

the chairman of the Finance Committee and we have a new majority come January.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

NDA

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, I rise today to address something that is not getting done on time, as it deserves to be done on this Senate floor; and that is the fiscal year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act.

I am very pleased to see my fellow Senator from the Great State of Mississippi, who is the ranking member on this committee, who has spent numerous hours—and days and weeks—working this bill but also educating Members and Senators as to how important this is.

The National Defense Authorization Act—or the NDAA, as we call it—is an annual display of support for the national security of our country here in the U.S. Congress. In fact, we have passed the NDAA for 63 consecutive years.

This bipartisan legislation supports our troops, supports our national security, and strengthens the capabilities of the U.S. military.

In a time when we face some of the most dangerous security environments since World War II, the NDAA should be one of our top legislative priorities. But, unfortunately, Leader SCHUMER just doesn't seem to agree.

And with the support of my Democratic colleagues, Leader SCHUMER has spent much of the summer on messaging votes that are crafted with no true intention of making a law, nominations for Federal entities, which we are going to be doing all day today, and the confirmation of judges that have—some of them—no business serving on the bench. This is not what the American people sent us to do for our country.

The urgent need to pass the NDAA becomes obvious when you take into account what is currently happening in the world around us. First, our ally and friend Israel is under attack by Iran and its terrorist clients.

Last week, we welcomed President Binyamin Netanyahu for a joint address to Congress, and he detailed the stark reality that his country is facing. Just a few days ago—just a few days ago—we learned the devastating news that 12 children and teenagers were killed by a Hezbollah strike while innocently playing on a soccer field.

We know that Iran is the aggressor behind these attacks, and we know that they are doing all they can to grow their nuclear capabilities as well. Imagine the dangers of a nuclear-armed Iran and what that means for the stability in the Middle East.

The last 24 hours alone have shown the rapid pace at which the Middle East security environment is changing. Israel is showing that it has the will and the capability to fight back against their aggressors—and I stand strongly in support with this ally.

Second, there is a large-scale ground war going on in Europe for the first time since World War II. And we know Putin's territorial ambitions and aggressions extend far beyond Ukraine.

Third, we are witnessing an unprecedented military buildup by China, accompanied by aggressions against Taiwan, the Philippines, Japan, and other partners in the region.

This summer alone, China aggression in the South China Sea has threatened to spark a dangerous conflict with the Philippines—a country that has a mutual defense treaty with the United States.

And just 5 days ago—I feel like everything is week to week—5 days ago, two Chinese and two Russian nuclear-capable bombers were detected near the coast of Alaska, prompting U.S. fighter jets to intercept these aircraft.

This is the first time we have seen this type of joint strategic bombing training between China and Russia in their “no limits” partnership.

Throughout all of this, we are watching China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea reinforce one another in their aggression. They are supporting one another and sharing resources to achieve objectives directly opposed to the United States, our way of life, and our values. If that doesn't raise alarm bells, I just don't know what will.

On top of this, the National Defense Commission—charged with assessing our Nation's preparedness for future conflict—gave us a pretty stark warning this week, which was: The U.S. is facing the most challenging threats we've seen since 1945—and we aren't ready for it.

According to this report, the Biden National Defense Strategy simply doesn't prepare us to deter or prevail in a future conflict.

According to one headline, the Pentagon has insufficient forces inadequate to face China—and Russia. Here again, we cannot wait; we have to get serious about our national security.

As I mentioned, Senator WICKER understands this. That is why he has released a proposal to help us repair our anemic military so that we are not at our lowest number of aircraft, ships, and munitions when China is building to their highest.

It is clear that now is the time to invest in our military, our personnel, and our capabilities. We can do that and send a clear message to both our allies and our adversaries by passing a strong and robust NDAA.

American leadership on the world stage has long been defined by “peace through strength,” but in order to do that, we must invest in strength first. The NDAA authorizes programs that the Department of Defense needs to replenish and grow our military stockpiles and to invest in the innovation and modernization programs we might need for a future fight.

The NDAA will make critical upgrades to our nuclear, hypersonic, missile defense, and our space programs,

and restore the arsenal of democracy by ensuring our country's ammo plants have the tools they need to modernize amid increasing demands for munitions. These are the facilities like the Allegany Ballistics Laboratory, which proudly operates in my home State of West Virginia.

It also invests directly in the men and women of our military by providing a 4.5-percent pay raise for servicemembers and increasing the monthly pay for our junior enlisted troops as well.

I have also worked to ensure provisions for my own State of West Virginia and how we can contribute to building our military and strengthening our national defense. It supports upgrades and operations at the Air National Guard facilities like the 130th Airlift Wing in Charleston, WV. It directs the U.S. Army to move forward on testing and fielding active protection systems on Army ground combat vehicles—to implement lessons learned from watching the failure of Russian tanks in Ukraine—and some of that testing is being done in West Virginia.

The bill supports the resilience of undersea cables used by the Department of Defense—to make certain that critical missions are not disrupted—and provisions that move our country away from the reliance on foreign sources for critical precursor chemicals used for the manufacture of U.S. weapons.

These are just a handful of the provisions included in the NDAA, but they speak to the importance of the legislation and the steps we need to take now to make sure that our military remains ready for any conflict that we may face in the future.

The crux of the issue is this: The House of Representatives passed their version of the NDAA on June 14. The Senate Armed Services Committee approved our version of the NDAA the day before that—that would be June 13—and we have heard absolutely nothing from the Democrat leader about when he will bring this vital leadership to the floor for debate and consideration.

So we are wasting the time of the American people on show votes and inconsequential nominees. Republicans are demanding action. We want to continue to point out the danger of sidelining our national security priorities. There is a desperate need for American leadership on the world stage, and a strong bipartisan National Defense Authorization Act helps us to get there. So I encourage my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to please recognize that.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I want to congratulate and thank my colleague from West Virginia for her remarks and for her leadership to make America strong again so that we can have peace through strength.

The distinguished Senator mentioned a hearing that the Committee on

Armed Services had yesterday. Our witnesses were two distinguished experts in the field of national security. The Democrat who testified before us was none other than former Representative Jane Harman of California—a high-ranking committee chair when she was in the House of Representatives and a loyal Democrat, but she is someone who understands that we are not where we need to be under this administration when it comes to national defense. The other witness was Eric Edelman, a very distinguished diplomat and Ambassador.

Their message was absolutely as the Senator said: The United States is not ready to face and to face down and to deter this axis of aggression that threatens the United States as we have not been threatened since 1945. Those are not my words. Those are the words of this bipartisan Commission on a unanimous basis. We are more threatened as a nation than we have been since 1945, and we know what was happening during that decade.

Just over a year ago, in a late-night vote after a long, long day, 86 Senators stood together and passed the National Defense Authorization Act and advanced American security. As I say, we had spent a full day with debate. We had 24 rollcalls. We passed 121 amendments—the most ever adopted on the floor for such a bill—and we overwhelmingly passed the Senate's version of the 2024 National Defense Authorization Act. We did it in the light of day so that every American could see how their Senators stood on important issues. That was last year.

Over the past several days, we could have done the same thing with this year's National Defense Authorization Act. We could have followed the same procedure, but for whatever reason—and I will speculate on those reasons—the Senate majority leader has allowed politics to stand in the way of such progress of our national security obligations, preventing Americans from seeing in the light of day how their elected Senators feel on some very controversial issues of taking up this important legislation that we do every year in an open process.

The U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee has worked hard this year to develop our 2025 NDAA. It is a bill that reflects the overwhelming bipartisan consensus of the committee, and I am pleased to report—and Americans now know—that, in a bipartisan vote, the committee added a \$25 billion budget top-line increase specifically designed to address the rising threats of this axis of aggressors: China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, and their proxies.

We are entering a long Presidential leadership transition period, and we need to present a strong front to that axis of aggressors that present, as the Commission unanimously said, the most dangerous threat we have had since 1945. The tyrants of these adversaries are watching our every move. They know we haven't taken up this

bill in an open process. They are looking for every vulnerability. By passing the NDAA under regular order, we could have shown them that the U.S. Senate backs our servicemembers to the hilt and that we intend to repair the damage that has occurred to our national defense.

Instead, Majority Leader SCHUMER has allowed the bill to collect dust. The \$25 billion top-line increase was a bipartisan choice, and I am grateful to Members on both sides of the aisle for supporting that in the committee, but the majority leader has somehow been afraid that the vote, although passed in a bipartisan measure, would reflect badly on the Biden-Harris administration. The political partisanship has caused him to prevent a full debate on the NDAA. Basically, there are a number of sensitive, leftist issues that the leader wants to prevent some of his vulnerable Members from having to vote on, pure and simple.

We shouldn't let political calculations dictate our national security decisions. Our enemies are working together, and we are not prepared to defend against them. Don't ask the Senator from Mississippi; ask the bipartisan Commission.

Our enemies are helping each other sow chaos around the world in Israel, Ukraine, the Indo-Pacific, Venezuela, where an election was stolen just a few days ago. A snapshot of events from the past week gives us a glimpse of this trend.

On Wednesday of last week, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu spoke before Congress. In my opinion, his remarks were among the most stirring and profound speeches ever delivered to a joint session of Congress. In clear and factual language, Prime Minister Netanyahu testified to the threat from Iran and its proxies. Iran is backing Hamas and Hezbollah—two terrorist organizations who seek nothing short of the elimination of the Jewish State and Israel. Iran has armed the Houthis—another terrorist group who barrage our Navy sailors in the Red Sea.

On the same day as the Prime Minister's address, Russia and China performed their first-ever joint military flight exercise—the first ever in history with Russia and China together—and they did it directly approaching Alaskan airspace, American airspace.

The following day, U.S. prosecutors brought charges against a North Korean operative with cyber attacks on American hospitals and military assets. This is dangerous.

Over the weekend, Hezbollah continued assaulting Israel from the north. The terrorist group launched a horrific rocket attack, killing 12 Israeli children on a soccer field—on a soccer field.

These incidents are not isolated. Each aggressor receives growing support and encouragement from the others, and they follow up on the atrocious October 7 terrorist attack that

killed so many Israeli and American civilians—babies, women, children, husbands, and wives—last year.

Yesterday, the Senate Armed Services Committee heard testimony from the National Defense Strategy, as the distinguished Senator from West Virginia said, and I would again emphasize that they didn't mince words. They agree with the recommendation of my white paper—that the United States needs to get back to Ronald Reagan's peace through strength and spend up to 5 percent of our gross domestic product on our security. We need to develop the kind of strength that keeps the axis of aggressors from growing stronger. We need to develop the kind of strength that keeps the axis aggressors from doing anything foolish that would plunge the world into a war.

Leader SCHUMER should appreciate the stakes and urgency of this moment, and they need to act now to send a strong message now and to do it with the Sun shining on it in the light of day. He should have brought the bipartisan NDAA to the floor instead of covering up for the Biden-Harris administration, instead of shielding vulnerable Democrats from issues like the left-wing social policy that is being forced on our military, and instead of preventing the Department of Defense's resources to be used to secure the border and take on the cartels.

There is no time to waste. While the Democratic leader avoids tough votes, our adversaries launch more missiles. When our leaders place politics above strong defense policy, when America shows weakness, more towns elsewhere fall into the hands of evil regimes.

In this moment of heightened global instability, we have missed a chance to project the kind of American strength that promotes peace, and because of the leader's actions, we will not be able to take this bill up in the light of day. It will be written in secret by a handful of people in a closed room, and that will be the final version.

I regret this. I am sorry that the leader has missed a great opportunity to send a strong signal to our enemies in the light of day and to let the American people know how their elected Senators stand on these important issues.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BUDD. Madam President, I thank my colleague and the ranking member for his comments and his leadership on Armed Services.

We meet at a time of increasing peril for our country. The threats we face are demanding attention in a way that we haven't seen in decades. From the Middle East to Europe, to the Indo-Pacific, weakness and moral bankruptcy from the Biden-Harris administration have allowed chaos to spread around the globe.

In the Middle East, Israel is in a fight for survival against genocidal Hamas

terrorists and other terrorist proxies from Iran. These forces of evil are bent not only on the complete annihilation of the Jewish State but on the destruction of the United States as well.

In Ukraine, Russia continues its vicious war of aggression by continuing to commit war crimes against innocent civilians and threatening the very stability of Europe.

In the Indo-Pacific, China is saber-rattling and taking provocative action toward Taiwan and the Philippines.

The aim of the Chinese Communist Party is clear: They are determined to displace the United States as the dominant world superpower. If this were to occur, the consequences would be staggering for America and, I say, yes, the world's security and economic well-being.

We know that the answer to all these crises is the one thing that has been missing for the last 3½ years, and that is American strength, particularly America's military superiority.

This year's National Defense Strategy Commission report has made clear that the dire threats we face can only be confronted if America's military might is strengthened. Our enemies won't relent if America takes a step backward. Our diplomatic efforts will never be successful if they are not backed up by the real threat of overwhelming military force. Simply put, in order to be a strong nation, our military must also be strong.

I am proud to say that my home State of North Carolina plays a leading role in our national defense. The Old North State is blessed to be home to eight active military bases, and it has thousands of Active-Duty servicemembers, veterans, and their families as well.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I see it as my responsibility to do everything that I can to support our military and to keep it strong. I am particularly proud of the work the committee did this year on the National Defense Authorization Act to combat the growing threats posed by China, Russia, Iran, and the dangerous individuals coming across our own southern border.

In this dangerous world, the U.S. Senate should prioritize the passage of the NDAA. We shouldn't procrastinate, and we shouldn't play politics with it. We should put it on the floor, have a full amendment process, and let everyone debate the issues. It is pretty simple.

But don't be fooled by the political calendar. The Democrat majority—they can make the time if they really wanted to do it, but instead they are prioritizing politics. They are holding show votes on messaging bills designed to fundraise for their political base. This does a massive disservice not only to the men and women serving overseas who depend on us, but it also sends yet another message of weakness and division to the world at a time when our enemies see the United States as weaker than we have ever been.

So my message to the majority is this: If you care about keeping America a strong nation, if you care about American leadership in the world, if you care about U.S. troops stationed here and abroad, put the NDAA on the floor so that we can do our job.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, I want to join my colleagues here on the Senate floor and talk about the importance of national security right here in the Congress of the United States. It is certainly one of our top priorities—protecting our Nation.

You know, President Ronald Reagan, who very much focused on the issue of peace through strength—and I am going to talk about that here in a minute—he once said:

We know only too well that war comes not when the forces of freedom are strong, but when they are weak. It is then that the tyrants are tempted.

“It is then that the tyrants are tempted.”

Tyrants like this guy—that is Xi Jinping sporting some cammies there with his military—tyrants like this guy and the tyrants around the world, they are tempted. They are tempted. They are on the march.

Look at this poster. That is Xi Jinping again in his military uniform. He kind of looks ridiculous, from my perspective, but, hey, they are on the march.

Putin, the terrorists in Iran, Kim Jong Un in North Korea, Venezuela, for goodness' sake—all the tyrants are working together, and they are on the march because the forces of freedom, as President Reagan said, have become weak.

You have heard it from my colleagues from North Carolina and Mississippi. We are on Armed Services together. By the way, they are both doing a great job. Let me make sure everyone can see that. Thank you. Yet this body has not taken up what we need to take up.

Just a couple of examples. Senator BUDD was talking about the chaos in the Middle East, the appeasement of Iran by the Biden-Harris administration.

By the way, in my great State, just this past week, we had a joint Russian-Chinese strategic bomber patrol come into our ADIZ, into the kind of territorial airspace right near Alaska. It never happened before in the history of the country—Chinese and Russian joint bomber patrols, with fighters, coming into American airspace. The tyrants—this guy—they are tempted. They have never done that before.

We heard about this. We all know this started due to the botched, chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan that has sent the message of weakness.

Our wonderful military up in Alaska scrambled 10 fighter jets, fully armed, went and greeted the Chinese and the Russians, and said: Not today, guys. Turn around. Get out of our airspace.

But that was an escalation. It never happened before.

In the United States, we need to be stronger—much stronger than the Biden-Harris administration has enabled us to be.

So what can we do here on the Senate floor? Well, what we can do—and you have heard my colleagues talk about it—is that we can bring up the National Defense Authorization Act.

Like a lot of my colleagues who have been talking on the floor right now, I serve on the Armed Services Committee and was glad to work on this bill in a bipartisan way. I saw Chairman REED here a minute ago on the floor. He did a great job, the chairman of the committee. We dramatically increased the top-line number that we need in terms of our military, the men and women who did the mission like they did last week in Alaska.

By the way, that is not an easy mission, flying 1,000 miles from their base to go intercept the Russians and Chinese with fighters. That was not an easy mission. Our military members did it really well.

But here is the issue: For so many of my Democratic colleagues, especially the majority leader, the military and bringing the NDAA on the floor is just not a priority. I mean, no offense to some of the people we are confirming right now, but these are not priorities. The time on the Senate floor reflects priorities, and the majority leader has kind of indicated: Hey, even though we have a good NDAA; even though our country is in peril right now, with the dictators on the march; even though the House already passed a version, the Senate—ah, forget it. We will do a tax judge. We won't bring the NDAA to the floor.

I know a lot of Democrats who worked hard—the Presiding Officer is one—who worked hard on this bill. A lot of my Democrat colleagues want the bill on the floor. For whatever reason, the Senate majority leader, during this dangerous time, will not bring a bipartisan bill strengthening our military to the floor.

Why won't he do that? Why won't he do that? Well, I will say there is a major, major difference between our parties—a major difference. What is that difference? Well, I like to proudly proclaim that the Republicans have been, are, and I hope will always be the party of peace through strength—peace through strength.

By the way, if you take a look at the Republican Party platform that we issued in Milwaukee at our convention a couple of weeks ago, it is all about returning to peace through strength. That is what the platform is about.

By the way, I took a look at the Republican Party platform in 2024 and the Reagan-Bush platform in 1984 on peace through strength. They are almost identical. That is what we believe in. That is what President Eisenhower believed in, Roosevelt, Reagan, and President Trump certainly did in his first term.

Here is the difference—you know, I know some of my colleagues don't like it when I say this, but, hey, the truth hurts—the Democrats are the opposite of this. When the Democrats have gotten into power in the White House, what do they do? They always come and cut defense spending, and they always undermine readiness. That is why the Senate majority leader is saying: I don't want to bring the NDAA to the floor. That is not our priority. We don't do that.

Let me just give a couple of examples.

Jimmy Carter cut defense spending in his first 3 years in office, and the Russians and Iranians took advantage of America's weakened posture.

Bill Clinton cut the size of our military by one-third, upending a decade of progress under the Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations.

Barack Obama slashed the Pentagon's budget by 25 percent during his second term. Our military readiness plummeted. I remember coming to the Senate in 2015. I was the ranking member on the Readiness Subcommittee and was shocked to see that 3 out of 58 brigade combat teams in the U.S. Army were at their highest levels of readiness—3 out of 58. Obama slashed readiness.

Of course, now we have the Biden administration. Every year Biden-Harris have been in office, they have cut defense spending. Every single year. This year's Biden-Harris budget shrinks the Army, shrinks the Navy, and shrinks the Marine Corps. That is a fact.

Next year's budget, in the next 2 years, if the Biden-Harris team is re-elected, we will go below 3 percent of GDP.

Take a look at this chart. It shows it. These are the numbers on GDP. That is 15 percent during the Korean war; 8, 9, percent during Vietnam; the Cold War, Reagan era, 5, 5½ percent; Bush, about 4½ percent; right here, 3 percent.

We have been below 3 percent of GDP four times since World War II. That is the wrong message to be sending to dictators in the world. That is what the Biden-Harris budget for the Department of Defense does right now.

Now, we can fix this. We can work on the NDAA, which, as I mentioned, in a bipartisan way, we significantly increase the top-line budget.

I want to commend ROGER WICKER, the Senator from Mississippi, the ranking member on the Armed Services Committee, for his great leadership on that.

By the way, the White House is against that. They love going below 3 percent. And during the Biden-Harris administration, they will crank up spending for other Federal Agencies by double digits—some up 20 percent—but Homeland Security, securing the border, and our military men and women, they get a cut. Again, that is what national Democrats do.

Our tradition is what the American people want, particularly during these

dangerous times: peace through strength. And one way we can do that right now on the Senate floor is to bring the NDAA to the floor—to bring the NDAA to the floor. And yet the Senate majority leader doesn't want to do that. It is not surprising. That is the tradition of national Democrats: weakening our military, not taking it seriously, not a priority.

But that is not what the American people want, Madam President. We need the NDAA to the floor now, during these dangerous times.

And my colleagues and I—I am glad to be with all of them on the floor. By the way, I am pretty sure there are going to be some Democratic Senators calling for this, too. They are not doing it right now, but we need it on the floor today, and I am honored to be here with so many Republican Senators making the same call.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Madam President, we shouldn't be here giving speeches about the National Defense Authorization Act. We should be here on the Senate floor voting on the National Defense Authorization Act.

Once again, as he has done year after year since I have been here, Majority Leader CHUCK SCHUMER is refusing to advance this critical bill to set the policy and funding levels for America's Armed Forces.

Washington's failure to move legislation forward is always frustrating, but the majority leader's refusal to act on the NDAA, a bill which passed with strong bipartisan support out of the Armed Services Committee more than a month ago, is more than frustrating; it is actually dangerous.

Every single day, our enemies—communist China, Iran, Russia, and North Korea—are actively working with one single goal in mind: to dominate the world stage by destroying the American way of life.

And without some of the good policy in the NDAA we passed out of committee a month ago becoming law, communist China has tools at its disposal to do great harm to our country.

Our country has fallen into a trap of dependence on our enemies—like communist China—for everything from drugs to food, and we have got to stop that today.

When the Senate fails to quickly advance the NDAA, as Majority Leader CHUCK SCHUMER has done year after year, it sends a strong message to our enemies that military strength and cutting dependence on our enemies is not a priority for the U.S. Congress. It is dangerous and unacceptable to allow that message to go out to the world, especially as we watch war after war erupt around the globe thanks to the weakness and appeasement of the Biden-Harris administration.

I hope we can all come together and recognize that we cannot be depending on communist China for our medicine,

technology, or food, especially if we are at war. The time is now to get serious about securing U.S. interests and decoupling our supply chains from communist China. As a body, we must demand action today.

I am a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, along with my colleague who is presiding, and the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Personnel. So I know firsthand how much hard work has gone into crafting a good bill that is essential to maintaining America's military as the most lethal fighting force on the planet.

But this bill does so much more than that. The NDAA isn't simply a reauthorization of our military and support programs. This bill sets the policy that ensures America's Armed Forces are on the cutting edge of innovation to not just win wars but to deter threats from our enemies because they know they stand no chance of victory in a conflict with the United States.

Try as they might to project weakness, President Biden and Vice President HARRIS, thankfully, do not have a hand in crafting this legislation. Thank God that is the case.

Through the NDAA, we can ensure that the woke vision for the U.S. military that Biden and HARRIS wish for does not become reality. Nothing could be more important to protecting our Nation and our men and women in uniform than that. Unfortunately, I fear that is the exact reason why the majority leader continues to stall and refuses to bring this legislation to a vote on the Senate floor.

The NDAA also ensures our military families are taken care of as they make sacrifices each and every day to support our warfighters and keep America safe.

Much of that work is reflected in the big wins we have in this NDAA for my home State of Florida. The U.S. military is incredibly important to Florida. We are home to 21 military bases and 3 unified combatant commands, over 64,000 Active-Duty military, 38,000 reservists, and more than 1.5 million veterans.

For our servicemembers and their families, I fought aggressively in this NDAA to secure a 4.5 percent pay raise, along with many of my colleagues. We have continued our work to support military families and expand access to affordable, on-base childcare by securing \$3 million for child development center construction in the Florida Panhandle.

We have also included language in the bill to eliminate disgusting Chinese garlic from our on-base grocery stores, so no family feeding their family through our on-base commissaries is forced to buy Chinese sewer garlic. Remember, Chinese-grown garlic is widely reported to be grown in human sewage, then bleached and harvested in abhorrent conditions, often with slave labor.

And with Russian warships recently 90 miles off our shores, communist

China building a spy base in Cuba, and growing partnership between communist China, Russia, and Iran with Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua, we made sure that Homestead Air Reserve Base in South Florida will continue to serve a critical mission for years to come and protect our Nation from the growing threats posed by our enemies in Latin America.

I am also proud to have personally fought for and secured big wins for the United States against communist China, including making sure the Department of Defense buys generic drugs made in the United States of America to cut dependence on our enemies for these essential medicines. We cannot continue to rely on enemies like communist China for essential medicines.

Through this NDAA, I am also fighting to stop the Department of Defense purchase of Chinese computers and printers, which pose a threat to our national security when connected to secure networks.

Passing this bill will prevent the DOD from procuring LiDAR technology for manned or unmanned systems from companies based in communist China unless granted explicit congressional approval.

It also supports research and development efforts to enhance the U.S. commercial, space-based LiDAR capabilities.

We will authorize a report on the operational value of the Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, given the concerning relationship the Government of Qatar has with Hamas and other terrorist organizations, as well as its continuing hostility to the State of Israel and other U.S. interests.

And, thank God, one of the leaders of Hamas is not alive today.

And we will provide support for Israel, America's great ally and the only democracy in the Middle East, with U.S.-Israel counter-tunneling cooperation and an increase of \$47.5 million for U.S.-Israel cooperation on emerging technology.

Madam President, the United States is at a critical moment where military strength is essential to preserving our national security and fending off the threats of tyranny and terrorism that are rising around the globe. This NDAA reflects what must be done to combat the threats posed by our enemies in communist China, Iran, and Russia; protect our allies and partners in Israel, the Philippines, and across Europe; and protect and grow our military strength in Florida, where we have massive defense assets that are critical to our national security.

A strong defense is key to protecting the freedoms that make America great. I will never lose sight of one of the most important roles I have as a U.S. Senator: to protect and serve the families of our great Nation. I look forward to working closely with my colleagues to make sure we are protecting our national security and investing in America's greatest asset: the men and women of our Armed Forces.

I want to thank Chairman REED, Ranking Member WICKER, and all of my colleagues on the Armed Services Committee for their leadership on these important issues. I am proud of the work we have done and again call for Majority Leader SCHUMER to stop stalling now and put this bill on the floor today.

We cannot afford to send any signal of weakness at this time of growing threats and instability around the globe.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that myself and Senator TUBERVILLE be permitted to speak for up to 7 minutes, Senator CARDIN for up to 10 minutes, and Senator TILLIS for up to 2 minutes prior to the scheduled rollcall vote.

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

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, as election season approaches, our political discourse has been heated, to say the least. From an assassination attempt a couple of weeks ago to destructive protests across Washington last week, the friction within America is undeniable.

My colleagues and I are here today to discuss one of the things Americans do agree on: defending our Nation.

We all see the tension simmering around Taiwan and South Korea and the tension exploding in Israel and Ukraine. And we see the threats China and Russia pose to our Nation. These threats are decades in the making. And while they sound far away—they are, after all, around the other side of the world—the close connections between the security of the world's democracies and the economies of the world mean that these developments impact our everyday lives.

America should have woken up and gotten ahead years ago, but, at the very least, we must wake up now.

The most critical job we have in the U.S. Senate is providing for our national security, and we do that through our National Defense Authorization Act. We passed the NDAA out of the Senate Armed Services Committee last month with bipartisan approval. It includes provisions that will benefit our servicemembers and that will bolster our national defense.

I supported a pay raise for members of our military and secured funding for several Nebraska military construction projects.

This year's NDAA also included important provisions to address issues within the munitions industrial base, contributing to thousands of good-paying jobs throughout the country while providing for our national security.

The bill incorporated elements of my Restoring American Deterrence Act to foster a skilled nuclear manufacturing and vocational trade workforce. We heard about the importance of that need at our SASC hearing yesterday, when members received the report

from the Commission on the National Defense Strategy.

I am hopeful that the full Senate will recognize the bipartisan importance of passing the NDAA, just as we did on the Armed Services Committee. But before we can do that, Majority Leader SCHUMER must prioritize bringing the NDAA up for a vote.

Just as these threats impact our everyday lives, so also does our response or lack thereof. This is a matter of urgency. Our defense is not something we can deal with in 5 years, in 10 years. It is something that we must address now, and we had better get started.

If we fail to ensure that we can produce munitions at scale, we will run out of missiles within weeks of a conflict. If we fail to field and equip a modernized Navy, Marine Corps, Army, Air Force, or Space Force, one day Xi will think: Maybe we can win.

Preventing that day will prevent a conflict that would touch the life of every American citizen in ways this country hasn't seen since the Second World War. The majority leader should have reflected that by bringing the NDAA to the floor before the August State work period, and now he needs to bring it to the floor as soon as possible. But instead of doing our most important constitutional job, we have been seeing political show votes on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

America's safety—America's safety—is a bipartisan responsibility, a bipartisan duty that requires bipartisan commitment.

Let's show Americans that despite all the fights and disagreements, we can unite in the Senate around the most important issues; we can prioritize our security; and we can and we must pass this year's NDAA.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, on October 23, 1983, terrorists killed 241 Americans, including 220 marines in Beirut, Lebanon.

Last night, Israeli Defense Forces reportedly killed a top Hezbollah leader responsible for those American lives lost. The events of last night highlight why the Senate now needs to move on the NDAA to strengthen our military and our allies abroad. Instead, Senator SCHUMER has done nothing this week but bring low-level nominations to the floor while the bipartisan NDAA gathers dust on his desk.

It is par for the course for Senator SCHUMER. Democrats ride the fence on this because Hamas is a key constituency of the Democratic Party. That is why KAMALA HARRIS couldn't bring herself to show up to the Prime Minister's congressional address this past week. It is why the Biden administration has flushed Iran with cash and now Iran is bankrolling terrorism all over the Middle East. But they act surprised when the Middle East is destabilized. They are more concerned about appeasing our enemies and supporting our friends and our allies.

Now Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS have brought us to possibly World War III. It is the weakest administration in the history of the United States of America.

We have become a complete joke in the eyes of the world, which is why I rise today to call on Senator SCHUMER to immediately bring the NDAA to the floor for a vote. Senator SCHUMER has refused to act on this legislation since it passed out of committee on June 13 with bipartisan support. After the events last night, it is imperative now more than ever that we move this bill.

Senator SCHUMER, let's be serious here, if you really care about our military, you will bring the NDAA up for a vote immediately. Stop wasting our time on messaging bills that are a ploy to bail out vulnerable Democratic colleagues in an election. We need a military that is 100 percent focused on protecting our country and enhancing our national security, not implementing the Biden-Harris woke agenda, which is why I have taken steps to return our military to greatness in this year's NDAA.

Among these victories, I count my amendments which will help refocus the Pentagon on its stated mission to deter war and ensure our Nation's security. One of these amendments includes eliminating all funding for the woke diversity, equity, and inclusion programs at the DOD.

Another amendment prohibits the use of taxpayer dollars from being spent on transgender surgeries or any other costs associated with these services.

I appreciate my colleagues on the committee supporting these commonsense amendments that were included in this year's Senate NDAA. I, along with millions of Americans, am scratching my head as to why the DOD has implemented these policies to begin with.

Sadly, no institutions, not even our great military, are safe from infiltration by the Biden-Harris regime's radical woke policies. Immediately after taking the White House, Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS weaponized the DOD, using it as yet another tool in their arsenal to further their progressive agenda. One of the Biden-Harris administration's first moves was mandating diversity, equity, and inclusion training in all the DOD. On day one, the Biden-Harris administration announced the military would be conducting training to "have knowledge of systemic and institutional racism and bias against underserved communities."

This hateful ideology has no place in the United States, let alone our military. The military is not a social experiment. It should be a lethal fighting force feared by our enemies and comprised of our best and brightest. The military should be built on merit, not diversity.

It is dangerous and insulting to waste our troops' valuable time on political indoctrination such as this.

And that is not all. In 2021, the Biden administration announced it would begin directing taxpayer dollars to pay for hormone therapy and transgender surgeries for servicemembers who want to transition to a different gender. It is not the job of the taxpayers to pay for someone to get a controversial elective procedure. American taxpayers' resources should ensure troops who are injured or sick get quality healthcare, timely, as they need it. And taxpayers should not be forced to bankroll these dangerous experimental procedures that often backfire.

Of course, the Biden-Harris administration would rather spend valuable taxpayer dollars on programs that affirm its progressive world view. The DEI and transgender surgery policies at the DOD are just two examples of the woke policies being implemented. We can't forget that the Biden-Harris DOD illegally mandated taxpayer dollars to fund elective abortions in the military. I have spent the better part of 2 years fighting the Biden-Harris administration on this front.

And we cannot forget the Biden-Harris DOD fired more than 8,000 able-bodied troops for refusing to take the COVID-19 vaccine.

None of these policies should be DOD priorities. It is a distraction from keeping America safe and secure and the consequences are dangerous.

For decades, support for the U.S. military was one of the few topics that brought Republicans and Democrats together. In the past year, the U.S. House and Senate Armed Services Committee would draft the NDAA, which authorized funding for the military and establish policy priorities for the DOD. These bills were largely bipartisan and not usually controversial. Both parties were united in the belief that the U.S. military should be the most lethal fighting force in the world. There were some policy differences here and there, and there should be. But both parties largely left politics out of the military; that is, until the Biden-Harris administration came to town. It is disappointing we reached a point where we need to legislatively intervene to refocus the Pentagon on its mission to protect and defend our great country, but here we are.

Predictably, the Biden-Harris regime injecting politics in our military has come at a price. The departure from bipartisan, commonsense policies at the DOD has resulted in detrimental impacts to military readiness and lethality.

Take recruitment, for example. In 2023, the Pentagon announced that it fell way short of recruitment goals in what it referred to as "the toughest recruitment year for the military services since the inception of the all-volunteer [Army]."

I would ask: Why would young men and women volunteer to serve in a country and in our military if it has become a place of the far-left indoctrination? Why would they do that?

Why would young men and women join a military that teaches them to hate our country? Why would any patriotic citizen join an organization that is more committed to social justice than defeating our enemies?

I must say, I share their concerns. The military, under today's regime, is not the same military that my dad served in over 60 years ago. It is the sad truth. The recruiting failure has resulted in a national security emergency. As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I have asked our top military leaders about the decision to focus on woke policies instead of addressing the recruiting crisis. Unsurprisingly, they didn't have an answer for me.

The impact of implementing those leftwing social priorities extends far beyond the recruiting problems here at home.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. TUBERVILLE. These dangerous policies at the DOD have consequences for our military readiness and the world stage.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

TRIBUTE TO LAVERNE ALLEN

Mr. TILLIS. Madam President, I will be brief. Back in the early eighties, disco was popular. I was young, and LaVerne Allen was just coming into the Senate, first as an intern and now as what everybody refers to as the "enforcer" on the floor.

I had to come over here. I am even doing this on a bipartisan basis. I came to the Democratic side of the aisle to trace LaVerne down to force her to get into the picture, probably the first time in her career.

But ladies and gentlemen, a lot of times we take for granted what happens in this Chamber. We don't think about all the hard work the staff does. They get here before us, they leave after us. We don't think about how difficult it is to come to a U.S. Senator and tell them to be quiet. I will tell you, she trains her proteges well because she just had SHERRON BROWN be asked to be quiet by an intern over there, somebody who just started. I saw it happen. LaVerne was about to, but you trained somebody to take your place really well.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have to recognize this place only runs because we have a strong Sergeant at Arms staff and great staff in both cloakrooms and up on the dais.

I did not want this week to pass, when LaVerne is about to take retirement and hopefully spend a little time with her beloved son Marcus, who is in the Navy stationed in Japan right now. I feel like, if it weren't against the rules and it wouldn't make the Parliamentarian mad for me to ask unanimous consent to take a selfie on the floor—I am not going to do that, but I am going to thank LaVerne for 43 years of service to this great institution.