

whose house has been threatened by one of the many devastating wildfires in recent years will tell you firefighters are not an optional expense. But over a quarter of the Forest Service's wildland firefighting jobs are vacant. And unless we provide funding to save our firefighters from a pay cut, those vacancies will get worse.

This is the very definition of a "must-have," not a "nice-to-have," kind of investment.

One percent means we are blunting momentum for lifesaving biomedical breakthroughs.

NIH is looking at a \$280 million shortfall as Cures Act funding tapers off. That absolutely cannot be filled with a 1-percent bump. And that is on top of the \$678 million in NIH Cures Act funding that already expired last year that we couldn't make up for because of the caps.

There are countless patients who would be devastated to hear that totally arbitrary spending caps are stifling research that could save their lives.

But that is barely scratching the surface. One percent means no major new funding for the opioid or mental health crisis.

It means fewer kids in Head Start, which is facing now a severe staffing shortage.

It means long waiting times for seniors and people with disabilities who need help with their Social Security benefits.

It means laying off meat inspectors and consumer product safety workers.

And let's not forget that 1 percent means we are giving up ground to our competitors and adversaries in just about every way.

It means delaying NASA missions.

It means letting adversarial governments fill the void in global politics and influence, failing to counter an aggressive Putin in Russia and allowing partners to succumb to economic coercion from Beijing and withdrawing from the world stage to let competitors set the international norms that impact our safety and economic strength.

It means falling way behind on innovation, which we should be leading the way.

Do you know how much the Chinese government is increasing their research and development spending this year? It's 10 percent—10 percent.

How do we expect to compete at 1?

You know, we authorized some truly transformative programs and funding levels in the bipartisan Chips and Science Act, but that doesn't matter if we don't provide bipartisan investments that live up to those ambitions.

The FRA has already forced us to fall short; and without more nondefense funding, it will force us to fall behind the Chinese government.

I have covered a lot, but here is the rub: This is not even close to a comprehensive list of what those spending caps mean for our country.

I cannot emphasize enough that under the caps for nondefense, every-

thing struggles to keep up with rising costs. Programs that our kids, the future of our country, depend on—public schools, public health, nutrition assistance, to name a few—cannot get by on 1 percent.

Programs that keep our economy strong and growing—childcare, training for our workers, support for small business and for farmers, cutting-edge research—can't get by on 1 percent.

Programs that help communities thrive—affordable housing, transportation, broadband, and, of course, support for our Tribes—cannot get by on 1 percent.

Programs that keep us safe—diplomacy, Border Patrol, food inspectors, law enforcement—cannot get by on 1 percent.

It is entirely self-defeating to box our future in, leave our families behind, and give our adversaries an opening to charge ahead.

Congress needs to decide, Do we want a stronger America?

House Republicans are saying "no" and writing fiscal year 2025 bills that ignore the deals that they negotiated in favor of devastating cuts to non-defense.

The Senate, however, needs to come together and chart a different path in a bipartisan way that says "yes" to a stronger America.

So, to me, the path for the Senate is clear: We have got to provide additional resources beyond the caps to address major shortfalls and new challenges.

I appreciate my colleagues who want to do more for defense. I also think the defense cap is too low. But I feel strongly that that increase cannot happen in a vacuum. We have to do more for nondefense as well.

Parity is the order of the day because investments in our families, in our economy, in communities' safety and success are no less important than investments at the Pentagon. They are, actually, in fact, connected. After all, a new submarine isn't just built with money; it is actually built by people who need schools and childcare for their kids, roads and public transportation to get to work, safe food and water, workforce training programs so they can take on new roles in advanced manufacturing, and more.

So let me be clear: I will not let us boost defense alone while leaving families and our country's future in the dust. That is a core principle for me. It is who I am.

Now, I want you to know I am not asking for the moon here. Parity for defense and nondefense is not new or radical; it was the norm. I should know.

When I sat down across from Paul Ryan—a principled conservative—to reach a deal that undid the worst of sequestration a decade ago, we didn't agree on everything. In fact, we didn't agree on a lot of things. Family and football and fishing was all we agreed to start with. That is where we started.

But we both understood the only way we were going to reach a deal, undo massive cuts, and help folks back home was by working together and producing a deal that may not be what we would have written alone but addressed concerns that both of us brought to the table.

A cornerstone of that agreement—and of numerous agreements since—was parity for defense and nondefense.

Parity is not new. It is not some antiquated concept either; it is as relevant today as ever, because I think we can all agree that making sure planes fly safely overhead, making sure we invest in R&D as the Chinese government now spends 10 percent more, making sure our kids don't get hungry is not some second order priority.

So we cannot shortchange either side of the ledger. We increased defense funding by tens of billions this year while nondefense was held flat; and I worked extremely hard alongside my colleagues to ensure we delivered on a \$95 billion national security supplemental to address the major global threats we are facing.

In fiscal year 2025, I cannot accept net cuts in real resources to NDD, which is what a 1-percent increase means.

Our duty to our constituents is to pass bills that make their lives better: to provide funds that let us actually meet this moment, support families, protect our Nation, and stay ahead of our competitors.

That will require more resources for nondefense. And I am ready to work with my colleagues to provide the same for defense.

Last year, we were able to produce strong, bipartisan bills in committee. I am very hopeful we are going to be able to do the same again this year.

I plan to hold our first fiscal year 2025 markup the week we return from the Fourth of July recess. And I look forward to working with all of my colleagues to make sure we meet this moment, take the concerns that we are hearing back home, and write and pass strong, bipartisan Senate Appropriations bills.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority whip.

MR. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following Senators be allowed to speak prior to the scheduled rollcall votes: Myself for up to 10 minutes, Senator CORNYN for up to 15 minutes, and Senator MERKLEY for up to 5 minutes.

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

SENATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

MR. THUNE. Mr. President, with election day approaching in less than 5 months, Democrats are getting understandably concerned.

After all, a historic 3-year-plus border crisis and a historic 3-year-plus inflation crisis are not exactly an ideal record on which to run. And so Democrats have been doing what they can

here in the Senate to brighten their election prospects with a series of show votes designed to put Republicans in a difficult position—or so the Democratic leader hopes.

I said “show votes.” And I say that because all of these votes were clearly designed to fail. The Democratic leader knew that Republicans were not going to support a border bill that had previously been rejected, a contraception bill that would jeopardize the religious freedom of healthcare providers, or an IVF bill that would allow for human cloning and genetic engineering of human embryos.

These were not serious attempts by the Democratic leader to legislate. These were future campaign talking points.

If the Democratic leader really wanted to legislate, he would be bringing up something like Senator ERNST's legislation to promote access to contraception, which has a number of Republican cosponsors—or any one of the numerous commonsense border proposals Republicans have advanced, like Senator BLACKBURN's measure to allow State and local law enforcement to detain criminal illegal aliens for ICE to deport. But that is not the legislation the Democrat leader is bringing up, because, as I said, he is not interested in legislating; he is interested in boosting Democrats' electoral chances—he hopes—this fall.

I know the Democratic leader is trying his hardest to put Republicans in a difficult spot. But as I have said before, if he hopes to have us quaking in our boots over taking these votes, he should think again because Republicans are happy to have the chance to talk about the Democrat agenda, to talk about the disaster President Biden created at our southern border—a disaster he allowed to thrive unchecked for years, despite the serious danger to our national security; or to talk about how, under the guise of protecting access to contraception—something that is not under threat, I might add—the Democratic leader brought up legislation that would not only funnel money to Democrats' allies at Planned Parenthood but would wipe out—wipe out—conscience protections for healthcare providers.

Democrats' bill specifically targets the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which is bipartisan legislation passed in 1993, back when Democrats actually believed in defending our First Amendment freedoms.

And this is not Democrats' only attempt to target this legislation and to dictate how and when Americans can live according to their faith. Take, for example, Democrats' so-called Women's Health Protection Act—more accurately called the “Abortion on Demand Act,” which would prevent healthcare providers from claiming protection under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act if their faith prevents them from performing abortions.

Apparently the “personal freedoms” that the Democratic leader mentioned

earlier this month don't include religious freedom—at least not when your faith conflicts with Democrats' policy positions.

Speaking of the Abortion on Demand Act, I find it very interesting that in a month the Democrat leader intended to be dedicated to “reproductive freedoms,” he chose not to bring up Democrats' signature abortion legislation. Is it possible that he thought that in a month in which he hoped to paint Republicans as extremists, it might not be a great idea to bring up Democrats' radical abortion legislation, lest Americans see just how extreme Democrats are on this issue? In fact, the Democrats' bill might be the most extreme abortion legislation ever considered by Congress.

The so-called Women's Health Protection Act would not only allow abortion through all 40 weeks of pregnancy, it would sweep away almost every commonsense restriction that has been upheld under Roe and would make abortion on demand at any time, for essentially any reason, the law of the land, not to mention wiping out the ban on taxpayer funding of abortion—something that has been agreed upon by both sides for nearly 50 years.

Needless to say, this is far out of step with the American people, a majority of whom believe abortion should generally be illegal during the second 3 months of pregnancy and 70 percent of whom believe abortion should generally be illegal during the final 3 months, not to mention the fact that it is also out of step with European abortion law, with 46 out of 50 European U.N. member countries restricting abortion on demand after 15 weeks. But that is certainly not stopping Democrats from pursuing one of the most radical abortion regimes in the world.

In the coming weeks, I expect we will see the Democrats' summer of show votes continue, but I suspect the American people will not be fooled by Democrats' politicking.

As for Republicans, we are happy to discuss the Democrat agenda anytime Democrats would like to bring it up.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

JUNETEENTH NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, one of the most defining days for our country throughout our Nation's history was when President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, freeing all slaves. It marked the end of one of the most shameful chapters in our country's history. But slaves in Texas wouldn't learn this life-altering news for nearly 2½ years.

It wasn't until June 19, 1865—the day we now know as Juneteenth—that Major General Gordon Granger and the Union troops arrived at Galveston, TX, and shared the news that all formerly enslaved people were now free. These newly freed men and women set out from Galveston and spread the news, and they began their lives anew. Many

traveled toward nearby Houston, and the news eventually reached the more than 250,000 slaves throughout the State of Texas.

In 1979, Texas was the first of what would become many States to proclaim the day Juneteenth as an official State holiday—1979. Every year on June 19, you will find parades, concerts, church picnics, family barbecues, and countless other Juneteenth events throughout the State.

I have joined a number of those Juneteenth celebrations over the years, but the one in 2021 in Galveston, the birth place of Juneteenth, will always stand out as one of my favorites.

Just 2 days before that celebration, a bill I authored with Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON LEE was signed into law, officially establishing Juneteenth as a national holiday—not just a State holiday, a national holiday. This marked the culmination of many years of hard work by Juneteenth advocates in Texas, and it was an honor to celebrate with many of those advocates in Galveston exactly 156 years after Major General Gordon Granger and his troops arrived there.

I would be remiss if I didn't recognize the most tenacious advocate for the Juneteenth holiday, my friend Ms. Opal Lee, who is widely known as the grandmother of Juneteenth. Ms. Opal was driven from her Fort Worth home by a racist mob at the tender age of 12 years. Rather than turn that tragedy into hate, she made it her life's work to recognize the 2½ years it took the news of the Emancipation Proclamation to reach Texas by walking 2½ miles in different areas of the country to build awareness.

Even though Juneteenth is now a national holiday, Ms. Opal, at the tender age of 97, still walks 2½ miles in the Texas heat—she will do that tomorrow—to underscore the importance of continuing to strive for a more perfect Union. Juneteenth National Independence Day would not have been possible without her perseverance and humility, and I hope she understands and appreciates the importance of her work.

By making Juneteenth a national holiday, we have ensured that the history and significance of this day will not be relegated to footnotes in history books. Instead, it will preserve the history of Juneteenth for generations to come and serve as a reminder of the hard-fought struggle for freedom and reconciliation.

This holiday gives us the opportunity to confront the flaws of our past, to honor the progress that we have made, and to resolve to continue to work together for a brighter future.

I appreciate the hard work and dedication of those who made Juneteenth National Independence Day possible, and I wish everyone a happy Juneteenth.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.