

watched as encounters of individuals on the Terrorist Watchlist nearly quadrupled in fiscal year 2022, and then rose even higher the next year.

Vice President HARRIS was supposed to be President Biden's border czar. I would be hard-pressed to name anything she did to stop the influx. If she did take any action, it was certainly ineffective, based on the steady increases in border encounters.

I don't have to tell anyone what the problems are with the kind of unchecked illegal immigration that we have been seeing. As I said, U.S. Customs and Border Protection has been stretched thin for pretty much the entirety of the Biden-Harris administration.

Cities at the border and around the United States have struggled with the influx of migrants, and migrants themselves have suffered as they have undertaken the perilous journey to our southern border, spurred on by the Biden-Harris administration's open-border policies.

Worst of all, the Biden-Harris border crisis has left a gaping hole in our national security. The kind of unchecked illegal immigration we have been seeing is an invitation to dangerous individuals to enter our country.

I mentioned that the number of individuals on the Terrorist Watchlist encountered at the southern border has surged, and those are just individuals who were actually apprehended. We have no idea how many terrorists or other dangerous individuals have made their way across our southern border without being apprehended.

We are closing in on 2 million known "got-aways" in the Biden-Harris administration's watch. Those are individuals the Border Patrol saw but was unable to apprehend. How many of those were dangerous people who should not be entering our country?

U.S. Border Patrol Chief Jason Owens, in a March interview with CBS News, said the number of known "got-aways" is keeping him up at night. This is his quote:

This is a national security threat. Border security is a big piece of national security. And if we don't know who is coming into our country and we don't know what their intent is, that is a threat. And they're exploiting a vulnerability that's on our border right now.

That same month, FBI Director Christopher Wray told the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence:

We are seeing a wide array of very dangerous threats that emanate from the border.

I want to repeat that.

We are seeing a wide array of very dangerous threats that emanate from the border.

That is from the Director of the FBI.

The June arrest of eight men from Tajikistan with suspected ties to ISIS who had illegally entered the country, as well as the identification of over 400 migrants that used an ISIS-affiliated smuggling network to enter our country, are just two examples of the kind

of threats that we face and the dangers of the chaos that President Biden and Vice President HARRIS have allowed to rage at our southern border.

In addition to threats from terrorists and other dangerous individuals, the chaos at our southern border has unquestionably facilitated illegal cross-border activity, including the smuggling of deadly drugs like fentanyl, which then make their way around our country.

My State of South Dakota is about as far from our southern border as you can get, but law enforcement officials consistently tell me that the illegal drugs that they are dealing with have entered the country across our southern border. In 2022, Minnehaha County Sheriff Mike Milstead estimated that 90 percent—90 percent—of the fentanyl and meth in our State comes from Mexico. That is 90 percent, Mr. President.

I could go on. There is a lot more to talk about when it comes to the Biden-Harris border crisis—from the mass amnesty the administration has offered to hundreds of thousands of individuals whose asylum cases have been closed without a decision to the placing of unaccompanied children with possibly dangerous guardians, something that Senator GRASSLEY and Senator LANKFORD are currently working to rectify and prevent in the future.

But I will stop here. Four record-breaking years of illegal immigration: the national security legacy of the Biden-Harris administration.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to point out that we are only 12 days from the end of the fiscal year and to call upon the majority leader to bring the appropriations bills to the Senate floor. We have wasted the last 2 weeks. We have spent time voting on issues that were not nearly as time-sensitive.

By the end of July, the Senate Appropriations Committee had held hearings on, thoroughly considered at full committee markups, and reported for consideration by the full Senate 11 of the 12 appropriations bills, roughly 96 percent of the discretionary funding permitted by the caps. All of the bills—all of them—received strong bipartisan support. We advanced six of the bills unanimously. Unanimous support for any bill in today's Senate is no small feat and a testament to the hard work and seriousness of our committee members on both sides of the aisle, led by our chair, the senior Senator from Washington.

But what has happened after the committee reported its bills? Nothing. They have languished on the Senate calendar. Instead of taking up the Senate committee-passed bills—including bills that passed unanimously—that we passed earlier in the summer, the Senate has spent this month processing nominations and taking show votes aimed at scoring political points.

Show votes: We had another of those yesterday. We voted for the second time on the exact same bill on IVF. What was that? That is not what the Senate should be doing at this critical time. That was simply an attempt by the majority leader to score political points, and I think that is highly unfortunate. We need to get back to legislating, and surely funding our government is an imperative. The Founders envisioned the Senate as a deliberative institution.

As I indicated, by July, the Senate Appropriations Committee had advanced the fiscal year 2025 Defense appropriations bill by a vote of 28 to 0. It was unanimous. The bill would provide our military with the resources it needs to confront the global threats facing the United States, which combatant commanders have described to me as being the worst and most dangerous in 50 years.

Our bill rejects the administration's budget that would have led to the smallest Air Force in history and would have yielded the seas to the growing Chinese navy. The committee, instead, called for a 3.3 percent increase in defense funding levels compared to last year.

Our bill strengthens our military across all domains: air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace.

Our bill would also provide our brave men and women in uniform the pay and benefits that they deserve. It would fund a 4.5-percent pay increase for most of our service men and women and a 5.5-percent pay increase for the most junior enlisted personnel.

These are just some of the highlights of the bill.

Our bill includes \$37 million for Navy shipbuilding, the largest shipbuilding budget ever. It begins to reverse the dangerous decline in the number of Navy ships.

For the Air Force, the bill provides additional funding to make nearly 500 more aircraft available than the President's budget request would allow.

The bill addresses the changing face of warfare with \$1 billion for counterdrone capabilities to address this evolving threat. The growing use of drones by Iran and its proxies as well as Russia in its attacks in Ukraine have demonstrated that warfare has changed and so must our strategies and budgets.

These are just some of the highlights of this critically important appropriations bill that we should have been debating, amending, and passing on the Senate floor.

Mr. President, don't take just my word for it. I would ask unanimous

consent to submit for the RECORD letters on why we need a full-year defense appropriations bill and describing the harm of long continuing resolutions.

One of the letters is from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. One is from the Secretary of Defense. One is from the Chief of Naval Operations. One is from the Commandant of the Marine Corps. One is from the Secretary of the Navy. One is a letter from The Military Coalition, representing more than 5.5 million current and former servicemembers, their families, and caregivers. One is from the Aerospace Industries Association. I could go on and on.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that those letters be printed at the end of my remarks.

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

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, here is my point. It does not have to be this way. If the Senate majority leader had prioritized bringing appropriations bills to the floor, we could be in conference now with our Senate colleagues on some of the most important funding bills and send them to the President's desk prior to the October 1 start of the fiscal year.

The Senate is not doing its job. We should be considering these bills, not engaging in show votes.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT
CHIEFS OF STAFF,

Washington, DC, September 13, 2024.

Hon. PATTY MURRAY,
*Chair, Committee on Appropriations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.*

DEAR MADAM CHAIR: We thank Congress for passing Fiscal Year 2024 Defense Appropriations, including multiyear procurement funds, and National Security Supplemental Funding for critical investments into our Nation's defense industrial base.

However, I am concerned the Joint Force has been constrained by Continuing Resolutions for 14 of the past 15 years, totaling 5 years' worth of lost time we cannot get back. Continuing Resolutions (CR) of any length have lasting impacts on the Joint Force. The National Defense Strategy identifies the key challenges that threaten U.S. national interests. All are currently active and, in some cases, working together. This convergence puts us in the most dynamic and challenging global security environment in my nearly 40 years in uniform.

Our Joint Force is the most capable and lethal fighting force in the world. Maintaining our strategic advantage depends upon on-time funding to have a modernized and ready force. In the race against time, each CR is the equivalent of taking a knee on advancing our defense capabilities as security challenges increase their momentum to challenge our credible combat power. CRs significantly impact and degrade acquisition of the warfighting capability and capacity required to defend the United States and our interests. They slow progress and damage our relationships with the defense industrial base, eroding trust driving up costs, and increasing delivery times, as industry hedges against funding inconsistencies.

Should Congress move forward with a six-month CR, we anticipate detrimental impacts to readiness and modernization across

the Joint Force. Pay and entitlements, nuclear enterprise modernization, shipbuilding and maintenance, aircraft procurement, weapons system sustainment, munitions production, and multiple new starts are just a few examples that will feel the brunt of the lost time and lost buying power caused by a CR.

Our Joint Force depends on long-term, stable, predictable, and timely funding. We are living in a consequential time. There is no time to waste. Thank you for your continued support and service to our Nation.

Sincerely,

CHARLES C. BROWN, JR.,
General, U.S. Air Force.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE,
Washington, DC, September 7, 2024.

Hon. SUSAN COLLINS,
*Vice Chairman, Committee on Appropriations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.*

DEAR SENATOR COLLINS: I am providing a detailed list of the impacts of a six-month continuing resolution (CR) for the Department of Defense. The Department appreciates the opportunity to share its view on a six-month CR and the litany of difficulties it would impose—not only on accomplishing our mission and maintaining national security, but also on the quality of life of our Service members and their families.

If passed, a six-month CR would represent the second year in a row, and the seventh time in the past 15 years, where the Department is delayed in moving forward with critical priorities until mid-way through the budget year. These actions subject Service members and their families to unnecessary stress, empower our adversaries, misalign billions of dollars, damage our readiness, and impede our ability to react to emergent events.

As you have heard me say, our budget is aligned to our strategy. A six-month CR would set us significantly behind in meeting our pacing challenge highlighted in our National Defense Strategy—the People's Republic of China (PRC). The PRC is the only global competitor with both the intent and capability to change the international order. The PRC does not operate under CRs. Our ability to execute our strategy is contingent upon our ability to innovate and modernize to meet this challenge, which cannot happen under a CR. Asking the Department to compete with the PRC, let alone manage conflicts in Europe and the Middle East, while under a lengthy CR, ties our hands behind our back while expecting us to be agile and to accelerate progress. We have already lost valuable time, having operated under 48 CRs for a total of almost five years since 2011. We cannot buy back this time, but we can stop digging the hole.

Moreover, under the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 (FRA), the consequences of such a CR in fiscal year (FY) 2025 could be even more dire for the U.S. and its allies and partners. Failure to pass any one of the 12 full appropriations acts by January 1, 2025, will start a process to reduce discretionary spending limits (caps) for the security category by one percent below the enacted FY 2023 level. This will be enforced through sequestration, potentially resulting in a total reduction of \$42 billion from the Department's FY 2025 request. A six-month CR takes us far too close to the April 30, 2025 deadline for a permanent sequestration order, as required by the FRA and related legislation.

A long-term CR in FY 2025 would impede thousands of DoD programs and projects. Military recruiting would be damaged, just as we are post-COVID, returning to meeting our goals. We would be forced to forego vital investments in our defense industrial base,

including the submarine and ship building bases. We would lose time and money the Nation cannot risk on modernization of our nuclear triad, rapid fielding of Uncrewed Aerial Systems through the Replicator initiative, execution of hundreds of military construction projects, and deterrence initiatives in the Indo-Pacific and Europe. Additionally, because there would be no funds for legally required military and civilian pay raises during a CR, the Department would be forced to offset the cost of these well-deserved pay raises, and in fact all inflation impacts across the Department, by cutting into other programs and accounts at potentially damaging levels.

Enclosed with this letter is information that highlights the impacts on each of the Military Departments and certain Defense-Wide activities should Congress fail to act. As you will see, the repercussions of Congress failing to pass regular appropriations legislation for the first half of FY 2025 would be devastating to our readiness and ability to execute the National Defense Strategy.

The single most important thing that Congress can do to ensure U.S. national security is to pass timely legislation for all 12 appropriations bills for FY 2025. I am fully aware of the political pressures that will challenge the Congress from fulfilling its duty before our national elections conclude. No matter who wins this election, there will be a Presidential transition. I urge you and your colleagues to take up action immediately after the election to limit damage to our national security during this vulnerable period around transitions and uphold the bipartisan tradition of funding our nation's defense prior to the inauguration of a new President.

The Department stands ready to assist Congress in any way possible to ensure it has the information and resources to pass this essential legislation. As I have said several times in the past, it's not only the right thing to do, but also the best thing to do for our Nation's defense.

A copy of this letter is being sent to the other Chairs and Ranking Members of the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations.

Sincerely,

LLOYD J. AUSTIN.

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY,
CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS,
Washington, DC, September 17, 2024.

Hon. JON TESTER,
*Chairman, Subcommittee on Defense, Committee
on Appropriations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I write to express my deep concern regarding Congress' intention to pass a six-month continuing resolution (CR) and echo the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Navy's calls to enact a Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 appropriation bill. A six-month CR would cause profound, damaging impact to the United States Navy while imposing unnecessary hardship on our Sailors, civilians, and their families.

I am grateful for your support of the provision to add \$1.95B to fully fund the two FY 2024 appropriated Virginia class submarines. This supplemental funding supports my efforts to maximize players on the field, deliver decisive combat power, invest in the submarine industrial base, and maintain trust in the AUKUS partnership.

Our Navy continues to support our Nation's security interests operating around the globe and, most notably this year, in harm's way. The Navy requires stable, predictable funding while engaged in combat in the Middle East, in a race with the People's Republic of China, and challenged by an aggressive Russia. A six-month CR would delay platforms and weapons to our warfighters

and undermine the foundation that supports them. Additionally, a six-month CR in FY 2025 drives us towards the draconian consequences of the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 imposing additional spending caps.

Our FY 2025 budget request is strategy driven and invests in priorities that will deter our potential adversaries and enable your Navy to respond in crisis and if necessary, win decisively in war. It is laser-focused on warfighting, warfighters, and the foundation that supports them. Highlighted below is a partial list of priorities that would be undermined by a six-month CR:

Columbia Class Submarine: risks further delaying delivery of Columbia class submarine due to construction delays and would result in future cost increases.

CVN 75 Refueling (RCOH): risks slippage of new contract award resulting in maintenance delays and potential cost increases.

Quality of Service: risks to fleet and family services, child development centers, and supporting shore infrastructure.

Operations and Maintenance: risks to air and port operations, facilities management and environmental compliance. Risks potential descope or delaying some of the 58 ship depot maintenance availabilities scheduled for FY 2025.

Military Personnel: more gaps at sea, reduction to end strength, elimination of most new bonus awards. Upon passage of the FY 2025 National Defense Authorization Act, pay raise that takes effect January 1, 2025 will induce impacts on other mission areas such as curtailment of permanent change of station moves and other personnel requirements.

Munitions: delays AIM-9X Sidewinder and Rolling Airframe Missile contract awards reducing missiles for fleet load outs.

Military Construction: Trident Refit Facility Expansion will be delayed, interrupting current operations and resulting in a failure to meet the refit mission of the Columbia Class submarine. Delays to Family Housing on Guam due to reduction in Navy Family Housing Construction. Delays to Conventional Prompt Strike Test Facility that will slow schedule, increase cost, and reduce rounds available to the warfighter.

Passing legislation on time for all 12 FY 2025 appropriations bills is the single most effective action Congress can take to ensure U.S. national security. The compounding effect from years of repeated CRs continues to undermine our ability to support the warfighter and maintain our position as the world's preeminent naval force. In the end, it is our people that suffer effects of a CR and the unpredictability it brings. I would ask you to think of the Sailors and their families from each of your state's districts. We must continue to build on the momentum of our efforts to ensure our quality of service meets the highest standards and look after our families who enable us to accomplish our warfighting mission.

The United States Navy stands ready to assist Congress in any way possible to ensure it has the information and resources to pass this essential legislation.

A similar letter has been sent to Chairman Calvert, Chair Murray, and Chairman Cole.

Sincerely,

L.M. FRANCHETTI.

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY,
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE
CORPS,

Washington, DC, September 17, 2024.

Hon. JON TESTER,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Defense, Committee
on Appropriations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN; I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding the impact

of Continuing Resolutions (CRs) and budget uncertainty on the readiness and mission of the Marine Corps.

My recent Commandant's Planning Guidance outlines the Marine Corps' strategic priorities and objectives, continuing the momentum of our Force Design initiatives, including maturing kill webs, maturing the force, and Quality of Life efforts that together generate a ready Fleet Marine Force and enable Joint operations. The FY25 President's Budget reflects these priorities and requests the necessary funding to achieve them. However, CRs and budget uncertainty have a detrimental effect on our ability to continue to build the Joint Force's Stand-in Force while sustaining the Nation's crisis response capabilities.

When we operate under a CR, the misalignment and reduced levels of funding prevent the planned execution of our FY25 strategy-driven budget. This leads to inefficiencies and a deceleration in warfighting investment, disruption to recruiting and retention, and reductions to operation and maintenance accounts, potentially compromising our ability to respond to emerging threats. Furthermore, budget uncertainty creates instability and unpredictability in our planning and operations, leading to delays in procurement, maintenance, and training, which impact our warfighting readiness, modernization efforts, and meeting our commitments to our allies and partners.

I urge you to consider the importance of providing timely appropriations for the Marine Corps. Budget certainty—adequate, stable, predictable funding—is the single most effective way to maintain critical strategic momentum in our Force Design transformation efforts to stay in front of our pacing threat, to support our Marines and Sailors, and to fulfill our mission as the Nation's Naval Expeditionary Force in Readiness.

A similar letter has been sent to Chair Murray, Chairman Cole, and Chairman Calvert. Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to working with you to ensure the continued success of the Marine Corps and the defense of our Nation.

Very Respectfully,

ERIC M. SMITH,
General, U.S. Marine Corps,
Commandant of the Marine Corps.

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY,
WASHINGTON, DC,
September 12, 2024.

Hon. SUSAN COLLINS,
Vice Chair, Committee on Appropriations,
U.S. Senate.

DEAR VICE CHAIR COLLINS: I write today to express my concern about the six-month continuing resolution (CR) and its impact on the Navy and Marine Corps. This lengthy delay in new funding would force the Department of the Navy (DON) to operate at last year's funding levels with the negative consequences lasting far beyond the time frame of the CR, impeding our ability to field the force needed to defend our nation while imposing unnecessary stress on our Sailors, Marines, Civilians, and their families.

Our FY 2025 budget request included significant investments in recruiting, quality of life, and the ships, submarines, and aircraft the DON requires to enhance maritime dominance. Enclosed with this letter is a detailed list articulating the impacts of a six-month and year-long CR on the DON, but here are some of the most consequential:

Delays in the Virginia Class submarine will impact submarine deliveries and future force structure availabilities, which are already running over cost and behind schedule. A CR risks setting back the program even further.

Further delaying delivery of Columbia Class submarine due to postponed construction, and result in future cost increases.

A six-month CR risks delaying critical investments in the submarine industrial base and the Australia, United Kingdom, and United States (AUKUS) partnership.

Restriction of Cost-to-Complete funding for prior year shipbuilding programs including CVN-74 refueling resulting in maintenance delays and potential cost increases.

Profound negative impacts on the Marine Corps Force Design efforts, slowing key acquisition programs.

Uncertainty in recruiting budget would lead to challenges in attracting new talent to the force.

Negative impacts to Quality of Service efforts including the Marine Corps Barracks 2030 initiative.

Other limitations include delays to ongoing and planned Nuclear Command, Control and Communications engineering activities supporting STRATCOM, construction projects, continued development of conventional munitions, and delays in procurement of munitions.

Delay key investments in making critical infrastructure like roadways, ranges, and utility systems resilient to extreme weather and climate change. It will also cause serious delays in developing and fielding the Hybrid Medium Tactical Truck program.

Additionally, a long-term CR would impact a multitude of programs within the Department, having a lasting impact on industry stabilization efforts for both shipbuilding and munitions. These include twenty construction projects, five research and development projects, up to fifty-eight ship maintenance availabilities, procurement of five ships, aircraft programs and munitions critical for our warfighters. Finally, due to the pay raises for both military and civilian not being funded under a year-long CR, additional programs would be negatively impacted to accommodate the increases in payroll along with other inflationary impacts.

The Department of the Navy stands ready to assist Congress in any way possible to ensure it has the information and resources to pass this essential legislation. This is the best thing to do to support our Nation's defense.

A copy of this letter is being sent to the other Chairs and Ranking Members of the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations.

Sincerely,

CARLOS DEL TORO.

THE MILITARY COALITION,
September 9, 2024.

Hon. CHUCK SCHUMER,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate.

Hon. MIKE JOHNSON,
Speaker, House of Representatives.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Republican Leader, U.S. Senate.

Hon. HAKEEM JEFFRIES,
Democratic Leader, House of Representatives.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER SCHUMER, REPUBLICAN LEADER MCCONNELL, SPEAKER JOHNSON, AND DEMOCRATIC LEADER JEFFRIES: The Military Coalition (TMC), representing more than 5.5 million current and former uniformed service members, veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors urges you to pass all of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 appropriations bills supporting our uniformed services—in particular the Defense Appropriations and Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies' Appropriations (MilCon-VA)—as soon as possible and at no less than the Senate Armed Services Committee-passed levels.

Our nation faces many threats, and our uniformed services operate in a very challenging environment. From responding to

Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and the current crisis in the Middle East, China's aggression in the Indo-Pacific, as well as countering the malign activities of North Korea—the uniformed services continue to answer our nation's call around the globe. Domestically, without fail or delay, the uniformed services have executed essential support to civilian authorities during natural disasters of historical scales.

If a continuing resolution (CR) is required to avert a harmful and counterproductive government shutdown, it should be a short one. Funding the government at last year's rate diminishes national security and the capabilities of the uniformed services (both Regular and Reserve Components) by hurting readiness, modernization, and quality-of-life programs. Uniformed service members who have concerns regarding quality-of-life issues cannot dedicate their full attention to the mission. The negative impact to quality of life will do nothing but harm those who are currently serving and will paint a negative picture for any recruiting efforts from an already scant pool of eligible candidates. CRs also do not permit new starts or increase the level of investment in modernization priorities. Further, new family housing and barracks projects cannot be started. Delaying funding damages our defense posture nationally and globally. CRs also hurt the defense industrial base, including small businesses, by adding uncertainty to the procurement and manufacturing processes. CRs damage the joint force's ability to prepare to fight and win in the future and impedes readiness to counter threats today.

Further, our nation's service members, veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors deserve the best possible health care including mental health care as well as timely claims and rating decisions. Shutdowns and CRs hinder new investments to enhance care for beneficiaries, the ability to hire additional health and mental health professionals, and improve facilities.

We believe that a strong national defense begins at home. The uniformed services, their families, our veterans and survivors benefit from on-time appropriate domestic spending which contributes to national security.

As such, TMC, as represented by the organizations listed below, urge you to swiftly pass all twelve FY 2025 appropriations bills as soon as possible. This would provide the predictability and resources commensurate with the demonstrated need and the urgency that our national security challenges require, and our service members, veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors have earned.

Thank you for your continued service to our nation in Congress.

Sincerely,

JACK DU TIEL,
President, The Military Coalition.

THE MILITARY COALITION

Air and Space Force Association (AFA), Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA), Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA), (Association of the United States Army (AUSA), Association of the United States Navy (AUSN), Blinded Veterans Association (BVA), Blue Star Families, Commissioned Officers Association of the US Public Health Service (COA), Fleet Reserve Association (FRA), Gold Star Wives of America, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), Jewish War Veterans of the US (JWV), Marine Corps League, Military Chaplains Association, Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), Military Order of the World Wars (MOWW), National Military Family Association, Naval Enlisted Reserve Association (NERA), Non-Commissioned Of-

ficers Association of the USA (NCOA), Reserve Organization of America (ROA), Service Women's Action Network (SWAN), The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA), Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), US Army Warrant Officers Association (USAWOA), U.S. Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association & Enlisted Association (USCGCPOA), Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA).

AEROSPACE INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION,
September 4, 2024.

Hon. CHUCK SCHUMER,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Republican Leader, U.S. Senate.

Hon. MIKE JOHNSON,
Speaker, House of Representatives.

Hon. HAKEEM JEFFRIES,
Democratic Leader, House of Representatives.

DEAR SPEAKER JOHNSON, MAJORITY LEADER SCHUMER, REPUBLICAN LEADER MCCONNELL, AND DEMOCRATIC LEADER JEFFRIES: On behalf of the American aerospace and defense industry, which employs millions of Americans and contributes billions to the American economy, the Aerospace Industries Association (AIA) encourages you to act urgently and jointly to address key priorities when Congress returns from its August district work period. This includes FY25 appropriations bills, the FY25 National Defense Authorization Act, and tax legislation that reverses current policies discouraging business research and development. Enacting these critical bills will not only protect the health of our industry, which is essential to the economic and national security of the United States but will also reinforce our country's resilience and well-being.

AIA represents our nation's leading aerospace and defense companies. These businesses are responsible for countless innovations, research and development that provides cutting-edge technology to our warfighters, improves aviation safety, and demonstrates our global leadership in space. We look forward to working with you to advance key legislation that is critical to maintaining our national security and our global economic leadership.

We know that passing all 12 regular appropriations bills is among your top priorities, and it is a priority that AIA and our members share. U.S. companies like ours that do business with the Department of Defense, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and other federal agencies rely on timely and predictable funding to stay on schedule and guide their own investments in staff, facilities, and equipment. Long-term continuing resolutions (CRs), such as those experienced this year, delay and disrupt these investments. We strongly urge you not to support any CR extending beyond this calendar year, because it would repeat and exacerbate the disruption caused by almost six months of CRs this year. Our customers, including our troops, our workers, and their families deserve better.

Secondly, we urge the House to follow the Senate's lead in providing additional funds for both defense and non-defense programs in the final appropriations bills. This is the last year of budget caps imposed by the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, and funding under those caps is insufficient to meet critical needs or even cover inflation. With bipartisan support, the Senate bills provide modest increases of approximately 3 percent for both defense and non-defense programs. We believe these increases are essential because costs for manufacturing inputs remain persistently high. Without adequate resources, federal contracts, quantities, and delivery schedules must be renegotiated, to the det-

rimment of federal customers and American workers like those in our industry.

For the FAA, FY25 appropriations bills include strong increases to improve aviation safety and increase hiring for air traffic controllers. In both cases, these are needed to address documented challenges and implement important new requirements from the recently enacted FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. Long-term CRs only push those safety improvements into the future.

The FY25 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) is critical legislation that will provide efficiencies to an often-burdensome acquisition process and reduce barriers for small and mid-sized businesses that seek to enter or remain part of the defense industrial base. American servicemembers, and the defense industrial base that supports them, depend on the authorities authorized in the NDAA each year—just as they have for the last 64 years. We urge you to complete this bill well before these critical authorities expire at the end of the calendar year.

Lastly but no less important, restoring the single-year deductibility of research and development expenses is very important to our industry. This is especially true for our small businesses, which are often forced to choose between paying salaries or continuing research into the next generation of potentially life-saving technologies. Our members serving the Defense Department rely on these expenses to generate cutting-edge technology that protects the warfighter and gives our military a competitive advantage over our adversaries. We are not the only U.S. industry harmed by this 2022 change in the tax code, but the effect on our industry is felt more fully in U.S. national security and safety programs. With China doubling down on its R&D tax incentives, we should not be one of the only nations in the industrialized world following this archaic practice.

AIA remains Congress' partner in these efforts, and we appreciate all you are doing to get these vital bills enacted on time. Please let us know how we can support you with this critical agenda.

Respectfully,

ERIC FANNING,
President and CEO,
Aerospace Industries Association.

Ms. COLLINS. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I really appreciate my colleagues wanting to move forward on our full-year funding bills. I share the absolute urgency that the Senator from Maine just talked about. This is critical work that must get done for the American people.

I have to say, as the first order of business, I hope all four corners of Congress can quickly come together as soon as possible to hammer out a reasonable bipartisan CR. We have to keep the government open and avert a needless and disastrous CR.

I want my colleagues to know I look forward to working with them on the other side in a strongly bipartisan fashion to pass all 12 of our full-year spending bills before the end of this year. Our committee has worked really hard to get bipartisan bills. We are ready. They are ready.

It is frustrating to all us that we have worked so hard on this process. Whether it is funding for our military or VA or countless other essential services in our bill, from childcare to food

safety inspection, I believe in the urgency of this.

I appreciate my colleagues speaking out on this today. I assure them I will keep working with them and make sure the voice of the Senate is heard and we do the job and get it done.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I want to join my colleagues, both Democrat and Republican, in expressing regret that we don't have the important national security business of this Congress before the Senate right now. Clearly, it is important to do a nomination and a confirmation every few days. The election is approaching and, of course, there are some show votes. And I think probably my side of the aisle has engaged in that sort of thing in years past.

But it is such a shame that we face this axis of aggressors like we have never faced in 50 years. And every national security official, whether a retired four-star or someone who is no longer in service but giving us good advice, they come before us, and they say we have never had such a threat from China; from Russia, which is engaged in a shooting war right now having invaded the sovereign space of a next-door neighbor; from Iran, which is directing the three—at least the three—terrorist groups that are raining so much havoc on Israel; and then a very unstable leadership in North Korea. This axis of aggressors is signaling that they don't fear an invasion of Taiwan in three short years. They have said it publicly.

While all of that is going on, our leadership, the distinguished majority leader from New York, has not let us bring the appropriations bill to the floor; has not let us bring the authorization bill, which we must pass—we must pass both of these bills every year—the two essential bills that cannot go without being taken care of every fiscal year.

I will say to you, Mr. President, to my colleagues, and to others that are paying attention, this has been bipartisan, absolutely. Senator MURRAY is correct. She is unhappy about this too. But I point the finger to the one person on the face of the Earth that can actually bring a bill to the floor, and that is the majority leader.

Senator REED, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and I have been putting together a managers' package for this year's National Defense Authorization Act. It would have been much better had we brought the bill to the floor and had 100 amendments winnowed down and worked back and forth together as we should be doing; then have open votes so the people of the United States could see how Senators from Maine to Mississippi and from the west coast to the east stand on important issues affecting the U.S. military. We have not been able to do that. But we are working together, Senator REED and I, on a plan.

And we worked on nearly 100 variations of the legislation that was passed months and months ago by the Armed Services Committee to resolve issues of local and State interests—issues involving how quickly we can get our industrial base going to meet the need that, frankly, we are not meeting at the present time; and to get ahead of the game so we can prevent war; so we can have enough strength to have the Reaganesque peace through strength that we enjoyed in the eighties and early nineties.

The appropriations bills are just as important—if not more important—than the authorization bills. They contain funding increases we need to prevent our Air Force from shrinking. We know that the Chinese Navy is expanding enormously and our Navy is shrinking, literally shrinking.

It is regrettable that here we are a week and half to go before we must break for the election, and the distinguished majority leader, Senator SCHUMER, has not brought any of this legislation before the full Senate, bills that have been ready since July.

Also, I want to commend my colleague from Maine, the distinguished ranking member of the Appropriations Committee, for accommodating the chairman of the Appropriations Committee. I had prepared today to come down here and support Senator COLLINS in an effort to have a unanimous consent request to bring the bill to the floor. I mean, what else are we doing? Look at us. In a matter of comity and to continue the great working relationship that these two senior Senators have had, Senator COLLINS refrained from that. So we are not asking for unanimous consent and requiring someone from the other side to come and object to that. We will continue to work.

But what is absolutely sure is that the fiscal year will begin in just a few days. And the appropriation for what we need to do at the Pentagon—what new things we need to do—will not be passed, and we will be stuck with last year's priorities. And as a result, at a time when we need to be putting more resources into national security and sending new direction based on the new facts and the new challenges that are out there—at that time, we will actually be wasting money of the taxpayers by having priorities still extended for another 3 months—hopefully, it is only 3 months—rather than putting the resources there that the experts tell us and that we have learned are necessary for the next fiscal year.

If my colleague from Maine would like to speak on my time, I will be glad to yield to her. If not, I am prepared to yield the floor and just regret so profoundly that our leadership has not allowed us to do the work that the taxpayers expect us to do.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I just want to thank the distinguished rank-

ing member of the Senate Armed Services Committee for his extraordinary leadership. He has charted a future for defense spending that recognizes the extraordinary threats that we face, and it has been a real honor to work with him.

I yield to the Senator from Alabama, Mrs. BRITT.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mrs. BRITT. Mr. President, today I rise to discuss something that is extremely disturbing, the fact that we have less than 2 weeks before the end of the fiscal year and yet we have not put any of our appropriations bills on the floor.

By "we," "we" is not the Appropriations Committee. That is actually right on Majority Leader CHUCK SCHUMER. He decides what comes to the floor. He decides when we do it, and yet he hasn't prioritized our men and women in uniform.

I think, today, that is exactly what we should be doing. But instead, I am sure he will either conjure up another show vote like we saw yesterday or he will put another partisan nominee on the floor. Instead of considering these appropriations bills, that seems to be what we are doing.

I want to be really clear. For everyone in the Gallery, we have members of the Appropriations Committee, both Democrat and Republican, that sit and work together. We have a job to fund the government. We are supposed to do it by September 30. We have marked up 11 out of 12 of those bills in an extremely bipartisan fashion. Yet those bills still sit on CHUCK SCHUMER's desk. He hasn't brought one of them to the floor.

Now, the House has sent over five bills, so what we could be doing is putting the ones that match up on this floor, sending them to conference, and actually funding them. But instead, we are doing nothing.

I want you all to know that this isn't new. This is exactly what CHUCK SCHUMER did last year as well. You have PATTY MURRAY and SUSAN COLLINS of different parties working together in a bipartisan fashion to figure out a path forward. I commend them for that.

Last year, we did 12 out of 12 bills that were marked up out of a Senate committee, were allowed to be amended on TV in front of the public by July 27.

Yet those bills sat, CHUCK SCHUMER not putting them on the floor until November 1 of 2023—127 days after they had been marked up.

After that is when we saw the next bill come on to the floor. We actually didn't finish our process until 174 days into the fiscal year last year. That is not only fiscally irresponsible, it is morally irresponsible.

The people sent us up here to do a job. And my question to the majority leader today is: Why aren't you letting us actually do it?

I am extremely disappointed that not a single one of these bills again this

year has seemed to find its way on the floor. He seems to have no plan to do that. The only plan seems to be to kick the can down the road.

And as my distinguished colleague from Mississippi said, every time we do that, our men and women pay the price. Secretary Austin, obviously appointed by President Biden, confirmed by this body, has said that a CR will hurt our men and women in uniform. So what we should be doing is figuring out a path forward to fund defense and to fund our veterans.

So today you see Members of the Republican Party standing up and saying: Let's get this Chamber back to doing the critical work we were sent here to do. It is long overdue.

Now, for those of you who don't know, I am new in this body. I have been here less than 2 years. And yet for some reason, last year I asked a question. I said: When is the last time we actually did our job on time for the American people?

You heard me say it took us 174 days into the fiscal year last year to actually do our job. Now, I want you all to be clear: Every time we do that, every time we kick the can down the road with a CR, continuing resolution, it costs the taxpayers more.

Think about this. You are halting everything; you are halting bidding processes. Have any of you ever had to rebid something? When you rebid something, does the price go up or does it go down? We know it doesn't go down. We know it goes up, which means we are being irresponsible with taxpayer dollars.

But yet again, that seems to be what we do year after year after year. So the former staffer came out in me, and I wanted to get to work and figure out when is the last time we actually did our job.

The last time we did our job on time—y'all, listen to this—was fiscal year 1997. And the last time we actually did it on time by passing bills individually through regular order, fiscal year 1995. So to all the Senate pages, clearly, you weren't even born yet.

That is 30 years ago for everyone in the Chamber that is doing the math, 30 years of kicking the can down the road.

The American people deserve better, and yet, somehow, we can't get the media to cover this. We can't get them to cover the fact that Leader SCHUMER has refused to lead but yet used his time on a show vote yesterday where he was trying to put my State in the crosshairs.

I am proud of the work that my State has done to protect IVF quickly and effectively, both from the legislature and the Governor. Once again, IVF is accessible and legal in every single State across our great Nation.

But do you know what CHUCK SCHUMER took his time doing yesterday? Creating a show vote for commercials, for men and women on the other side of the aisle that are in vulnerable seats, instead of putting the American people

first. And the American people are sick of that. And bottom line, they deserve better.

And as long as I am in this body, I am going to keep pushing this issue; I am going to keep moving it to the front. We are going to find a solution to actually getting back to doing the work the American people sent us up here to do.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I just want to thank the Senator from Alabama for her eloquent words, her passion, and her leadership. She is absolutely correct that there is no reason for us to be in the situation that we find ourselves in just 12 days before the start of the new fiscal year.

There is no reason why the Defense appropriations bill, the military construction VA bill, the Labor HHS bill, the CJS bill—I could go on and on. There is no reason why the Senate appropriations approved bills could not have been brought to the Senate floor.

They are important. Funding the government is critical. And as the distinguished Senator from Alabama points out, when we go on to continuing resolutions, we cause enormous harm, which is why I entered into the record all of those letters from the Department of Defense and to other organizations.

And here is the other point: As the Senator from Alabama has pointed out, we end up spending more money. It costs us more money because contracts are put on hold, new starts are delayed, and programs that should be trimmed back or eliminated continue to be funded.

This just is not how the Senate should operate. And I implored the majority leader more than once to bring the appropriations bills to the Senate floor, and it is harmful to our Nation and particularly to our national defense that these bills were not brought to the floor.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Ms. BUTLER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak for 5 minutes, and Senator SCHMITT be permitted to speak for 5 minutes prior to the scheduled vote.

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

NOMINATION OF MICHELLE WILLIAMS COURT

Ms. BUTLER. Mr. President, I associate myself with the comments of the colleagues just before me. Senator COLLINS and Senator BRITT talked about the importance of doing the work of the American people. In just a bit, the Senate is going to take some action to continue to do the work—some important work—of the American people, and that is ensuring that they have access to swift and fair justice.

I want to appreciate Leader SCHUMER and Senator DURBIN and all of my colleagues on the Senate Judiciary Com-

mittee for moving so expeditiously to ensure that we are not delaying justice for many Americans across the country.

I rise today to proudly support the nomination of Michelle Williams Court to be the United States judge for the Central District of California.

As her name is announced on the floor of the U.S. Senate, I want to recognize her loved ones whose unwavering love and support over the years has undoubtedly shaped Judge Court into the incredible jurist and person we know her to be today. Specifically, I want to acknowledge her husband Jamie and their two sons.

I would also like to start today by highlighting the work we do in the Senate to fill these judicial vacancies and why it is so important.

The Central District of California serves roughly 17 million people, making it the largest Federal district by population in the entire United States. The judges who serve these Californians are currently facing an unprecedented number of filings, making the need to fill the court's vacancies all that more urgent.

It is commonly said that "justice delayed is justice denied," and at this moment, the people of the Central District of California are indeed being denied justice as a direct result of these judicial vacancies.

And as I noted, I want to appreciate and really call attention to the leadership of Chair DURBIN and the members of the Judiciary Committee, moving really, really quickly along with and working in partnership with President Biden and the White House to get these nominations advanced, to ensure that the people across our country—in this instance, the people of California—have fair access to justice.

I want to make sure that also in talking about the qualifications of Judge Court, that we are really talking about the importance of these seats in a way that is not just about access to the people but the quality of justice that they will have access to, ensuring that judges that are being nominated and put forth for consideration of confirmation are the most experienced, that they are the most qualified, that they are thoughtful and prepared to follow the rule of law.

And that is really why I am so proud to stand in support of Judge Michelle Court for this nomination. Judge Court's dedication to public service and to the State of California runs deep.

Born into a military family, Judge Court moved to California during high school and has called the State home ever since. She attended Pomona College, where she worked her way through school, sang in the glee club, and earned a bachelor of arts in sociology.

After graduating at the height of the AIDS crisis, Judge Court dedicated 2 years of work to the AIDS Project,