

We have been working on a bipartisan basis. So we are trying to move in the regular order, and that is good news. We are moving a little more quickly than I think has been done in many years. That is good news. But the practical fact of that also means that we are not in the middle of working on legislation that must be passed by today or must be passed by next week because whatever we do—whether it is the Energy and Water title, whether it is THUD coming next, maybe MILCON-VA after, whatever it may be—we are going to be waiting for the House to act, and we are going to be conferring. It is not at all clear when we will actually move appropriations measures to the President's desk, but it is fair to say those things are not exactly legislatively on fire. We could wait 2 or 3 legislative days. We could wait 2 or 3 legislative weeks. We are ahead of the game. That is not to say we don't have our own challenges with each of these individual appropriations measures, but this defines an emergency. This defines an emergency. This is an actual public health emergency, which means the idea of a pay-for for this is antithetical to the way we ought to work. This is what government does.

Whatever your political persuasion, whatever your ideology is about the size and scope of the Federal Government, I think we can all agree that the most basic responsibility of the Federal Government is to keep us all safe. This is a real risk. This is not an imaginary risk, this is not a trumped-up risk, and this is not a partisan thing. If you talk to the CDC, if you talk to your local departments of health, vector controls, mosquito control areas—talk to them. They are very nervous, and it is increasing. The only reason this hasn't totally popped both epidemiologically and politically is that it is still cold in a lot of places and mosquitos aren't out. This is a real emergency. There is no reason we shouldn't be taking this up as the emergency starts to happen. There is no reason we can't take a couple legislative days to deal with that.

To address the senior Senator from Texas, the assistant majority leader's questions about whether the plan addresses his concerns about accountability, about the ability to move money from one account to the other, about backfilling the Ebola funding—fine. Those are all legitimate questions, and I think they can all be addressed.

But here is my question: Why not get on the bill? Why object to a UC request that we get on the bill? All of those questions can be addressed on the floor or in committee or in conversation. There are many ways to address those questions. But the refusal to even acknowledge that this matter is sufficiently urgent that it should be the thing we are dealing with right now, that THUD could wait a week, and that whatever we are planning to do next is

not quite as urgent as the Zika virus—that is the point we are making today. Not that there isn't going to be some legislative wrangling and not that we are supposing that the President's request is exactly perfect, it is just that this is a real emergency, and we ought to get this thing onto the floor so we can take some action. That is what we have to do.

I know the Senator from Missouri is working very hard on this. I know others are too. We don't want this to be a partisan issue either. But to object to a request to get on this bill fails to acknowledge what a serious public health emergency the Zika virus is.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I came to the floor today to talk about another issue, and I will talk about the issue I had scheduled to talk about earlier this week. But in regard to the issue of Zika, it does need to be dealt with. It is being dealt with.

The good news is that there was substantial money various departments had that could be reprogrammed, and the fact that they have reprogrammed it indicates to me that there is a genuine belief in the administration, which I share, that this is an emergency. Over half a billion dollars has already been reprogrammed to deal with that emergency. I believe some of that reprogramming money needs to be restored, and some of it probably doesn't. The Ebola crisis is not what we thought it might be in Africa, but it is still in existence there. I think some of that money needs to go back into the accounts it had been reprogrammed out of.

But if anybody listening to this debate believes that nothing is happening, that is not accurate. I do appreciate my friend from Florida recognizing that a lot of discussions are going on. I was in several this week, and some yesterday with House Members and Senate Members.

The House could pass a bill first. That may or may not happen, but what really needs to happen is a bill that gets on the President's desk. I think there is almost no chance the Senate would pass a \$1.9 billion bill as proposed. The best place to debate that could be the Senate floor for several days or it could be to work on a bill that could come to the floor quickly, go to the House, and be passed by the House. If there were a slim chance that the Senate could pass the bill we have been talking about—the bill as proposed that would spend \$1.9 billion, in big hundred-million dollar chunks, which we talk about as if that is no money at all and is somehow a plan—that in all likelihood wouldn't pass the Senate, and I am absolutely sure it wouldn't pass the House. What would we have gained? This is something we need to work out. We can work it out. I believe we will work it out.

The goal is not for the Senate to pass a bill. The goal is for the Congress to

pass a bill and the President of the United States to sign that bill. I believe that will happen. Many people, including me, are working to see that happens. The majority leader knows that, and others who have spoken today reflect the fact that they know those discussions are going on.

#### FALLEN HEROES FLAG ACT

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, what I came to talk about today is a bill we did pass a couple of weeks ago. As we get ready for police week early in May—I think the week of the 9th of May—there are people we want to recognize and do recognize and do appreciate. I am cochair, along with Senator COONS of Delaware, of the Law Enforcement Caucus. I want to speak today about something we have just done to honor our first responders.

I want to start by recognizing the first responders from my State of Missouri who lost their lives in the line of duty last year. In Missouri, four law enforcement officers died in the line of duty. Deputy Sheriff Steven Brett Hawkins of the Harrison County Sheriff's Office, Trooper James Matthew Bava of the Missouri State Highway Patrol, Sergeant Peggy Marie Vassallo of the Bellefontaine Neighbors Police Department, and Officer Ronald Eugene Strittmatter of the Lakeshire Police Department lost their lives.

Deputy Sheriff Brett Hawkins of Bethany, MO, suffered a fatal heart attack on September 13 following an emergency response. He was 34 years old. Deputy Sheriff Hawkins suffered that attack after returning home from his shift, which included the search of a residence and surrounding property. He had served with the Harrison County Sheriff's Office for 3 years. He is survived by his wife, daughter, and three sons.

Trooper James Bava of Mexico, MO, was involved in a fatal vehicle crash while pursuing a motorcyclist for a traffic stop on August 28. Trooper Bava had served with the Missouri State Highway Patrol for 2 years. He was 25 years old the day he lost his life serving us. He is survived by his parents, a brother, three sisters, and his fiancée.

Sergeant Peggy Vassallo of Bellefontaine Neighbors Police Department was struck and killed by a vehicle on August 24 while rendering aid to another driver after being involved in an accident en route to work. Sergeant Vassallo had served with the Bellefontaine Neighbors Police Department for 15 years and had previously served with the St. Louis County Police Department for over 13 years, almost 30 years' service. She is survived by her husband, son, and two grandchildren.

Officer Ronald Strittmatter suffered a heart attack after attempting to help an older person who had fallen. Officer Strittmatter had served in the Lakeshire Police Department for 4 years and had previously served in the

St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department for 24 years. He is survived by his wife and a son.

In Missouri, we also lost five firefighters and first responders in the line of duty last year.

Battalion Chief Chris Tindall of Raymore, MO, died shortly after responding to an emergency incident in January 2015. He was a 19-year veteran of the South Metro Fire Department.

Larry Lawhorn, a volunteer firefighter with the Orchard Farm Fire Protection District, suffered a fatal medical emergency in May of last year while driving a first responder vehicle en route to a structure fire. He had been a volunteer with the department for 20 years and had previously served 15 years with the St. Charles County Fire District.

In October 2015, two firefighters were killed in Kansas City in the line of duty. Larry Leggio, a 17-year veteran of the Kansas City Fire Department, and John Mesh, a 13-year veteran of the Kansas City Fire Department, were able to save two residents from a burning apartment complex before a wall collapsed on them after they had evacuated other people from the building.

EMS pilot Ronald Rector of Linn, MO, was killed during a flight operation in March 2015. He was inbound to pick up additional crew members at St. Louis University Hospital in a medical helicopter when his helicopter crashed.

Early this month, I introduced the Fallen Heroes Flag Act, which creates a program to provide a flag flown over the Capitol to the family of firefighters, law enforcement officers, members of rescue squads or ambulance crews, and public safety officers who lose their lives in the line of duty. I thank my colleagues for unanimously passing that bill last week. The House had already passed a similar measure introduced by Congressman PETER KING, and I hope to get a final bill on the President's desk in very short order.

Our Nation's first responders put themselves in harm's way to keep us safe, and we mourn the loss of all those who have given their lives in the line of duty. We can never in any way fully repay the debt we owe them and their families. These are people who go to work every day, with the greatest goal for their families being that they come home safely that day, and they have more reason to worry about that than most of us have. All we can offer instead is our gratitude. My hope is that each flag that is flown over the Capitol and provided to these families will be a lasting symbol of our appreciation and a fitting honor to those who embody the very best of what we stand for as a nation.

#### SILVER STAR SERVICE BANNER DAY

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, as I conclude, one other thing I want to mention is Silver Star Service Banner Day.

I thank my colleagues for unanimously passing a resolution I submitted with Senator MCCASKILL last week to designate May 1 as Silver Star Service Banner Day. It is a day we honor our Nation's servicemembers who have been injured or become ill while serving, and we also honor their families on that day.

I am grateful to work for this cause and for the work the Silver Star Families of America do. This is a nonprofit organization headquartered in Clever, MO. In 2004, that group began its work to remember, to honor, and to assist members of the Armed Forces from every branch of the military and from every war. This organization assists veterans who have suffered physical or emotional trauma from war and distributes Silver Star flags and care packages to wounded veterans and their families.

Our military men and women put their lives on the line to defend our Nation, and many have done so in ways that result in tremendous personal cost for them and their families—from loss of life, to injury, to trauma of all kinds. On Silver Star Service Banner Day, I hope all Americans will take a moment to reflect on the countless sacrifices and appreciate the blessings of freedom their service has provided.

We salute our former and current servicemembers and encourage all Americans to do the same with the presence of a Silver Star service banner in the window or a Silver Star flag flying in the front yard. Those who serve deserve and should receive the gratitude of the Nation, whether they serve in the military or as first responders, and in the last few days the Congress was able to step forward and recognize those who serve in unique ways.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### THE NATIONAL DEBT

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, the talk of the debt in our Nation has been diminishing. Unfortunately, debt itself has not also diminished. While the deficit has been reduced significantly over the last several years, the debt continues to grow. It is now crossing well over \$19 trillion. It is my concern that we as a body continue to get distracted with other things and lose track of the looming debt issues we will still continue to face and we will be held to account for, and rightfully so.

The American people expect us to come here and solve a lot of issues—solve not only crisis issues such as Zika and other issues around the coun-

try, but also what we are going to do with national defense and security. There is an expectation that we will be able to do multiple things, but over all of that, there is an expectation that we will balance the Nation's checkbook and find a way to be able to solve these issues. I don't think that is an unreasonable request.

When we cross over \$19 trillion, at what point do we as a body decide that this is enough and that we need to work together to solve the issues we face? The Congressional Budget Office continues to challenge us and to tell us that this is an unsustainable pace, and the Nation as whole continues to push back. I think we should pay attention to it.

I thank Gene Dodaro and the good folks from the Government Accountability Office for putting out their latest report on what they define as opportunities to reduce fragmentation, overlap, duplication, and achieve other financial benefits. It is the report that GAO puts out every year that we often call a duplication report—here are the problems, here are the unresolved issues.

Last year, I asked Gene Dodaro and GAO specifically to break it up and to make it very clear—not just to say where it is in government but whose responsibility it is, who can actually fix this. They broke it up this year into two different sections basically saying: This is the administration and the agencies. They already have the authority to fix this, and these are the issues they face.

He also identified 63 areas that specifically only Congress can fix. It is a to-do list for us of things that we need to either vote on and discuss or we need to disagree with GAO and be able to push back on, but we shouldn't just ignore it and say we are going to do nothing on it.

We have dealt with this every single year for the last several years. We all face the duplication. We all hear the stories about it. My challenge is, How do we actually bring this to the floor, vote on it, solve it, and move forward from here? It will leave some things actually addressed.

Part of the issue we face every year with duplication is that duplication is buried into the governmental system, and it takes a GAO report to pull it out.

I have proposed a bill for several years now. I did it in the House and brought it over to the Senate. It is called the Taxpayers Right-To-Know Act. The Taxpayers Right-To-Know Act already passed the House this year, and it has not yet cleared the Senate. The Taxpayers Right-To-Know Act is a very clear transparency piece. It says: Shouldn't we have a list of every program in the Federal Government, how much we spend on that program, how many staff are committed to it, what that program does, and, specifically, how it is evaluated? It is a very straightforward, transparent piece.