

MCCAIN, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee. His commitment to our Nation's heroes is unfailing, which is why, amidst his own battles, Chairman MCCAIN has returned to the Senate to manage this bill and see it through passage. We are all proud to have him with us now.

As we begin considering this bipartisan defense authorization, Members from both sides will have opportunities to work with Senator MCCAIN and to offer amendments. Ultimately, we will keep working to find consensus so that we can pass this critical defense legislation without further delay.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING SEPTEMBER 11

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, 16 years ago today, my city, our country, changed forever. On September 11, 2001, our country was attacked; the World Trade Center towers fell; the Pentagon was in flames; and the smoke rising from an empty field in Pennsylvania reminded us that as cataclysmic as the attack was, the conspirators had planned even greater destruction.

It was a day of fear and helplessness, of phones ringing endlessly—when they worked—husbands calling wives, wives calling husbands, folks in search of brothers, sisters, neighbors, and colleagues.

I will never forget the next day. President Bush provided a plane so that Senator Clinton and I could fly back to New York. The smell of death was in the air. Lined up outside before you entered into the grounds where the Twin Towers were, were hundreds of people with little signs with pictures: Have you seen my father Jim? Have you seen my daughter Mary? That will stay with me forever.

More than 3,000 souls were taken from us—a guy I had played basketball with in high school, a businessman who had helped me on my way up, a firefighter with whom I had done blood drives. It was one of the bloodiest days on American soil since the Civil War.

On September 12, 2001, I called on Americans to wear the flag in a sign of solidarity. Every day since, I have worn this flag in remembrance of those who were lost and those brave souls who died rushing to the towers to find those who still might be alive. God willing, I will wear it every day of my life for the rest of my life.

September 11 was one of those before-and-after moments. Nothing has been the same since. We awakened to a new manner of evil that had previously been beyond our imagination.

But on this day, as we solemnly remember those who were taken from us, let us also remember what that day revealed about us. "On a normal day, we value heroism because it is uncom-

mon," wrote Nancy Gibbs of Time Magazine 3 days after the attack. "On Sept. 11, we valued heroism because it was everywhere."

Firefighters and police and union workers searched, undaunted, through dust and smoke, through fire and ash, for citizens who might still be alive, trapped in the rubble. Average Americans pulled the wounded to safety. Folks from coast to coast lined up for blood drives and pooled their money for donations.

I will never forget the picture of a man who owned a shoe store two blocks north of the towers and was giving out shoes to everyone because they didn't have theirs on as they rushed to get out of the towers—just a small act of charity and selflessness. It was repeated over and over again because those kinds of acts are deep in the American soul.

This morning I came from the 9/11 Memorial in New York City. Where once there were mighty towers, now there are two deep scars in the Earth. But all around the memorial, New York City is alive and thriving.

In the days after, they wrote it off. They said that no one would live south of Canal or Chamber Street, companies would flee, and New York's greatest days were over. But we New Yorkers are a tough breed. We rebuilt. We came back stronger.

On this day, we should always remember that beside our distinctive spirit of independence, resilience, and uncommon heroism are essential parts of the American character.

I do have to say how proud I am of my city. Downtown is bustling, and 50,000 people live there who didn't live there before. Businesses have relocated. It is a new "in" area. Bin Laden is gone. The evil men with him are gone. We thrive.

God bless America.

HURRICANE IRMA DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, as Hurricane Irma continues to buffet Florida, our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Florida and the rest of the Southeast that is in the storm's path. The Democratic caucus and I stand ready to work with the majority leader and his caucus, members of the administration, and officials in Florida to provide them with the resources and aid they need.

Just as we were able to speedily pass an aid package after Harvey, I expect we will come together to support rescue and recovery efforts in the wake of Hurricane Irma and in some of the other disasters, particularly the fires out west.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, this week we will begin consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act, as

we do each year. As usual, there are hundreds of amendments that have already been filed and a whole lot of tough issues to consider. We Democrats want to work in a constructive and productive manner to process as many of these amendments as possible and work through even the most difficult of issues.

I know that Chairman MCCAIN and Ranking Member REED have an excellent working relationship, as well as a great deal of respect for one another. I hope they can build a strong managers' package that will be acceptable to both sides.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2018—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 2810, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 175, H.R. 2810, a bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2018 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. The assistant Democratic leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, when we finish this period of morning business, which is open to speeches and statements on many different topics, we will then go to the Defense authorization bill. Our process in the Senate is to authorize spending and then to appropriate the money for the actual spending. Occasionally, those two things are in sync, but many times they are not. I am afraid that what we face today is uncertainty.

Senator MCCAIN, who is the chairman of the defense authorization committee, will bring his proposal to the floor, but it is at a spending level that is not allowed by current law. The Budget Control Act will not allow Senator MCCAIN or the Senate to spend at