

Democrats are serious about reaching reasonable, bipartisan compromise to pass this package. The question is if Republicans are now willing to do the same.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

On NDAA, at the beginning of December, I said the Senate has three major priorities before the end of the year.

First, we needed to end the blanket holds on hundreds of military nominees by the Senator from Alabama. We have now done that. Before we finish for the year, the Senate plans to move to confirm the 11 four-star military officers awaiting confirmation.

Second, we must pass the annual Defense authorization bill, which has been one of the most bipartisan priorities in Congress for over 60 years. This will be our focus on the floor this week.

Third and hardest of all, we must reach an agreement on the national security supplemental. We are still working, and while we are not near an agreement yet, we are going to keep pushing as the week progresses.

Last week, I filed cloture on the NDAA conference report, and we expect to move forward on the NDAA conference report after lunch tomorrow. At a time of huge trouble for global security, passing the Defense authorization bill is more important than ever.

This year's NDAA makes strong downpayments in outcompeting the Chinese Communist Party, particularly by approving President Biden's trilateral U.S., U.K., and Australia nuclear submarine agreement. We have been working on AUKUS all year. It is one of the most important tools we have against the Chinese Government, and it is a major accomplishment to get it done.

I want to thank the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, JACK REED, and Ranking Member WICKER for their good work in shepherding this bill through committee and through the conference process. I commend all conferees for their good work over the past few weeks.

I thank my colleagues for working together to ensure the Senate's six-decade streak of passing the NDAA remains unbroken.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, now on judges and nominations, today, the Senate will confirm the 39th circuit judge under President Biden—Richard Federico to be circuit court judge for the Tenth Circuit.

Mr. Federico is precisely the type of judge we need on our circuit courts—a brilliant legal mind who has dedicated his life to service as a lawyer in the Navy and as a public defender.

Thanks to the work of President Biden and the Senate majority, we have confirmed more public defenders to circuit courts than under any President in history. Of course, we also confirmed the first-ever public defender to sit on the U.S. Supreme Court, the great Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson.

Now this Senate majority has confirmed over 160 judges to lifetime appointments on the bench, including more Black judges, more women judges, and more judges of color than the full first term of any other President; more women to circuit courts than any President in their entire time in office; the first Muslim-American woman on the Federal bench; the first Navajo Federal judge; and, of course, as I mentioned, the first Black woman on the Supreme Court, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson.

All year long, this Senate majority has prioritized confirming judges who add to the bench's personal and professional diversity, and we are going to continue going into the new year.

STUDENT LOAN DEBT

Mr. President, now on student debt and the letter we sent, today, I sent a letter with several of my Democratic colleagues, including Senators WARREN, PADILLA, and SANDERS, to the Secretary of Education urging him to continue the Department's expansion of student debt relief to working- and middle-class borrowers.

The Biden administration has already taken historic steps to reduce the burden of student loan debt for tens of millions of Americans, but following the Supreme Court's cruel ruling blocking student debt relief, too many borrowers remain saddled with massive and in many cases unbearable amounts of debt. We can and must do more to help these borrowers.

As the Education Department is engaged in the rulemaking process for student debt relief, our letter specifically urges the administration to, No. 1, eliminate all debt that exceeds the original principal balance of the loan; No. 2, provide full cancellation for borrowers who have repaid enough to cover their original principal; and No. 3, extend relief to borrowers victimized by student loan servicer misconduct or error and other commonsense measures to help borrowers.

I want to thank Senators WARREN, PADILLA, and SANDERS, as well as Representatives PRESSLEY, OMAR, and WILSON, for their leadership on this letter. I look forward to working with the Biden administration to make sure relief reaches every borrower in need.

ALBANY NANOTECH

Mr. President, now on Albany NanoTech, earlier today, I joined Governor Hochul and Albany leaders to announce a historic \$10 billion public-private partnership to make the Albany NanoTech Complex the most advanced center for semiconductor research in the entire world. It is a landmark day for the capital region in New York. That is Albany, Schenectady, and Troy in that tricity area.

This \$10 billion partnership, spurred by the CHIPS and Science Act, will bring the most cutting-edge semiconductor machinery on the planet to Albany and propel Albany NanoTech as the premier global center for semiconductor research.

Today's announcement will mean hundreds of new, high-paying tech jobs, hundreds of construction jobs, and a tidal wave of scientific innovation that engineers today cannot even fathom.

When I wrote the CHIPS and Science Act, I had precisely regions like Albany and Upstate New York in mind because these communities have so much to offer for America's semiconductor future.

As we enter the home stretch for the selection of the major hubs of the National Semiconductor Technology Center, today's \$10 billion announcement will strengthen Albany and Upstate New York's case as the best region to lead the next generation of innovations in America's microchip industry.

Today's announcement comes on the same day as the announcement by the Commerce Department of the first funding agreement from the CHIPS Incentives Program. BAE Systems will receive \$35 million to quadruple its production capacity for chips essential to our national security, including for F-35 fighter jets. This award, like today's announcement in Albany, shows that the CHIPS and Science Act is delivering for American workers and for our national security.

So it is an exciting time for New York tech, with major announcements from companies like Micron, IBM, GlobalFoundries, and so many others made possible because of CHIPS and Science. And I believe the best for New York's semiconductor industry is still to come.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). The Senator from Mississippi.

MILITARY NOMINATIONS

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, a major item in the news last week was that the senior Senator from Alabama, Senator TUBERVILLE, released holds on over 400 military promotions. As usual, media reports framed the situation in much the same way as the Biden administration had. Both the President and the press focused on the holds instead of the policy the holds protested. They claimed my Senate colleague manufactured a crisis. The truth is that it is the President's political appointees who have been manufacturing the crisis from the start.

Let's go back. In the summer of 2022, the Supreme Court handed down its landmark Dobbs ruling. Almost immediately, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel claimed the decision would have "significant implications . . . for the readiness of the force." The abortion decision named "Dobbs" would have "significant implications . . . for the readiness of the force." Again, he claimed that the Supreme Court's decision, which essentially returned abortion decisions to the States, would have "significant implications . . . for the readiness of the force."

Let's all agree that readiness is vital to our success. Military readiness is

our No. 1 job. The United States faces the most dangerous national security situation in decades. China's military strength is growing at an alarming rate. Russia has brought war to Europe. Iran is actively attacking our troops. North Korea continues to develop dangerous weapons.

In the face of such a complicated web of threats, we must take military preparation seriously. Our precarious situation makes it irresponsible for anyone to fearmonger about readiness in order to advance a political agenda. Yet that is what we must conclude the President's appointees at DOJ have done.

They contend that the Dobbs decision hurts readiness, so, in response, Republicans have repeatedly asked for proof that Dobbs harms readiness. I have personally, as ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, asked for proof that Dobbs harms readiness, and the administration has refused to provide that evidence. In truth, that is because the evidence does not exist. At this point, it is pretty clear that Biden officials are avoiding the question because they do not like the answer.

It is difficult not to see that the President, and not my colleague from Alabama, is the one who precipitated the crisis.

To solve this imaginary emergency, the administration released what they called the reproductive health policy. The creative title failed to disguise what is a clear attempt to use taxpayer dollars illegally for abortion, contrary to the Hyde amendment. Under the rule, servicemembers are granted compensated time off, as well as monetary reimbursement for travel costs incurred, to receive an abortion. This policy violates popular opinion, and it violates the law.

Most Americans oppose late-term abortions, but a DOD official begrudgingly admitted to me in testimony that the policy would facilitate abortion at the very latest stages of pregnancy, in the eighth or ninth month. The provision spends tax dollars to facilitate abortions conducted mere days before a child's due date. That is just a fact.

Again, the administration claims this policy is necessary to solve a readiness problem created by Dobbs, but if Dobbs is such a threat, we could have reasonably expected wide usage of the travel policy. Despite the administration's stonewalling, I have obtained information indicating that just 12 women during this entire time have taken advantage of the reimbursement—just 12. Over 1 million Americans serve in our Armed Forces, but 12—not 12,000, not 1,200, but 12—have so far used this abortion travel reimbursement program. So the Biden administration cannot provide proof that Dobbs created a crisis for national defense.

We do have evidence that other administration priorities are harming our Armed Forces. The U.S. military faces a recruiting challenge, but the Biden administration is making it worse. The

President has instituted a woke diversity, equity, and inclusion bureaucracy at the DOD which is souring servicemembers' views of the military. A survey of Active Duty troops found that 7 in 10 are concerned about the politicization of the military. That same percent said that politicization would affect whether or not they would encourage their children to enlist. We know that family ties are the No. 1 way we recruit new servicemembers. When the Biden administration injects politics into the Armed Forces, it weakens that recruiting channel, and we see the results of that weakening.

In this year's national defense legislation, Republicans successfully included a number of important provisions curbing that woke agenda; but, regrettably, Democrats ended up blocking our efforts to end the DOD's illegal abortion travel policy. We will continue in future Congresses to resist that travel policy.

Last year's Dobbs decision was a monumental victory for the Constitution, our country, and, most importantly, for the unborn. It was the culmination of decades of dedicated work by pro-life groups, and I salute them. These groups understood how the Framers built our political process, and they patiently used their voices to advocate for the unborn in our democratic system. They were rewarded for their faithfulness that they exhibited during nearly 50 years under Roe.

During this time, the Biden administration has refused to play by the rules, and they grasp at ways to circumvent the Supreme Court's ruling. We intend to promote, in the next phase of our effort, a culture of life and to refocus the Pentagon on its national defense mission. The pro-life movement has always been a coalition of energetic volunteers, resilient advocates, and elected officials, and we will continue to work together to fight for the unborn.

And one final bit of very good news: Since the Dobbs decision was announced in 2022, approximately 30,000 babies have been born who would, otherwise, not have had an opportunity to experience life. That, in essence, is what this fight has been about and what it will continue to be about.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today, I want to address the ill-advised and really unacceptable conduct at the November 30 Judiciary Committee executive meeting. The majority there didn't allow a single Republican amendment to the adoption of the subpoena authorization, and that was breaking with precedent. Contrary to what Democrats allege, when I was chairman, I followed the rules and let everyone speak who wanted to so speak. I even allowed them to offer resolutions during a confirmation process, which I could have ruled out of order. Simply put, this subpoena authoriza-

tion isn't based on oversight; it is based on overreach. It is a political hit.

Over the past 6 months, the left's web of dark money interest groups has tried to impugn the character and reputation of certain conservative members of the Supreme Court. This Democratic investigation into the Supreme Court totally ignores ethical questions and dark money networks surrounding liberal Justices. This is all part of a whirlwind effort to cast doubt on our country's highest Court and call into question the legitimacy of its rulings. Conservative Justices have been specifically targeted, harassed, and even threatened. The left's influence-peddling scheme views these conservative Justices as the greatest obstacle to jamming their radical agenda through our courts because Congress won't do the same liberal bidding.

The left has outlined new rules for conservative Justices: Justices' spouses must give up their independent law practices; Justices shouldn't vacation with close personal friends; Justices shouldn't have wealthy friends; and Justices shouldn't make any new friends after donning the robe.

How unfair and how unrealistic. No such conflicts of interest ever were raised during the Court's liberal years. These rules were not invoked against the Court's liberal Justices. This persistent political battering of the Judiciary is coming at a tremendous cost. The conservative Justices have endured real threats to their safety and the safety of their loved ones.

As I have said before, judicial decision-making must be based on law and sound jurisprudence. It shouldn't be subject to the whims of public opinion or clamor. It cannot be the result of threats and intimidation of Supreme Court Justices. This political hit by the Democratic majority of the committee will do lasting damage not only to the Court but to the committee. Again, this effort isn't really oversight as I like to do, and we do a good job of it; instead, it is about political theater.

Let me give some examples of how an investigation should be conducted.

During my time as chairman of the Judiciary Committee, starting in 2017, the committee investigated, in a bipartisan fashion, alleged collusion between the Trump campaign and the Russians. Bipartisan committee staff—I want to emphasize that—bipartisan committee staff interviewed five individuals who participated in that meeting, including President Trump's son, and collected documents from several others involved. At the Democrats' request, the committee interviewed an additional six individuals. I subpoenaed even Paul Manafort, with then-Ranking Member Feinstein's agreement for him to appear at a hearing and to provide testimony. With the exception of Democrats refusing to subpoena Fusion GPS and related parties, then-Chairman GRAHAM's 2020 Crossfire Hurricane subpoena authorization was based on years of bipartisan work.