

to work smarter, and continue to work harder.

With that thought in mind, I close by expressing the gratitude of all Americans to the Presiding Officer and to everyone at the Department of Homeland Security. I wish you and your families a very merry Christmas and a joyous holiday, as well as a more peaceful New Year for all of us. Keep up the good work. We are proud of you. Stay safe. God bless you all.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, my friend the Senator from Delaware has spoken very eloquently about the need to say thank you to our Members who work within TSA. I wish to speak in terms of members of the Armed Forces and to remind the people of America that we are free and we will be able to enjoy a very precious holiday season coming up because the men and women who wear that uniform are on the frontlines. It is their families who are making that sacrifice as they are away from home. We should keep all of them in our prayers and remember to say thank you to their families for the sacrifices they have made. Thank you to the men and women on the frontlines who keep us safe.

With that, as a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I am pleased that we came together once again to pass the National Defense Authorization Act, a vital piece of legislation. It is a testament to the leadership of the chairmen and ranking members in the House and Senate that Members on both sides of the aisle have continued to work together to pass the NDAA again this year, and I thank them for their leadership.

It is important to continue this 55-year-plus tradition of passing the NDAA to show our troops and their families that they have our full support. As in years past, this year's NDAA includes policies to support our wounded warriors, our troops, and their families. It also provides our military with the tools needed to combat our enemies around the globe.

However, it is also the most significant defense reform legislation in decades. An example is its significant provisions to reform how the Department of Defense acquires new weapons.

Given that the No. 1 responsibility of the Federal Government is the defense of our Nation to keep Americans safe, it is reassuring that Congress has continued to pass the NDAA every year for over half a century.

To many Americans and even Members of Congress, the most visible manifestation of our NDAA is our combat vehicles, ships, and combat aircraft that have, with our outstanding serv-

icemenbers, made our Armed Forces second to none. Less visible are things such as training, maintenance, and adequate munitions, without which success on the battlefield would be in doubt.

I am pleased that this year's NDAA adequately authorizes funds for the DOD's operations and maintenance account, which provides the dollars for these vital but less visible functions.

The NDAA also stops the Department of Defense's proposed drawdown of an additional 15,000 soldiers, 2,000 marines, and approximately 4,000 airmen for fiscal year 2017.

Additionally, it addresses munitions shortfalls and provides funds for depot maintenance and facilities sustainment.

Importantly, it does not require women to register for the Selective Service and does not contain TRICARE prescription drug co-pay increases, both of which have been of concern to me and many other South Dakotans.

I am pleased it includes a number of provisions which I offered to address the serious cyber threat our Nation faces. One of those requires the President to define when an act in cyber space requires a military response. Another requires training for DOD hiring officials on how to use the special authorities Congress gave them to expedite the hiring of cyber security professionals and pay these civilian employees more than what is normally authorized for civil service.

I am also pleased that the conference report includes my mental health measure requiring the Department of Defense to more carefully monitor prescriptions dispensed at military treatment facilities for the treatment of PTSD.

I join my colleagues in urging the President to continue the decades-long tradition of signing the NDAA into law. While we champion this year's bill, the most significant defense reform legislation in decades, we must extend our view beyond fiscal year 2017.

For the past 2 years, I have served as a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, bearing witness to potential challenges that could threaten our national security if we do not address them now, including arbitrary budget caps. These arbitrary budget caps have forced the kinds of false choices that are potentially so devastating for our Armed Forces. In particular, we must avoid the false choice of paying for readiness while assuming risk for modernization or vice versa.

The American people expect us to adequately defend America next year and for every year to come. Job one in that regard is to remove the arbitrary budget caps and the threat of sequestration. Only by doing so can Congress fulfill its No. 1 responsibility—keeping Americans safe.

In closing, I thank Chairman MCCAIN, Ranking Member REED, my Armed Services Committee colleagues, and all of our staffs for the great legis-

lation we had the honor to vote for today.

I yield the floor.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I would like to associate myself with the objections raised by my colleague from Arizona, Senator JEFF FLAKE, concerning the 2016 Water Resources Development Act, WRDA, conference agreement.

I must express my dissatisfaction with the WRDA conference agreement. While I applaud the hard work by the conferees to advance a number of worthwhile flood control projects—some of which are located in my home State of Arizona—my objection centers around the inclusion of a massive drought relief package for California at the expense of drought priorities for Arizona.

For the past 2 years, Senator FLAKE and I have been negotiating with the committees of jurisdiction and certain offices of the California delegation to ensure that any drought legislation that comes to the Senate floor would be applicable to all Western States. We won provisions in the Senate-passed WRDA bill and the energy bill to expedite salt cedar removal and increase storage capacity for reservoirs across the West. Unfortunately, our WRDA provisions have been stripped by the conferees.

I cannot support a drought package that is overly California-centric while my home State and other Western States are also suffering under an oppressive 16-year drought.

MORNING BUSINESS

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN EGYPT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I have visited Egypt many times, and I have voted for billions of dollars in U.S. assistance for Egypt to support economic and security programs in that country. I have recognized positive developments in Egypt when they occur, such as the recent decision by the government to undertake economic reforms, including by reducing some subsidies.

I also recognize the security challenges Egypt faces from instability and violence in Libya and in the Sinai. The U.S. has an interest in helping Egypt confront these challenges by addressing the underlying causes in a manner that is consistent with international law.

Today I want to speak briefly about the Egyptian Parliament's recent passage of a restrictive new law on non-governmental organizations, NGOs, that would effectively cripple Egypt's civil society for years to come. Rather than sign this legislation, I hope President Sisi calls for a new version to be drafted in cooperation with independent NGOs. If President Sisi does sign this law, it will be yet another step in the wrong direction by a government that professes to be making progress on civil and human rights when the facts indicate otherwise.

Such a development would be further evidence of the need to strengthen existing democratic and human rights conditions on U.S. aid for Egypt.

According to information I have received, the law passed by parliament on November 29 would place all NGOs in Egypt, both local and foreign, under the supervision and control of a committee that would be dominated by representatives of the Defense, Interior, and Justice Ministries, as well as the General Intelligence Service, the country's top spy agency. Among other things, the law would criminalize work that harms "national security, national unity, public morals or public order" but leaves those terms undefined, allowing the authorities to bring such charges against any group they choose. Anyone convicted of violating the law would face sentences of up to 5 years in prison and a fine of up to \$56,000.

The proposed law comes at a time when independent voices in Egypt are facing an existential crisis. Instead of passing a new NGO law that would allow both domestic and international groups to operate without burdensome restrictions, the Egyptian authorities have escalated their crackdown on independent NGOs, particularly against groups that focus on human rights, the rule of law, and democratic norms.

Over the past year, a court has frozen the assets of human rights groups and the personal assets of human rights defenders. At least 15 NGO founders, leaders, or staff—many from prominent groups—have been banned from leaving the country. An investigation into the foreign funding of dozens of local NGOs could result in criminal charges carrying sentences of up to 25 years in prison. This pattern of harassment and arrests is not a new phenomenon. It has been happening for years, and, contrary to representations of Egyptian officials, it is getting worse.

I urge the Egyptian authorities to adhere to their constitution, and the pledges they have made in international fora such as the United Nations Human Rights Council, by guaranteeing freedom of expression and association. I urge President Sisi to reject this draconian legislation.

I also want to reiterate what I said in this chamber on September 27, 2016, when I spoke about Aya Hijazi, a young Egyptian American social worker currently being detained in Egypt.

Ms. Hijazi, along with her Egyptian husband and five employees of their NGO Belady, has been accused of salacious crimes—accusations that the government has yet to corroborate with credible evidence in a court of law. Ms. Hijazi has been jailed and denied due process since May 21, 2014. She and the other defendants should be released immediately or provided a fair, public trial so they can defend themselves.

REMEMBERING DAVID BUDBILL

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Vermont is saddened by the death of the poet David Budbill, whose poetry celebrated the simple pleasures of life in Vermont and highlighted the lives of working Vermonters. He died on Sept 25, at the age of 76.

In the State that gave the world Robert Frost, Vermonters know and love our authentic poets. Through David Budbill's 10 books of poetry, 7 plays, an opera libretto, 2 children's books, and many public performances and readings, he became the most widely known and loved Vermont poet since Robert Frost.

He was born in Cleveland, OH, in 1940, and after attending Union Theological Seminary in New York City and teaching at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, he moved to Vermont—to Wolcott—in 1969.

He then learned to use a chainsaw and worked in the woods to make a living, while also writing poems about the people he met and about his experiences there. His first book of poems, "The Chain Saw Dance," was published in 1976.

Other poems and books of poems followed, and David gradually created a fictionalized version of his own community, which he called Judevine—a place where rough-hewn loggers, sawyers, farm wives, gas station attendants, and shattered Vietnam veterans struggled to make a living amid the rugged beauty of rural Vermont. That material was later shaped into a play, also entitled Judevine, which was widely produced, both in Vermont and nationally.

Then in the 1990s, Budbill's focus deepened. He began writing poems about his own life in Walcott, thinly disguising himself as "Judevine Mountain," an old Chinese sage, who somehow was settled on a nearby Vermont hillside. He wrote with the spareness, directness and clarity of the ancient Asian poets he admired. One short example is "What Issa Heard." Issa is an 18th century Japanese haiku poet. Here is what David wrote:

"WHAT ISSA HEARD"

Two hundred years ago Issa heard the morning birds
singing sutras to this suffering world.

I heard them too, this morning, which must mean,

since we will always have a suffering world,
we must also always have a song.

David wrote poetry and plays that tapped into and expressed the essence of northern Vermont, and he plumbed these subjects so deeply that they became universal through his pen. His rural characters, Antoine, Grace, Tommy, and others, are quintessential Vermonters, but they are also vivid human beings with the same sorts of hopes, fears, triumphs, and disappointments that we all experience. Similarly, his "Judevine Mountain" poems were expressions of his own life, but they continue to resonate deeply with

the lives of everyone who has read and loved his poems.

In short, David Budbill's poetry and plays accurately, meaningfully and profoundly depict rural Vermont—his place, that is also our place. They have a universality that have and will enrich lives in Vermont and in the larger world forever.

TRIBUTE TO HENRY JARECKI

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Henry and Gloria Jarecki are two of my longest and best friends. I speak, of course, both because of our personal friendship, but also of their efforts with the important Scholar Rescue Fund, a program designed to provide fellowships for scholars whose are persecuted or threatened at home for the important work they do. This commitment is especially poignant, when considering that, as a child, Henry fled the Holocaust in Germany, ultimately settling in the United States.

Both Henry and Gloria have worked to bring about recognition and understanding of people of different races, religions, and cultures. To me, Henry has been more than just a friend. He has been a mentor and a confidant. Some of the happiest times for Marcelle and me have been with Henry and Gloria.

Dr. Henry Jarecki recently received the Order of Merit, Officer's Cross, in Heidelberg, Germany. The Order of Merit is the only federal decoration in the Federal Republic of Germany. This high honor is befitting not only of Henry's history, but of his long dedication to promoting the simple but sometimes difficult principles of freedom and liberty.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of Dr. Henry Jarecki's moving remarks upon receiving this prestigious honor be printed in the RECORD.

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

DR. HENRY JARECKI: ACCEPTANCE OF ORDER OF MERIT, OFFICER'S CROSS—NOVEMBER 17, 2016

OPENING THANKS

It is a great honor to receive this award from the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Joachim Gauck, a leader honored by Germany for transforming his experiences with totalitarianism into support for freedom, human rights, and democracy. Thank you, Minister Bauer and Mayor Würzner, for presenting it to me. Thanks also to Rektor Eitel for his thoughtful welcome. Let me also thank two special individuals who have played a prominent role in this award: the former Consul General of Germany to New York, Busso von Alvensleben, who is here with us tonight, and the current Consul General of Germany to New York, Brita Wagener.

I am of course thrilled to have so many friends and members of my family here with me at this special event, including my sons Andrew, Tom, and Nick and my grandsons Alexander and Tyler. Most of all, I acknowledge my wife, Gloria. It was on this very day in 1957 that the lovely Gloria Friedland became my wife. After 59 years of marriage, I think she deserves her own award!