

International Development—USAID—by improving planning, execution, and oversight of this function at these agencies and requiring education for personnel who engage in contingency contracting.

From the Maine Military Authority and the DFAS Center in Limestone to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, from innovative composite and renewable energy research at the University of Maine to high-tech firms like Vingtech, Hodgdon Defense Composites, Maine Machine Products, and Mt. Desert Island Biological Laboratory, Mainers continue to support national defense with ingenuity and craftsmanship.

The investments authorized in this bill support these efforts in Maine and in States around the Nation, and they ensure that our military is the best trained and equipped in the world. I urge my colleagues to support passage of this bill.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013. Congress has passed the Defense Authorization every year for the past 5 decades and it remains one of the most bipartisan pieces of legislation we produce in this body. I believe strongly that there is no more important responsibility that we have than providing for our common defense. The NDAA is a crucial part of that responsibility and I am glad to have the opportunity to speak in favor of it today. As Senators, it is one of our most important duties, and one of our greatest privileges, to debate and pass this bill every year.

I would like to thank Chairman LEVIN and Ranking Member MCCAIN for their leadership of the Armed Services Committee and their determination in getting the NDAA to the floor.

I have had the honor to serve as Chairman of the AirLand Subcommittee, of which I have been a member of since its inception in 1995 and been either Chairman or Ranking Member since 1999. I would like to recognize Ranking Member SCOTT BROWN and thank him. We have worked together very well once again this year. Ours has been a bipartisan effort through our hearings, our markup, and now on the floor. I would also like to thank the Subcommittee staff, Bill Sutey and Creighton Greene of the majority and Church Hutton and Pablo Carrillo of the minority, for their hard work that helped make this bill possible.

This year, the portion of the budget request falling under the AirLand Subcommittee's jurisdiction total over \$50 billion, including \$37.4 billion in procurement, and \$12.9 billion in research and development. The portion of the bill under the AirLand Subcommittee's jurisdiction supports the Defense De-

partment's requests for several major weapons programs, including:

\$639.9 million for the Army's new Ground Combat Vehicle that will replace some of the M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicles in the current force;

\$2.7 billion for procurement of UH-60 Blackhawk and CH-47 Chinook helicopters so critically important to operations in Afghanistan and around the world;

\$6.9 billion in the base request for the Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force's F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program;

\$60.0 million for F/A-18E/F advance procurement to preserve the Navy's option to produce additional aircraft in fiscal year 2014.

\$91.0 million for M1 Abrams tank upgrades and \$123.0 million for M88A2 advanced recovery vehicles. These recommended increases will extend armored vehicle production through fiscal year 2013 and allow tank production through 2014, thus preserving important combat vehicle industrial capability.

Perhaps of greatest interest to many of our colleagues, the bill addresses concerns that the Air Force proposed disproportionate cuts to the Air National Guard in its FY13 budget submission by establishing an independent commission to study the appropriate force structure of the Air Force, including the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve, and providing \$1.4 billion to freeze Air Force force structure pending the commission's review.

The NDAA also provides an opportunity to address policy concerns important to military families, defense, and National security at large. There are a number of worthwhile amendments that have been filed and that I support, including my amendment with Senator GILLIBRAND providing TRICARE coverage for important autism treatments and my amendment with Senator COLLINS mandating a prescription drug take-back program to help reduce the scourge of military suicide. I would like to briefly highlight a pair of issues I hope we address through floor amendments.

Finally and most importantly, I hope this bill will include a new package of Iran sanctions that Senator MENENDEZ, Senator KIRK, and I plan to introduce. The fact is, Iran is continuing to make progress towards a nuclear weapons capability, and time is running out to stop them, short of the military option that none of us desire. That is why we need to do everything in our power to ratchet up the pressure on the Iranian government, as quickly as possible. The NDAA provides the last, best chance that we will have in this Congress to impose tougher sanctions on Iran, and we must seize it.

In conclusion, I urge all my colleagues to support the NDAA for FY13. It is a strong bill that provides critical funding and authorities to our military, and it has always been passed on a broad bipartisan basis. As I approach the end of my career in the Senate, I

look back gratefully upon the annual floor debates on the NDAA as examples of the way this body should operate.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO MARSHA KREUCHER

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, tomorrow night will be bittersweet in Jackson, MI; it is the night the Community Action Agency will bid a formal farewell to its leader and CEO, Marsha Kreucher. For nearly a quarter century, the Community Action Agency has been guided by a leader with vision and compassion. Her work has been squarely focused on making the lives of those in need better. She has gone about this work with humility and tenacity, ensuring that her work and the work of the agency she leads does its part to improve the lives of the countless people served by the Community Action Agency.

The roots of poverty are complex and deep. Marsha's work, which takes a holistic and innovative approach to promoting self-sufficiency among at-risk and low-income residents, has sought to identify the issues associated with poverty and develop programs to alleviate them. Her efforts have reaped many rewards for the residents of Jackson, Lenawee, and Hillsdale counties and have improved their economic, social, and health conditions as a consequence.

In the late 1980s, when she began working at the Community Action Agency, the agency administered about two dozen programs and had a budget of roughly \$4 million. Nearly a quarter century later, the agency serves more than 27,000 residents annually through more than 80 programs with a budget that averages around \$20 million. This is impressive growth and a testament to the quality of service the agency provides and the talent of those leading the way.

It doesn't take very long to observe the profound impact the Community Action Agency has had on this region in the last two decades. The Center for Healthy Beginnings was established and currently provides full health care services to more than 27,000 residents annually. The Partnership Park Downtown Neighborhood Project was formed to help revitalize and redevelop a 23-block area in Jackson, MI, through \$15 million in investments. More than 1,000 children a year receive early childhood education opportunities through agency activities. And thousands of families receive free assistance filing their income tax returns each year. These are but a few examples of the good work of this impressive agency and a glimpse

of the range of services they provide with Marsha Kreucher as a driving force.

Marsha is not just an accomplished leader; she is also a willing mentor and tireless community servant. She sits on a number of nonprofit boards and works to bring various stakeholders together to seek out fresh ways to combat the issues related to poverty. She is always willing to lend an ear or to provide insight to others. Her vision and her ideas have helped spark innovation and creativity, planting the seeds for a brighter future.

Marsha recently said to a local paper about her life after retirement, "It's almost hard to comprehend the difference my life will have without it." I say to her today that it is hard to imagine how different the Jackson community would be without her vision, leadership, and hard work over the last two decades. She has worked tirelessly and fiercely to make a positive impact on the lives of those in need, and she has done so with grace and determination. I congratulate her on a job well done and wish her the best as she begins her next, exciting journey.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REAUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this fall also marks the 10th anniversary of the passing of another great Senator, Paul Wellstone, and his wife Sheila. They were dear friends. Among the many things for which they are fondly remembered is the important work they did to combat domestic violence and help victims. We have made much progress on this issue, in large part thanks to the Violence Against Women Act, which has long demonstrated the bipartisan commitment to work together against domestic violence and rape.

Sadly, so much remains to be done. Recent reports find that almost one in four women have experienced severe domestic violence, and nearly one in five women have been raped. In some communities, the picture is much worse. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, one in five female college students will be a victim of sexual assault during college. A recent study found that three out of five Native American women have been assaulted by a spouse or intimate partner.

The bipartisan Leahy-Crapo Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act includes vital provisions to help these and other particularly vulnerable victims. As the New York Times observed this weekend:

The act's reauthorization is must-do business for the lame-duck session. Mr. BOEHNER should relent and allow the House to vote on the Senate bill.

I ask that the full Times editorial be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the New York Times, Nov. 24, 2012]

THE G.O.P. AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

If Republicans are serious about repairing their party's standing among women, gay and Hispanic voters, they need to adjust some policies and stop sending hostile messages. A good place to start would be for Republicans in the House to stop blocking reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act over provisions deemed too protective of gay and immigrant victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

The 1994 law remains crucial to the nation's efforts to combat domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. Previous reauthorizations sailed through Congress.

A thoughtful renewal measure introduced by Senator Patrick Leahy, a Vermont Democrat and Judiciary Committee chairman, and Senator Michael Crapo, an Idaho Republican, cleared the Senate in April with strong bipartisan support. But it has hit a wall in the Republican-led House. Instead, House Republicans pushed through a regressive version of the measure that omits new protections for gay, bisexual or transgender victims of abuse.

The House bill also left out a needed increase in the number of visas, known as U visas, available for undocumented immigrants who are victims of domestic violence and sexual assaults. And it would reduce the incentive for frightened victims to come forward by ending the current ability of U visa holders to apply for permanent residency after three years.

Speaker John Boehner and his Republican colleagues blame Democrats for the impasse, suggesting the Democrats inserted changes to invite opposition and score political points. But the provisions at issue respond to real humanitarian and law enforcement needs identified by experts working in the field.

By refusing to accept the principle of protecting all victims of domestic violence, House Republican leaders are conveying a belief that rapes of gay people and immigrant women are not "legitimate" rapes, as Representative Todd Akin, the failed Republican candidate for the Senate from Missouri, put it so appallingly. Is that really what Republicans want to stand for?

The act's reauthorization is must-do business for the lame-duck session. Failure to agree on a bill would mean having to start the legislative process all over again next year. Mr. Boehner should relent and allow the House to vote on the Senate bill. There is a chance it would not muster sufficient Republican votes to pass. But at least it would give Republican representatives who value moderation a chance to dissociate themselves from the narrow-minded prejudices and politics hurting their party.

Mr. LEAHY. Friday will mark a year since Senator CRAPO and I introduced this bill. We have kept victims waiting too long. We should come together to act now.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, it has now been more than 3 weeks since President Obama was reelected by the American people, and Senate Republicans are still blocking votes on 19 judicial nominations who should have received confirmation votes before the Senate recessed for the election. Some of these nominees have been waiting close to 9 months for a vote. It is time for us to come together to do what is right and to act in the interests of the American people.

We should begin by having an up or down vote on the longest-pending nomination. The nomination of Patty Shwartz to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals has been ready for a final vote since last March 8. Judge Shwartz received a unanimous well-qualified rating from the nonpartisan ABA Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary, its highest possible rating, and it is well past time for the Senate to vote on her nomination.

Regrettably, the Senate has not been allowed to make real progress for the American people by reducing the number of judicial vacancies. There were more than 80 vacancies when the year began. There were more than 80 vacancies when in March the Majority Leader was forced to take the extraordinary step of filing cloture petitions on 17 district court nominations. There are now more than 80 vacancies once again. In stark contrast, there were only 29 vacancies at this point in President George W. Bush's first term.

There is no justification for holding up final Senate action on the 19 judicial nominations that have been approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee and are pending on the Senate Executive Calendar. President Obama has consistently reached across the aisle, consulted with home state Senators from both parties and appointed moderate, well-qualified judicial nominees. It is time for the obstruction to end and for the Senate to complete action on these nominees so that they may serve the American people without further delay. Delay for delay's sake is wrong and should end.

Senate Republicans have engaged in unprecedented obstruction and a contorted rewriting of the "Thurmond Rule" in their refusal to proceed on consensus nominees. Whatever justification Senate Republicans contended they had by resort to their misapplication of the Thurmond Rule to stall judicial nominations before the election is gone. The American people have voted and chosen to reelect President Obama. It is time for the Senate to vote.

From 1980 until this year, when a lame duck session followed a presidential election, every single judicial nominee reported with bipartisan Judiciary Committee support has been confirmed. According to the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, no consensus nominee reported prior to the August recess has ever been denied a vote. That is something Senate Democrats have not done in any lame duck session, whether after a presidential or midterm election.

Senate Democrats allowed votes on 20 of President George W. Bush's judicial nominees, including one very controversial circuit court nominee, in the lame duck session after the elections in 2002. I remember, I was the chairman of the Judiciary Committee who moved