate. We can't continue to live high on the hog at the expense of future generations.

To put our current national debt in perspective, a gross Federal debt of \$31.5 trillion equates to \$95,000 for each man, woman, and child living in the United States today. By comparison, the average cost of a 4-year public college degree in 2023 is about \$90,000. Both are more than we should be asking young people to bear. Looked at in terms of the American taxpayers, our government debt comes to a staggering \$247,000 per tax filer, and I think the number of tax filers would be close to 160 million or just a few more. That is \$52,000 more than the average home value in my State of Iowa.

Our growing national debt is unsustainable. In its most recent budget outlook, the Congressional Budget Office estimates interest on the debt will be near \$1 trillion in 2028—an amount exceeding what our Nation is expected to spend that year on national defense. Absent action, interest costs will continue to mount at an alarming rate. Looking well into the future, by 2044, interest will exceed \$2.9 trillion, surpassing what we are projected to spend on Medicare. By 2050, interest will become our Nation's single largest expense, even surpassing Social Security.

Interest costs of this size would have been unfathomable to my then-Senate colleague Joe Biden. Remember how he said he was outraged that the national debt would reach \$2 trillion? While Senator Biden was expressing outrage over a \$2 trillion national debt, he was also lamenting the prospects of \$219 billion in annual interest costs. Yet, today, President Biden barely bats an eyelash at interest projected to blow past \$1 trillion, on a path to \$3 trillion.

At the same time our interest costs are set to soar, several major Federal programs are barreling toward insolvency. According to the trustees of Social Security and Medicare, in the report they introduced this spring, Social Security's primary trust fund will become insolvent in 2033, while Medicare's trust fund will go broke in 2031.

Contrary to what some Democrats claim, doing nothing to address these programs is not an option. The Social Security and Medicare Board of Trustees, which consists solely of President Biden's administration officials, has made it clear that congressional inaction means automatic benefit cuts within the next 10 years. Yet President Biden has accused any Republican who mentions the words "Social Security" of wanting to gut the program, although nothing could be further from the truth.

In 1984, Senator Joe Biden sang a much different tune. He understood that a dire fiscal situation required bold action from this Congress. The Federal spending freeze he advocated

for applied across the board. It would have frozen spending on Social Security, Medicare, defense, and much more.

Nothing any Republican has proposed today comes close to the broad-based spending cuts advocated by then-Senator Biden. What Republicans have put forward likely wouldn't go far enough for the 1984 Joe Biden. Today, our debt, our deficits, and our interest costs are all on a far bleaker path than they were in 1984. Yet President Biden refuses to entertain even modest spending cuts. That should be unacceptable and is unacceptable to most Americans.

We can't continue to ignore our current fiscal trajectory. We must get our fiscal house in order. Failure to act puts children born today in a position that they will never be able to recover from financially. This Congress must come together to fix our broken budget system and return to regular order. As the ranking member of the Senate's Budget Committee, I stand ready to work with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to put us on a more sustainable path.

Unfortunately, the White House doesn't seem to want to address the issues we are facing. The President's budget request continues our Nation on a path to fiscal ruin. Under the administration's budget proposals, public debt as a share of our economy will set a new record in 2027.

We owe it to the Nation's young people to leave them a country that is on solid financial ground. We cannot ask the generation of tomorrow to pay for the gluttony of today.

Here are the words of then-Senator Biden in 1984: "I, myself, am outraged . . . I hope that all those other Senators who share my outrage will also share my determination to do something" about our unsustainable debt.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

300-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, "Always ready, always there." That is the motto of the Illinois National Guard. And for 300 years, in times of war and peace, it has lived up to that promise.

As the Illinois National Guard celebrates its 300th anniversary, we thank our citizen soldiers for their service and their sacrifice.

If you want to see the selfless character of the Illinois National Guard, just take a look around the Senate because you will spot my colleague Senator TAMMY DUCKWORTH, former Lt. Col. TAMMY DUCKWORTH of the Illinois Air National Guard.

Senator DUCKWORTH almost gave her life when the Black Hawk helicopter she was copiloting was hit by an RPG in Iraq. But it didn't diminish her will to serve our State and our Nation, and I am lucky to have her as my colleague.

The Illinois National Guard traces its history of service to May 9, 1723, when a local militia completed its first exercise in Kaskaskia, IL. Back then, Illinois was still a French territory. Since then, the citizen soldiers of the Illinois National Guard have protected our State and Nation at home and abroad.

When the Mississippi River overflows its banks or when we are faced with other natural disasters, it is the Guard that we call. And its members have served with honor and distinction throughout its history.

During the American Revolution, Illinois' militia members fought under the heroic command of Col. George Rogers Clark to oust the British from Illinois.

Illinois' most famous member of the National Guard was a man named Abraham Lincoln, who served during the Black Hawk war in the 1830s.

During the Mexican-American War, a young Army officer served as assistant quartermaster in the 21st Illinois Infantry Regiment. He went on to lead the Union forces to victory in the Civil War. His name was Ulysses S. Grant.

Later, Illinois' 370th Infantry Regiment earned the distinction of being the only Army unit commanded mainly by African-American officers in World War I, and members of the Illinois Army National Guard served bravely in World War II, the Korean war, Vietnam war, Operation Desert Storm, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

More recently, Illinois National Guard members were activated during the COVID-19 pandemic as the world grappled with that virus; and after the U.S. Capitol was attacked on January 6, National Guard members were dispatched to help restore order.

In the most challenging times, the Illinois National Guard continues to be "Always ready, always there." I am confident they will be for many years to come.

This month, their sacrifices are remembered throughout our State; and on behalf of a grateful State and Nation, I want to commend Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, the adjutant general of the Illinois National Guard, and all the men and women of the Illinois National Guard on the occasion of this momentous anniversary.

WOMEN'S HEALTH PROTECTION ACT

Mr. President, we have sure learned a lot since the Dobbs decision was handed down.

Roe v. Wade was controversial, but after 15 years, we had reached something of a balance in terms of what was allowed and what wasn't allowed on a national basis. Then came the Dobbs decision and the repeal—overruling—of Roe v. Wade, and for the first time in the history of the United States, a con-

stitutional right which women had enjoyed for 50 years was removed from the law. It never has happened before.

The American people have united together in support of the belief that reproductive rights are a fundamental right and that extremist politicians have no business dictating the healthcare decisions of women and their doctors.

Just a few days ago, Republican lawmakers in two States failed to pass restrictive abortion laws, and they were not blue States—far from it: South Carolina and Nebraska. Cheers actually erupted outside the Nebraska Legislature when the proposed abortion ban failed.

To some, the failure of these abortion bans in Republican-controlled States may be surprising, but if you have been paying attention over the last year since the Dobbs decision was handed down, it is no surprise. In the months since that decision, at least a dozen States have enacted near-total bans on abortion, and the number of horror stories that are emerging from those States is staggering—stories of rape victims as young as 10 years of age being denied healthcare because of restrictive State laws governing abortion; an 11-year-old victim of sex trafficking also denied an abortion under one of these State laws; stories of women being forced to flee their home States to access basic reproductive care service; stories of pregnant women suffering miscarriages, being turned away by doctors until their lives are at risk because these abortion bans are so vague and so poorly written that healthcare providers are afraid to provide lifesaving care until the women are in an extreme situation. And the laws surrounding abortion—and miscarriage management—seem to be changing almost on a weekly basis. So much confusion and chaos.

Now, one of the most striking features of the Dobbs decision itself was the almost complete absence of discussion of one subject. The subject: women. In a 79-page ruling, women received a few paragraphs from Justice Alito on the Supreme Court. This author of the majority opinion defended his disregard for women's lives by arguing it is "hard for anyone"—Justice Alito said, "and in particular, for a court—to assess . . . the effect of the abortion right on society and . . . on the lives of women."

That is from the man who wrote the decision, the Dobbs decision that repealed Roe v. Wade. He said it was kind of difficult to assess the impact it would have on the lives of women. He was sure right about that.

Mr. President, perhaps the Court's conservative majority should have paid closer attention to the briefs filed by medical professionals like the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Medical Association, who gave Justice Alito and the majority on the Supreme Court fair warning about what was going to