

## WORK BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, earlier today we moved the Defense authorization bill across the finish line. This legislation authorizes funding for things such as training our troops to counter the ever-evolving threats emanating from around the world. The Defense authorization bill will also give our men and women in uniform the most up-to-date weaponry and the other equipment they need, including advanced aircraft, ships, and ground vehicles.

Fortunately, the bill also authorizes needed improvements in military facilities such as those in Fort Hood, TX, Joint Base San Antonio, Red River Army Depot, and Ellington Field.

Finally, it provides a much needed pay raise for our troops. I am pleased we were able to finish our work on that to better serve our men and women in uniform.

I hope the President reconsiders his stated intention to veto this legislation. It makes absolutely no sense to me, and I think it would be an insult to the troops—whom we all claim to support—to deny them the resources and the pay raise that this bill provides for.

We still have more work ahead of us, including the continuing resolution. I know there are Members of this body who say: Well, we want to change that appropriations bill to add some other provisions. But I just came back from meeting with some of the Members of the Texas House delegation. They tell me the House is leaving. So even if changes are made, the House is not going to be here and in session to make changes to the continuing resolution.

Our friends across the aisle need to face up to the reality that if they somehow prevent us from passing this continuing resolution, it will be on their hands. I hope they will reconsider because they are not going to be able to achieve the goal they are seeking.

We are close to wrapping up the Water Resources Development Act as well. This bill has also experienced a little bit of a hiccup. It has been held up over questions about how to best address the drought in California, but the bottom line is that California needs this legislation to help deliver water to its people and to keep producing billions of dollars' worth of crops each year.

I know the folks in California consider themselves to be the breadbasket for America and literally the world because of all the food we export, but that is one reason why this legislation is so important and why the senior Senator from California, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, and Majority Leader MCCARTHY negotiated this package.

I know Senator BOXER is not pleased with it, but the fact is, under the current procedures, we are going to finish this legislation one way or another—perhaps as late as Monday, but we need to get it done.

This legislative package will make sure that California and the rest of the country get the resources we need

while complying with all environmental laws. Of course, with some cooperation we can get all of these moving parts done for the American people soon.

### TRIBUTES TO DEPARTING SENATORS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I know it is always difficult to come to the floor and talk about the departure of our good friends and valued colleagues. The word I have heard mentioned the most this week is “bittersweet”—people looking forward to the next chapter of their lives but regretting the fact that good friends and valued colleagues are moving on to the next chapter of their lives. But every other December, we find ourselves bidding farewell to some of our most admired and respected Members. Today I wish to speak briefly about four of them, starting with our good friend from New Hampshire, Senator AYOTTE.

KELLY AYOTTE

Mr. President, Senator AYOTTE and I have more in common than may meet the eye, so let me explain. Our hometowns are 2,000 miles away, so it doesn't seem obvious. She served as attorney general of the State of New Hampshire and holds the distinction of being New Hampshire's first and only female attorney general. She was first appointed to that position by a Republican Governor, and she did such an outstanding job serving the people that she was reappointed to that position by a Democratic Governor.

Everybody who knows KELLY AYOTTE knows that she epitomizes the spirit of bipartisanship and comradery that makes a good public servant a great one. That has been evident in her work she has done here in the U.S. Senate. From the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act to multiple national security issues, Senator AYOTTE has been eager to work with Members on both sides of the aisle when it comes down to doing what is best for the people of her State and for the United States.

Senator AYOTTE and I both come from military families. My dad flew in the Army Air Corps in World War II, with the 303rd Bomb Group of the Air Force. Her grandfather also served in World War II. And, as many of us know, Joe, her husband, served in the Air Force and the Air National Guard, and he flew combat missions in Bosnia and Iraq. Senator AYOTTE's firsthand knowledge of the military has been a great help to us, particularly in her role on the Armed Services Committee.

KELLY will tell us that she does her best to listen first, to take in the concerns and priorities of her fellow Granite Staters, discuss the merits of each side's policy position, and only then carefully and methodically reach a well-considered decision. That patience and willingness to listen and consider all views has served her well during her tenure in the U.S. Senate. It is a lesson

we all should take to heart and learn from by her good example.

I want to add my thanks to our friend, Senator KELLY AYOTTE, for her years of service on behalf of the people of New Hampshire. I also thank her husband Joe Daley and their two children, Katherine and Jacob, for their steadfast support of Joe's wife and their children's mom over these past years.

I don't know in what capacity Kelly will continue to serve her community and her State and her Nation, but I know we will be hearing and seeing her more in some capacity of service, and I look forward to seeing where and in what capacity she finally decides to serve next.

DAN COATS

Mr. President, next I wish to recognize our friend, Senator DAN COATS. Senator COATS is a well-known commodity not just in Hoosier country but across the United States. He has earned the reputation of a distinguished statesman who genuinely doesn't need an introduction because his sterling reputation precedes him.

We know his impressive resume. After serving the country as a soldier in the Army, he decided he wanted to continue in public service, so he worked as a congressional staffer for then-Congressman Dan Quayle. When his boss decided to run for the Senate and won, Senator COATS took his boss's congressional seat to serve in the House of Representatives. And when Senator Quayle became Vice President Quayle, Representative Coats became Senator COATS, following on in his example.

He broke that pattern of following in the footsteps of the former Vice President when he was appointed Ambassador to Germany. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, he was an instrumental diplomat, working with our allies in Europe as we responded and as the world responded to the worst terror attack on our country in our history.

I know I speak for every Member here when I say that we are grateful Senator COATS came out of retirement and came back to the Senate in 2010. We have come to know that he is a warrior when it comes to wasteful Washington spending, and every week he comes to the floor to talk about his waste of the week. It is a service to all of us, really, to remind us that we have a lot of work to do in that area but also to point out how we can save taxpayers' dollars and use them more efficiently.

Many folks wouldn't know that he regularly attends the weekly Prayer Breakfast we have here in the Senate as well, which is a great time for Senators to come together and to support one another. It reflects Dan's commitment to faithfully encourage his colleagues day in and day out.

My colleagues know that Senator COATS is also a big fan of getting things done during votes, and he knows how to work a room. He has been on

the deputy whip team and helped consult with and helped inform our colleagues in a way that has helped us to actually get legislation passed by unifying us.

Suffice it to say Senator COATS is a true diplomat wherever he goes, and this Chamber has been a better, more civil place with him in it.

I know DAN would be the first to tell us that his decades of public service were made possible because of the equal partner he has in his wife Marsha. They met in college. They have been married more than 50 years, and they are a great example to all of us. So thanks to Marsha and their children and grandchildren for sharing DAN all these years.

I have a suspicion that Senator COATS doesn't have it in him to step totally away from public service, and there has been some news and discussion as to whether he might be in the running for another important position, perhaps in the next administration. I know we all look forward to seeing where he goes next to serve our country, which we know is so important to him.

DAVID VITTER

Mr. President, I would also like to say a few words about the senior Senator from Louisiana, DAVID VITTER. Back in the 113th Congress, in 2013, I began my tenure as the Republican whip, and at the same time I invited Senator VITTER to serve the conference as a deputy whip. One thing we always know about DAVID VITTER, whether you are a colleague, a staffer, or a constituent, is that no matter what, he is going to have thought carefully about the issue in ways that perhaps surprise many of us, and when he has something to say about an issue, it is always something worth listening to. I can't say that about all of us, but certainly Senator VITTER adds to the value of our deliberations every time he speaks.

But, of course, nothing is closer to his heart than the people of Louisiana, and what he has done diligently and faithfully here is serve the people of his State. I have had the pleasure of working with him on issues we share in common, like coastal protection issues that affect both of our States with our gulf coast.

Senator VITTER was sworn into office the same year Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans. As a matter of fact, for a time, he and his family literally lived outside the Houston area because of the devastation wrought by that terrible hurricane—a storm that FEMA called the “single most catastrophic natural disaster in U.S. history.” Katrina did billions of dollars' worth of damage, killed almost 2,000 people, left thousands without a roof over their heads, and cut the population of New Orleans in half. About 100,000 of those, I am told, made permanent residence in Texas, having had their homes destroyed.

I know Senator VITTER took this devastation as a personal challenge. He hit

the ground running. When the people of Louisiana needed him most, he worked at every level of government to bring them together and get the help they needed. Of course, just a few years after Katrina, Hurricane Ike pummeled its way through the Gulf Coast of Mexico before making landfall on the Texas coast. So I have had a number of opportunities to work with Senator VITTER not only on recovery efforts for our States but to make sure our communities along the coast stand ready to help each other and particularly as we prepare for future storms.

I wish him and his wife Wendy and their entire family well as they look to more adventures and more opportunities to serve. I have no doubt he will continue to take his passion for helping the people of Louisiana with him wherever the future may lead.

MARK KIRK

Finally, Mr. President, I wish to recognize the senior Senator from Illinois, MARK KIRK. If my colleagues have noticed Senator KIRK's interests on the floor, they will notice a trend. In addition to supporting measures that help the people of Illinois, he is laser-focused on keeping America safe. He provides us a declassified situation map that shows us where the U.S. military is engaged in fighting the War on Terror in the Middle East and in Africa.

He is a former member of the U.S. Navy, and so he has worked long and hard to strengthen our military at every turn. He has been a thoughtful and vocal critic of some of our Nation's biggest adversaries, like North Korea and Iran. MARK has never been one to shy away from more sanctions or steeper penalties for those countries if it means the United States will be safer as a result. To put it simply, MARK KIRK is a great patriot.

We all know his personal story of overcoming a stroke and his great perseverance and fortitude. It really has been an inspiration to watch MARK as he has recovered from that devastating stroke and continued to be an enormously productive Senator on behalf of the State of Illinois.

It has been a joy to see him turn that difficult circumstance into a rallying cry to help others get the best care and rehabilitation available today.

So I am personally grateful to Senator KIRK for many things, but in particular I want to mention his strong support of anti-human trafficking legislation. I joined him in Chicago a few years ago to speak with law enforcement about the connections between organized crime and sex trafficking. MARK has never wavered from his support for important legislation that we passed here this last year called the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act. He understood right from the beginning that human trafficking was essentially modern-day slavery, targeting, as it did, vulnerable children—typically a child of 12 to 14 years old who has run away from home, only to find themselves unable to leave because

they have become a victim of slavery. So I am thankful to Senator KIRK for standing up for the victims of human trafficking and taking care of and prioritizing our veterans and service men and women.

Let me close by saying thank you again to our friends Senator KIRK, Senator VITTER, Senator COATS, and Senator AYOTTE for the indelible mark and contributions they made to the Senate and my sincere appreciation for how they have faithfully served our country. I am grateful for their friendship and wish them and their families well as they tackle new ventures ahead.

I will just close by saying we have another colleague who has been nominated to serve as Attorney General, who still has to go through the process of confirmation and advice and consent by the Senate. That, of course, would be the senior Senator from Alabama, Mr. SESSIONS—not to jinx him; I will wait until that process is concluded, but I will be back here speaking about him at the appropriate time.

With that, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, for debate only, until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I would like to have a colloquy with my colleague.

It is my understanding that Senator CARPER was interested in 5 minutes, Senator MERKLEY was interested in 5 minutes, I was interested in 5 minutes, and I think Senator ENZI was interested in 5 minutes.

Could I ask my colleague if he would amend his UC so that each of those four Senators would have 5 minutes? I think that would take us to about 3:10, as opposed to 3 o'clock.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I would like to accommodate my friend from Washington, but the House message containing the continuing resolution is due here at 3 o'clock. There are a number of procedural matters that need to be attended to, so we will have Senators coming to the floor for that purpose. I am told that after that process occurs, which shouldn't take very long,