

then he will know that signing this bipartisan National Defense Authorization Act is anything but the waste of time some of his allies might pretend it to be. In fact, this bill is essential.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL AND BENGHAZI SELECT COMMITTEE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the bill before the Senate this afternoon, in spite of all the statements of my friend the Republican leader, is another piece of political theater. Everyone knows the President is going to veto this. Everyone knows this. The House, if they are called upon first to sustain the veto, will do it. If we are called upon first to sustain the veto, we will do it.

Republicans are trying to paint Democrats as being soft on defense. Based on what we have heard from my friend today, I don't know where he doesn't want American troops—China, Iran, Russia, all over the Middle East. It is stunning to listen to what he has said. We have spent a lot of money training foreign troops. I was in Iraq. Who was training the troops then? General Petraeus. I don't know what my friend wants, but I do tell everyone the gimmick we have in this bill today; that is, having this funny money funding and that is what it is—I can't imagine my Republican friends who have in the past been so supportive of not doing things that deal with funny money, that their—Senator MCCAIN, the chairman of the committee, has acknowledged that sequestration will destroy the military—that is my word—but will badly damage the military. He has said that many times.

So we have a lot of problems here, but the gimmick my friend is so touting today does nothing to support the security we need at home: The FBI, homeland security, border protection. I say to my friend, the Presiding Officer, today: You voted the way I thought Republicans should vote when this matter came before the body yesterday.

It has been a week since it happened, but the American people are still reeling from House Majority Leader KEVIN MCCARTHY's admission that the so-called Benghazi Select Committee is nothing more than a political hit job on Hillary Clinton. That is what he said. Speaking about this committee, he told FOX News:

Everybody thought Hillary Clinton was unbeatable, right? But we put together a Benghazi special committee, a select committee. What are her numbers today? Her numbers are dropping.

It doesn't take much to figure out the point he was making; that this was nothing more than a hit job on Hillary Clinton. According to Mr. MCCARTHY, the so-called Benghazi Select Com-

mittee was orchestrated with one goal in mind—to weaken Hillary Clinton's Presidential campaign. Of course that is shameful. House Republicans have used the tragic deaths of four Americans as political fodder to win an election. Don't the victims deserve better? Don't their families deserve not to have their deceased loved ones pulled into a political inquisition?

Even more shocking, this political farce continues now. House Republicans are showing no signs of bringing this charade to an end. Consider the facts. These are a number of the select committees that have been going on that we have had in the Congress in recent years: Hurricane Katrina, Pearl Harbor, Warren Commission, Iran-Contra, Watergate, and the Benghazi Committee. This big red line sitting here shows this committee has spent far more time than any committee except Watergate. Look at that. It is hard to believe. For 16 months now we have used the tragic deaths in a way that is not what we should be doing. They have spent almost \$5 million of taxpayer money on this so-called select committee, and the number continues to climb as I speak. Not only do they have a select committee, they have had six other committees that have held hearings on this. What a waste of taxpayer dollars. The select committee has investigated Hillary Clinton for 17 months, 517 days—longer than the investigations that I mentioned: Pearl Harbor, the Kennedy assassination, and even, timewise, Watergate—close but still more time than on Watergate, and it is still going on. What have they accomplished? What have they achieved after all that time and money has been spent? What have they accomplished for the American people? Nothing. And they have held three hearings in 17 months. Not one American is safer today because of the select committee, not one terrorist attack has been thwarted because of the committee's work, and Republicans are fine with that. They hail the Benghazi committee as a success because it was never the panel's intention to get to the truth. This committee's only real objective was to hurt Hillary Clinton—exactly as Congressman MCCARTHY said. The evidence makes that clear. In 17 months, the committee has interviewed or deposed eight Clinton campaign staffers. They are obsessed with Hillary Clinton and her campaign status. Yet, stunningly, Chairman GOWDY and Republicans have little interest in questioning intelligence and defense experts. They have held only one hearing with an expert from the intelligence community. They have never held a single hearing with anyone from the Department of Defense. The Republican chairman and his colleagues have abandoned their plans to interview Defense officials and instead have gone after Secretary Clinton and her staff. The evidence is clear. The Benghazi Select Committee is a sham. Democrats have known this for 2 years, but now

we have the man who is going to be—I understand after tomorrow at noon—running the House of Representatives come November 1. He has acknowledged it is a witch hunt. That is why the Democratic leadership of the Senate wrote to Speaker BOEHNER asking him to disband the select committee. That is why I will not stop reminding Republicans of Congressman MCCARTHY's admission.

If it were up to me, the House Democrats on that panel would nail this quote on the committee room doors as a reminder to everyone that Republicans have manipulated a true American tragedy and turned it into a political circus:

Everybody thought Hillary Clinton was unbeatable, right? But we put together a Benghazi special committee, a select committee. What are her numbers today? Her numbers are dropping.

He is so proud of himself. Until House Republicans do the right thing and disband this committee, I will continue to tell the American people about the disgrace that is the House Republicans' Benghazi committee.

Mr. President, would the Chair announce what we are going to be doing today.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2016—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 1735, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Conference report to accompany H.R. 1735, a bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2016 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 1 p.m. will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Utah.

THE RIGHT TO EXTENDED DEBATE

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, 2 months ago I came to the Senate floor in my capacity as President pro tempore to speak to my colleagues about the importance of maintaining decorum and respect in this body. I reminded them that decorum is essential to the proper functioning of the Senate and to its unique role in our constitutional structure. The Framers designed the Senate to be an institution of deliberation and reason, where Members would work to promote consensus and the common good rather than their own narrow, partisan interests. Today I rise once