

Whereas Congresswoman Giffords was shot and wounded along with 12 others while an additional 6 people were killed, including her Congressional aide, Gabriel Zimmerman;

Whereas in 2013 Congresswoman Giffords formed an organization to promote gun violence prevention and responsible gun ownership;

Whereas Congresswoman Giffords continues to serve the American public by being an outspoken advocate for solutions to gun violence;

Whereas Congressman Leo Ryan was an elected member of the House of Representatives for the 11th district of California from 1973 through 1978, championing causes related to equality, freedom, human rights and the protection of our democratic institutions, and represented an unwavering example of dedication to public service;

Whereas Congressman Ryan's life was marked by his service, in the Navy during World War II, as a teacher, a school administrator, South San Francisco city councilman and mayor, and California assemblyman, before serving three terms in the House of Representatives;

Whereas in his more than 40 years in elected office, Congressman Ryan worked to ensure equal treatment of all, including the least fortunate and those without a voice, and won the widespread respect of his colleagues and the people he served;

Whereas Congressman Ryan took a hands-on approach to combat injustice, from taking a job as a teacher in Watts to gain insight into the causes of the Watts riots, or posing as an inmate at Folsom Prison to investigate conditions, or going to Newfound-land to see for himself about the slaughter of baby seals;

Whereas in 1978 House Majority Leader James Wright described Congressman Ryan as having an "ever-ready willingness to go where suffering was";

Whereas when asked to describe his colleague, Rep. Robert Drinan of Massachusetts said in 1978 that "He was a gutsy, courageous guy," and "When he believed in something he just pressed and pressed.";

Whereas Reverend Jim Jones' Peoples Temple was based in San Francisco, California, and had recruited people from Congressman Ryan's nearby San Mateo district;

Whereas following negative press reports, to avoid exposure cult leader Jim Jones traveled to Guyana with his followers;

Whereas in 1974 an agricultural project was established in Guyana by the Peoples Temple which would be known as Jonestown;

Whereas in 1978 several stories began to surface over relatives being held in Guyana against their will and some constituents from Congressman Ryan's district began to contact his office with concerns over their relatives in Jonestown;

Whereas Congressman Ryan left for Guyana on November 14, 1978, accompanied by two congressional staffers, nine journalists, and 18 relatives of Jonestown residents;

Whereas the delegation arrived at Jonestown November 17, 1978, and several Jonestown inhabitants expressed a desire to return to the United States;

Whereas the original delegation along with 15 Jonestown inhabitants attempted to board planes at Port Kaituma airstrip but were fired upon by a Jones loyalist and other gunmen;

Whereas an additional 40 Jonestown inhabitants were also awaiting transport to leave Jonestown;

Whereas Congressman Ryan, one Jonestown inhabitant (Patricia Parks), and three journalists (NBC news reporter Don Harris, NBC photographer Bob Brown, and San Francisco Examiner photographer Greg Robinson) were shot to death at the airstrip and nine

others, including Congresswoman Jackie Speier, were wounded;

Whereas Congressman Leo Ryan was the first Member of Congress to be assassinated overseas while performing his Congressional duties;

Whereas Congressman Ryan stated, "I learned that if you give in to fear you can't do your job"; and

Whereas Congressman Ryan went above and beyond to provide service to his constituents and to the people of the United States, exhibiting courage and resilience: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That—

(1) the House of Representatives honors the work and public service of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords;

(2) the House extends its condolences to the family, friends, and all those affected by the mass shooting on January 8, 2011;

(3) the House of Representatives honors the legacy of Congressman Leo J. Ryan for his lifelong commitment to objective fact-finding and for his extraordinary commitment to advancing freedom and basic human rights at home and abroad;

(4) the House honors the bravery of Congressman Ryan and his team members for undertaking a dangerous yet essential fact-finding mission in Guyana;

(5) the House extends its condolences to Congressman Ryan's family and all those affected by the Jonestown tragedy; and

(6) the Democratic Cloakroom in the Hall of the House of Representatives (room H-222 of the United States Capitol) is designated as the "Gabrielle Giffords-Leo J. Ryan Cloakroom".

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2810, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2018

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 616, I call up the conference report on the bill (H.R. 2810) 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, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 616, the conference report is considered read.

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House in Book II of November 9, 2017, at page H8701.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Texas (Mr. THORNBERRY) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. SMITH) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on the conference report to accompany H.R. 2810.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 3 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, for 55 straight years under both parties, Congress has come together to pass a defense authorization bill to support our troops and our country's security. Along with my partner on the Armed Services Committee, Mr. SMITH, I am pleased to bring a conference report that will do so again.

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge and thank all the Members on both sides of the aisle who contributed to this product, and especially the members and staff of the House Armed Services Committee.

I also want to thank the conferees from the 14 other committees of the House who were appointed to the conference, and I appreciate their contributions.

Finally, I want to express my appreciation for the opportunity to work with Mr. SMITH and with our colleagues in the Senate, Senator MCCAIN and Senator REED.

We do not always agree among the four of us; in fact, we disagree sometimes energetically, but I have no doubt that each of them is committed to doing the right thing for our troops and the right thing for our country. Each of them is a patriot whom I admire.

Mr. Speaker, I know that I speak for all Members when we wish Senator MCCAIN the best in dealing with his current health challenges.

Members and the public were given a summary of this conference report last week, so I will simply say that I believe the priorities in this bill are, number one, our people; number two, the readiness; number three, missile defense; and number four, reform to see that we are more capable of meeting the security challenges our country faces in the future and today.

In that regard, I especially want to commend the work of Mr. ROGERS and Mr. COOPER and the Strategic Forces Subcommittee on space. They initiated deep, far-reaching reforms based on a real sense of urgency, and they are in this bill. Their work exemplifies the work of our committee: bipartisan, really nonpartisan, on the national security challenges the U.S. faces today.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, as the world grew more dangerous, we cut our defense budget and we added to the burden borne by the men and women who serve us.

We will not rebuild and fix our problems in 1 year or one bill, even when it is matched by an appropriations bill, which this will need to be, but we can head in the right direction. That is what this conference report does, and I hope Members will support it.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 5 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, first and most importantly, I want to concur with the remarks of Mr. THORNBERRY. We have had a great many people work together to produce a very important product. The staff, the Members, House and Senate, have all done an outstanding job.

On the Armed Services Committee, we are very proud of the fact that we produce a legislative product every year. We actually do legislation the way it is supposed to be done. We work it through committee. Chairman THORNBERRY often outlines the number of different provisions that were asked for at the committee level, at the full House level and the Senate level, and we worked through those, reached compromise where we could, and produced a product that is truly a legislative product.

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That is testimony to the great work, first and foremost, of our staff. Both the House and Senate do an outstanding job with hundreds of complex issues and working with all the Members, and I thank them very much.

It is also a testimony to the Members, both House and Senate, to their commitment to make sure that we pass the National Defense Authorization Act, understanding how important it is to support our troops and meeting our national security needs.

I also want to thank our colleagues in the Senate. Mr. THORNBERRY and I oftentimes say those are some of our most contentious debates—not between us, but between us and the Senate. But they are handled, I think, with great dignity and intelligence, and I enjoy working with Senator MCCAIN and Senator REED. They are great partners in this final product.

I am proud of this final product. There is a lot of very good policy in here. Mr. THORNBERRY mentioned several of the keys: acquisition reform, basically getting more out of the money we spend, making sure the system works better.

I particularly want to thank Chairman THORNBERRY. He has taken a lead on this issue for a number of years. I think we have made significant improvements, even while acknowledging that we still have a long way to go to get the efficiency that we need out of the Pentagon budget, but that is an important change.

I also think that this bill does a great job of supporting our troops and their families. As the chairman mentioned yesterday, it is basically the case that you recruit a servicemember but you retain the family, and that means that you have to provide for them. We fully fund the 2.4 percent pay raise in this bill and support our troops and their families in many other ways. This is a very good product.

I will also say, I want to particularly thank Representative LANGEVIN for working on this issue. This bill states that climate change is a national security threat. We make that the policy of

the United States Congress, to acknowledge climate change and the impact that it is going to have on our national security, and Representative LANGEVIN was tireless in making sure that that was part of this bill.

So this is a good product. I am proud of it. I am proud of the work that we have done together to produce a legislative product that, as Mr. THORNBERRY says, none of us like everything that is in it, but we reached a compromise to produce a product on an important issue.

The challenge that we have going forward is what the chairman mentioned at the end there: This bill funds, I think it is right around \$696 billion in defense spending. It goes \$80 billion, roughly, over the budget caps, and the bill can't do that on its own. Unless the budget caps are lifted and appropriators pass the appropriations bill, that doesn't happen; and we haven't made a lot of progress on that.

I was thinking, today, back to 2011, in August, when we first passed the Budget Control Act. We were about 2 days short of not being able to meet our debt ceiling obligations when we passed that; and at that time, the hope was that we would come together on a compromise to deal with our deficit and our debt to get us on a fiscally responsible path.

Well, over 6 years later, I can't say that we have made an enormous amount of progress on that, and that is a huge threat to our troops and our national security. I would also say that it is a threat to the nondefense discretionary budget and the rest of the budget as well.

But without question, one of the greatest challenges the Pentagon faces—they don't know from one month to the next how much money they are going to have. Is this going to be the number? Is this bill going to work?

I hope so, but we don't know. We have got to resolve that issue. We have got to figure out how to have a fiscally responsible budget so we can pass appropriations bills every year so all aspects of the discretionary budget can have some predictability.

It is absolutely true, as the chairman and others have said, we have a readiness shortfall. What that means is we are not providing the equipment and the training to our troops necessary to fully prepare them to do the missions we are asking them to do. I have no doubt that part of that is underfunding.

But another part of it is we have a National Security Strategy that is unclear and, as it is presented, is far greater than we would ever have the resources to match. I had a meeting with a Pentagon official who told me that they were very concerned because they were way short of having the funds necessary to meet their 2012 National Security Strategy.

And make no mistake about it. As big and confusing as the Pentagon may

look, they have a reason for everything that they spend. They have a plan in place. Right now, we don't have the funds to match those plans.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky). The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself an additional 1 minute.

That is a huge problem. So going forward, while we do need to provide more resources and more stability, I also think we need to take a look at that National Security Strategy and say: Where are we spending money that we shouldn't be? What part of our strategy do we not need?

If we can't do that, if we can't cut back, we are never going to be in a position to provide adequate funds to our troops, and, to me, that is the absolute worst result.

Whatever the strategy is, the one thing that it absolutely ought to do is fund our troops sufficiently to meet it. To have a big idea of what we ought to be able to do and then to underfund the men and women whom we are asking to do it, I believe, has led to some of the accidents and deaths that we have had recently with our ships and with our planes.

We need to adequately fund readiness to meet a mission that is achievable. That, we still need to get to; but, overall, this is a good policy bill.

Again, I thank the chairman. I appreciate the partnership and really enjoyed working with him to produce this product.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON), chairman of the Subcommittee on Readiness.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman MAC THORNBERRY for his leadership.

The extraordinary, controversial issue that should be addressed of the widows' tax has been solved with his leadership and will be so meaningful to military families.

I am grateful to support H.R. 2810, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018.

Throughout this past year, as chairman of the Readiness Subcommittee, we heard testimony from each of the Joint Chiefs about the critical necessity to address the military's alarming readiness shortfalls across all domains: air, land, sea, cyber, and space.

Sadly, the recent, tragic deaths of 17 sailors in two avoidable collisions in the Indo-Pacific region provided unmistakable evidence that readiness has fallen to a dangerous level. We can no longer delay the maintenance and sustainment problems that plague the military, and we can no longer defer critical training and modernization that directly impact the ability to respond rapidly to emerging threats worldwide. There are numerous important readiness provisions in the bill.

I also appreciate the gentlewoman from Guam (Ms. BORDALLO), my friend, colleague, and Readiness Subcommittee ranking member, for her tireless efforts and participation in this process. The creation of the NDAA was truly bipartisan and represents real emphasis for readiness recovery efforts and the enhanced defense of our Nation to promote peace through strength, protecting American families, as we recognize freedom is not free.

I strongly support the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2018 and encourage my colleagues in the House to support it as well.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Guam (Ms. BORDALLO), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Readiness.

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the conference report to accompany the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018.

I commend Chairman THORNBERRY, Ranking Member SMITH, and I would also like to thank the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON), the Readiness Subcommittee chairman, and the committee staff who worked many, many long nights on this bill. I am especially thankful for the spirit of cooperation that enables us to pass an act that directly impacts the young men and women who defend our country.

The conference report authorizes \$3.6 billion in additional operations and maintenance funds to increase training, spare parts, facility and equipment maintenance, and other readiness enablers. This is a very important step to support the recovery of readiness in areas that have been adversely impacted by high operational tempos and made worse by numerous continuing resolutions and the effects of sequestration. However, Congress must go further and provide the Department with budget stability by repealing sequestration so that we can continue to support the training, the maintenance, and the modernization needs of our forces.

The conference agreement also includes a number of provisions to support military readiness, such as providing authorities and flexibility for investments in infrastructure, extending direct hiring authorities, protecting training ranges from encroachment, and continuing to support the Asia-Pacific Rebalance.

The Rebalance is critical to security and stability in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region and a matter of most importance to me because of the recent threats against the United States and, specifically, my home district of Guam.

Critically, for my constituents, this agreement provides authority for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to approve H-2B visas for Guam that support construction projects directly connected to, as well as those associ-

ated with, the realignment of military forces to Guam. Additionally, the agreement authorizes \$354.6 million for military construction projects in Guam.

As Guam's representative, I will continue to work with the DOD and the USCIS to provide relief for healthcare and other industries that support our military on Guam. While I support the progress that we made in this bill, without further relief, our inadequate workforce will negatively impact our national security.

So again, Mr. Speaker, I reiterate my appreciation for the work by our committees and our exceptional staff. The FY18 NDAA provides the resources that our military requires for its missions in this very, very dangerous world, so I urge support for the bill.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TURNER), the chair of the Tactical Air and Land Forces Subcommittee.

Mr. TURNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2810, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018.

I strongly support this bill, and I want to personally thank our chairman, MAC THORNBERRY, for his work in trying to get a higher top line for defense. This bill comes in higher than the President's budget request, but it is in line with both the appropriations and the budget document that came out of the House.

This bill authorizes \$634.2 billion in the base budget, a much-needed increase over the original budget request, and fully supports many of the unfunded requirements identified by the Department that totaled more than \$30 billion. The \$634.2 billion authorization is essential. Anything less dramatically handicaps our ability to restore military readiness over nearly a decade of neglect.

This increased base budget funding for fiscal year 2018 begins the long process to rebuild our military's full spectrum readiness from years of deferred modernization brought on by the failed assumptions from the previous administrations's Budget Control Act and sequestration.

Within the Tactical Air and Land Forces Subcommittee's jurisdiction, this bill authorizes over \$12 billion in additional funds to address unfunded modernization requirements and critical capabilities gaps.

If we do not begin, with this budget, to set favorable conditions to start to reverse the high-risk defense posture we currently have, we will significantly jeopardize our military's advantage that we have taken for granted in past conflicts and steady-state operations.

As such, the bill recognizes the importance of land forces in current and future operations and authorizes over \$2 billion to accelerate armored brigade combat team modernization, to include additional Abrams tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles.

The bill authorizes strike fighter capability and capacity shortfalls and authorizes over \$3 billion in additional funding to procure new fifth-generation aircraft and modernize our fourth-generation fleet. These projects address unfunded requirements for the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps.

The bill also continues to address the needs of the National Guard and Reserve components by authorizing an additional \$250 million for their equipment and modernization.

This bill prevents the Air Force from reducing critical ISR capabilities.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I would first like to begin by thanking Chairman THORNBERRY and Ranking Member SMITH and Chairwoman STEFANIK for their tireless work on this bill. It is a good work product, and I am very proud to be associated with it and be supporting it.

I would also like to thank the Armed Services Committee staff for their contributions for another successful and bipartisan NDAA, in particular, Lindsay, Pete, Kevin, and Neve. I want to recognize Kathryn Mitchell, my MLA on my staff, along with my two fellows, Sean and John, for their contributions and support during the time we put together this mark.

I am extremely pleased with the Emerging Threats and Capabilities portion of the NDAA. I want to congratulate Chairwoman STEFANIK. This is her first NDAA as chairwoman, and it was a pleasure working with her in a strong bipartisan way.

The conference agreement preserves important steps forward when it comes to cyber, information operations, and advanced technologies, and it provides support to our special operators and their families.

When it comes to cyber, the bill requires the Department of Defense to conduct a cyber posture review to ensure we have appropriate authorities and policies in place to allow our forces to operate successfully in cyberspace.

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It also reinvigorates the DOD's cyber scholarship program, which provides scholarships and grant opportunities at colleges and universities to boost the Nation's cyber forces and to bring their expertise into the Department after they graduate.

Additionally, the finalized language includes a provision that I wrote in conjunction with Chairman THORNBERRY, Ranking Member SMITH, and Chairwoman STEFANIK to require timely notifications for sensitive cyber military operations outside areas of active hostilities, ensuring Congress is able to conduct appropriate oversight in this new domain.

The bill makes important investments in advanced technologies that will be game changers for our warfighters, such as the electromagnetic railgun. We never want to send our servicemembers into a fair fight, and transitioning critical technologies like these will ensure that we avoid the valley of death and provide them with the very best tools that are available.

Finally, I am very pleased with the final conference report preserving my amendment expressing the sense of Congress that climate change is a national security challenge and requiring the department to report its effects.

This important bipartisan provision represents one of the most significant legislative actions Congress has taken on this issue, and this shift in policy will better prepare our Armed Forces, ensure mission resiliency, and improve our readiness to face the changing climate.

Again, I want to thank the Armed Services Committee for their excellent work on this critical bill, particularly Chairman THORNBERRY, Ranking Member SMITH, Chairwoman STEFANIK, and, again, all the members of both the committee staff and my staff as well. It was a pleasure working on this very bipartisan bill in support of all of our warfighters, who we want to make sure that we provide the very best tools that they need to do their job safely and effectively. I thank them for all that they do for our Nation.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. ROGERS), the chair of the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces.

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this year's NDAA and commend the chairman for his outstanding leadership in getting us to the point we are today.

This year's bill takes the first step to fixing the broken national security space enterprise within the Air Force. In this bill, we streamline the current fragmented leadership structure, eliminating over 20 unnecessary internal Air Force boxes on the Air Force acquisition organization chart.

The bill empowers the commander of the Air Force Space Command with sole authority to organize, train, and equip space forces. It terminates duplicative and ineffective offices like the Principal DOD Space Advisor, the Defense Space Council, and the Air Force's A-11 office.

Most importantly, it is a step in a long path to getting space right for the betterment of our warfighters.

Hopefully, over the coming year, the Senate will focus on the chronic problems facing national security space and work with us to establish a separate Space Corps.

On missile defense, the bill ensures that we stay ahead of the threat, which, as we have seen over the last few years from North Korea and their two dozen missile tests, they are advancing rapidly.

Also, in this bill, we are authorizing more interceptors, accelerating research and development for advanced technologies, and improving acquisition authorities for missile defense systems.

And let's also not forget about what the bill does for our nuclear deterrent. All three legs of the triad will age out and begin retiring over the next decade, but this bill ensures the replacement programs remain on schedule.

On space launch, we continue the committee's dedication to the development of a domestic replacement for the RD-180 engines and to appropriately scoping the DOD investment in development of current or planned launch vehicles.

Finally, I am very pleased with the progress we have made toward getting some of the surplus 1911 pistols into the hands of collectors and off the government dime for storage costs.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support of this legislation.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COOPER), who is the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces.

Mr. COOPER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Ranking Member SMITH, Chairman THORNBERRY, Chairman MCCAIN on the Senate side, and Ranking Member Reid.

It is very important that Congress continue this great tradition of passing a Defense Authorization Act. This will be the 57th year. My constituents back home want nothing more than for us to cooperate in a bipartisan fashion for the good of the country. This bill, H.R. 2810, does that.

In particular, I would like to thank the Chairman of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee, MIKE ROGERS, who has been a great partner, as we do several very important things:

Number one, modernize our nuclear forces and keep the effort going on nuclear nonproliferation; we fund critical missile defense needs in the face of rising threats from North Korea and other countries; we support U.S.-Israeli missile defense; and we also strengthen, dramatically, our capabilities in space.

This Defense Authorization bill takes a decisive first step to address the fragmentation and lack of focus on national security space issues that the Air Force has shown by reorganizing space within the Air Force and within the Department of Defense.

While it does not create the Space Corps that we preferred, it achieves many of the goals that we set out to achieve. Notably, it consolidates acquisition, operations, and training of space forces under the Air Force Space Command and eliminates ineffective or redundant authorities across the Department. Our assets in space, unfortunately, are increasingly vulnerable to attack. This reorganization will begin to provide the focus and coordination necessary to effectively address these growing threats.

I thank the chairman of the subcommittee for his strong leadership in this effort and for making this a bipartisan process.

I would also like to thank the Deputy Secretary of Defense for his engagement on this important issue. We will continue to hold the Department accountable during this transition period.

I am also pleased that the bill begins to counter the vulnerability of our GPS systems in space which underpin many defense and civilian systems. We increase the resiliency and alternatives to GPS, including thinking outside the box, by relying on our allies and perhaps even exploiting Russian or Chinese signals as a means to deter attack on our systems.

The conference also dropped restrictions on extending the new START Treaty, which verifiably limits the number of nuclear weapons that Russia or the United States can deploy.

The bill, more effectively, holds Russia accountable for violating the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty by imposing increasing sanctions related to those violations rather than prematurely nullifying the treaty.

The conference report also encourages a dialogue with Russia and China to reduce risks of miscalculations that could lead to an unintended nuclear war in a crisis. Pressuring Russia, while avoiding an unnecessary nuclear arms race or a precipitous nuclear war, should be top priorities for our defense in the current, more volatile environment.

In this context, I support the increased focus on modernizing our nuclear command and control system, which has been too long over-cost and delayed.

Finally, the bill ends years of wasteful spending on the unaffordable and failed MOX project in South Carolina by allowing the Department of Energy to terminate it and move to a solution at a fraction of the cost.

Mr. Speaker, I support this bill.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces.

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2018.

This bill fully funds our Armed Forces, increases troop end-strength, and sets in earnest the modernization of our military and ensures that our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines are properly compensated for the sacrifices they make for a grateful nation on a daily basis.

In my role as the Seapower and Projection Forces chairman, I vowed months ago to set the conditions for the Navy to grow to 355 ships, in accordance with the Navy's own force structure assessment. I am proud to say that this bill sends the signal to our Navy, the industrial base, and our adversaries that a 355-ship Navy is not

just a theoretical idea, but rather an achievable reality.

The bill expands on the eight ships requested by the administration by adding an additional five ships. The bill also recommends additional advanced procurement for the Virginia-class attack submarines, while fully funding the Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine program.

As to aircraft, the bill fully funds the B-21 Raider bomber program, a critical component of the future nuclear triad.

This bill also recommends an expansion of KC-46A aerial refuelers, C-130J airlift, and P-8 submarine aircraft. Finally, the bill delivers expanded authorities that will save the taxpayers billions of dollars.

Now, some of our colleagues have suggested that our defense budget is excessive and that additional moneys should be provided towards other efforts. Mr. Speaker, this thought is not only misguided, but it is dangerous. We have a constitutional responsibility to provide for the common defense of our Nation. We will not shrink from that responsibility, and I hope none of my colleagues undermine the efforts to deliver the \$634 billion base moneys that are required for our national security.

Finally, I want to recognize Ranking Member JOE COURTNEY. He has been and continues to be a true partner in ensuring the Seapower and Projection Forces of our Nation are properly resourced. I do not think that we would be anywhere close to delivering the 355-ship Navy or providing for our Air Force's deep-strike capability without his steadfast resolve and sincere efforts to realize bipartisan solutions.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to reflect that with the chairman and the ranking member and their leadership, and I urge my colleagues to support the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2810, and I want to begin by congratulating Chairman THORNBERRY and Ranking Member SMITH for their really skillful bipartisan guidance of this measure.

The vote that took place last summer when the House passed it the first time through was the largest bipartisan vote, since 2008, for an NDAA, and that didn't happen by accident. It was because of their great work.

I also want to thank my colleague, Mr. WITTMAN, on the Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee. It is a very bipartisan effort, and the result, I think, really demonstrates that, when you do it that way, you get good results.

I also want to congratulate the staff, Dave Sienicki, Phil MacNaughton, and also Lieutenant Commander Dominic Kramer, a Navy fellow who is here

today. Their support and work were invaluable in terms of getting the seapower portion of the bill to the really solid place that it is today.

Again, last year, 2016, the Navy came forward with a force structure assessment that said: Based on national security needs around the world, our fleet size needs to grow. When the President's budget came over last May, unfortunately, there were only eight new ships in that budget; but our committee, again, showing its independence as a coequal branch of government, produced a seapower mark that boosted that build rate to 15 and, again, has us now on a pathway to achieve the goal that the Navy identified last year.

In particular, in terms of the undersea fleet, our combatant commanders, whether it is an Asia-Pacific or a European command, have been loudly warning Congress that we should not allow the decline in the fleet size to occur.

This bill, again, authorizes \$5.9 billion for the Virginia-class submarine program and provides multiyear procurement authority to enter into a contract for 13 Virginia-class, allowing for a build rate to move from two a year to three fast-attack submarines in 2020, 2022, and 2023.

The National Sea Based Deterrence Fund, which, again, our committee created in 2014, extends continuous production authorities which the Navy has told us will save \$383 million in the Columbia-class program, which, again, is about smart procurement, which Mr. SMITH referred to at the beginning.

Again, there are other provisions in the bill that I would just note. There was no BRAC that is authorized in this bill. We also gave authority to the United States as part of the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative to provide medical treatment to wounded Ukrainian soldiers, as well as training to Ukrainian healthcare specialists, which our allies desperately need. Again, it is a very, I think, smart move by the committee.

Mr. Speaker, as has been noted, this is the 57th year in a row that we have produced an NDAA. It is because we follow regular order. It is because we respect both sides of the aisle in terms of the contribution that they make.

We still have meat left on the bone to get the 2018 spending bill done, and hopefully the example that Mr. THORNBERRY and Mr. SMITH set in terms of allowing the process to breathe is the way we are going to get to a successful result, just as we did with 2017.

Again, I want to congratulate the leadership of our committee, and I strongly urge all the Members on both sides of the aisle to support passage of this measure.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. COFFMAN), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2810, the con-

ference report for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018.

The conference report contains significant policy and funding initiatives that continue our commitment to our troops and their families, all while maintaining military readiness and addressing important military personnel issues.

The provisions contained in this bill provide our warfighters, retirees, and their families the necessary pay and benefits to sustain them in today's highly stressed force.

To that end, this bill establishes a fully funded by-law pay raise for all our servicemembers. After years of lower than by-law pay raise requests, it is critical that we continue to give our troops and their families the pay increases they have earned.

□ 1430

It increases the end-strengths of the Active National Guard and Reserve Forces, thereby increasing mission readiness while reducing the stress and strain on the force and their families. It permanently preserves special survivor indemnity allowance payments and closes the gap in the "widows tax" to surviving military spouses.

It also continues to improve sexual assault prevention and response by adding a new provision to the Uniform Code of Military Justice, specifically prohibiting nonconsensual sharing of intimate images; expanding Special Victims' Counsel training; and expanding the annual Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Report.

Finally, spouses of servicemembers are challenged by varying State licensure and certification requirements when forced to move to a new State by military orders. Rather than imposing a single Federal standard on the States, we provide a \$500 reimbursement to defray these costs. We ask States to work with the Secretary of Defense to develop common standards where possible.

In conclusion, I want to thank the ranking member, Ms. SPEIER, and her staff for their contributions to this report.

Of course, we were joined by an active, informed, and dedicated group of subcommittee members. Their recommendations and priorities are clearly reflected in the conference report for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge my colleagues to support the passage of this conference report.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Massachusetts (Ms. TSONGAS), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces.

Ms. TSONGAS. Mr. Speaker, I thank Ranking Member SMITH and Chairman THORNBERRY for their leadership. I would also like to thank Chairman TURNER for his partnership and leadership this year on the Tactical Air and

Land Forces Subcommittee and for maintaining the spirit of bipartisanship that is the tradition of this committee.

Mr. Speaker, the fiscal year 2018 NDAA takes significant steps to support and protect military members and their families. However, I share Ranking Member SMITH's concerns that this year's bill authorizes a level of defense funding that is wholly unrealistic.

The numbers included in this bill are well above caps placed on defense spending by the Budget Control Act, and prioritize defense spending at a devastating cost to important Federal agencies and other investments that are critical to maintaining our national competitiveness and the future of our country. They are being put forward at the same time that we are considering a tax reform bill that will significantly cut revenues and, by the latest estimate, add \$1.7 trillion to the Federal deficit. Accordingly, the increased spending included in this bill are hollow numbers and we are failing to deliver a credible or sensible long-term plan to the Defense Department.

Throughout my tenure on this committee, I have been guided by our moral obligation to ensure that the men and women that we send into harm's way are properly equipped and the best protected in the world. I would never deny them the tools they need to defend themselves and our Nation, which is why I will be voting for this compromise.

I understand the necessity of many of the programs that are funded each year in this bill and believe its passage is needed to maintain American military superiority against a variety of threats while supporting our men and women in uniform. But ongoing budget negotiations need to get realistic. We owe it to our servicemembers to find a responsible, balanced path forward that works for both our national and economic security.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. HARTZLER), the distinguished chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the conference report for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018.

I would like to thank Chairman THORNBERRY, Ranking Member SMITH, all of the conferees, and the committee staff for their hard work on this important piece of legislation.

As Members of Congress, it is our responsibility to provide support for our men and women in uniform while they selflessly serve our Nation. This bill authorizes a much-needed \$634 billion in base budget requirements for our national security. This number is the minimum requirement needed to even begin the process of restoring our military's readiness.

Tragically, this year alone, we have heard report after report of deadly

training accidents. These accidents demonstrate severe readiness shortfalls across the services. We cannot stand by as our men and women in uniform continue to suffer. Now is the time to invest, and this bill does just that.

The NDAA authorizes a 2.4 percent pay increase for our troops; authorizes 24 additional F-18 Super Hornets to help fill the Navy's strike fighter shortfall; and it fully funds the B-21 bomber, a critical platform needed to deter and defeat future aggression around the world.

I am proud to represent Missouri's Fourth Congressional District, which is home to Whiteman Air Force Base and Fort Leonard Wood. This bill funds modernization programs for the B-2 bomber, authorizes \$50 million in the DOD impact aid for military-connected schools, and fully authorizes a new hospital facility and blood processing center at Fort Leonard Wood.

As chairwoman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, I am proud of the provisions in the conference report that will improve the foreign military sales process and provide the National Nuclear Security Administration with much-needed flexibility to address the crippling infrastructure of the U.S. nuclear security enterprise.

I want to thank Ranking Member SETH MOULTON for his support in working on these important issues in a bipartisan fashion.

Mr. Speaker, our troops deserve this bill and they deserve the funding that this bill authorizes. Thanks to the leadership of Chairman THORNBERRY, this conference report increased defense spending to meet the needs of today's warfighter. I am proud of this critical bill, and I urge my colleagues to support its passage.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MOULTON), the ranking member on the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations.

Mr. MOULTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on the National Defense Authorization Act. I must say that I am so proud to be a member of a committee so known for its bipartisanship. I am particularly proud to serve on the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee with my colleague, VICKY HARTZLER, from Missouri.

I am concerned that this administration is failing to confront the threats our country faces, like Russia, so I am encouraged that this bill includes a package of measures to deter Russia, including U.S. training and support for our European allies; a plan for additional sanctions on Russia linked to treaty violations; as well as a requirement for the administration to develop a strategy to counter Russia over the long term.

The bill also forces the same type of accountability that I have been push-

ing for on Syria policy for a long time, requiring the President to submit a comprehensive Syria strategy, including diplomatic, military, and humanitarian assistance initiatives.

Too often, big bills like this forget the troops on the ground, but this bill raises military pay by 2.5 percent and takes action on specific concerns raised to me and my team by requiring a study on improving opioid prescription practices as well as additional mental healthcare for those transitioning out of Active Duty.

The bill includes a provision I supported for our critical allies in the fight against terror. The Afghan Special Immigrant Visa program affords Afghan interpreters who have risked their lives—not only for their country, but for ours—the ability to resettle in the U.S. due to threats that they and their families face on a daily basis because they work with U.S. troops.

Here at home, our military families selflessly support our men and women in harm's way and provide the backbone so important to military communities across our country. That is why I led an effort to include a requirement for the DOD to examine a new Military Family Service Corps to support volunteer efforts surrounding spousal career support, career transition assistance, community integration for military families, support for liaison programs with schools, as well as families with children of special needs. By building on these efforts, we can ensure our servicemembers and their families are supported to the fullest extent possible.

Despite the important provisions included in this bill, it does come at a time when we as a Congress have forced the Department of Defense to operate under yet another continuing resolution in the absence of a full-year budget; and we are authorizing an unprecedented \$692 billion in defense spending, blowing past the budget cap set by the Budget Control Act, by over \$80 billion.

All the while, Republicans are pushing one of the most aggressive tax cut packages in history, set to cost our country at least \$1.7 trillion. Simply put, Republicans don't know how to balance a checkbook. Ultimately, it is our servicemembers and their families who will pay the price.

As Admiral Mike Mullen, the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in 2010 and again in 2016:

Our Nation's long-term debt is the single greatest threat to our national security. We ought to balance the budget because it is the right thing to do for the troops.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. STEFANIK), the distinguished chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities.

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the conference report for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018.

I strongly believe that this bipartisan bill puts us on a course towards readiness recovery, ensuring that our military is fully equipped, trained, and supported.

As the chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, I am especially proud of our contributions to ensure proper resourcing and authorities for cyber warfare, safeguarding our technological superiority and defense innovation, enabling Special Operations Forces to counter terrorism and irregular warfare threats around the world, and energizing programs and activities that counter the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

I would specifically like to highlight what our subcommittee has achieved this year in the areas of cyber warfare and cyber operations. Our emphasis on cyber has carried three broad themes:

First, we increase congressional oversight of cyber operations by including H.R. 2807, a bill introduced by myself, Ranking Member LANGEVIN, Chairman THORNBERRY, and Ranking Member SMITH, which will ensure Congress is kept fully informed of sensitive military cyber operations. We also require a cyber posture review to clarify U.S. cyber deterrence policy and strategy.

Second, we bolster international partnerships for cyber warfare to counter aggressive adversaries such as Russia, China, and North Korea. This includes support for our NATO partners and those within the Asia-Pacific region to enhance partnered cyber capabilities and information sharing, and to counter and mitigate adversarial propaganda efforts and information warfare campaigns.

Third, the bill continues to build and enhance our U.S. cyber warfare capabilities and activities—principally within U.S. Cyber Command, but also across our government—with the services and within the intelligence community. This includes resiliency of Department of Defense networks, weapons systems, and supply chains.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, this bill reinforces counterterrorism and unconventional warfare capabilities by fully resourcing U.S. Special Operations Command's programs and activities, including ongoing efforts in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Eastern Europe.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 30 seconds to the gentlewoman from New York.

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, we also include a new 2-year authority to counter irregular warfare and unconventional threats, such as those being posed by Russia and other adversaries.

Before I conclude, I would like to thank Chairman MAC THORNBERRY for his leadership, as well as my subcommittee ranking member, JIM LANGEVIN, from Rhode Island, for his consistent bipartisan leadership on all of these issues.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill and to vote "yes" on the conference report.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. CARBAJAL), a member of the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Ranking Member SMITH, Chairman THORNBERRY, and the committee staff for working with me to include language that brings attention to the threat of nuclear proliferation.

Currently, nine countries possess over 15,000 nuclear weapons, and the United States plans to spend \$1.2 trillion over the next 30 years to upgrade and expand its nuclear stockpile. As we build up our nuclear arsenal, we are increasing the risk of these destructive weapons ending up in the hands of terrorists.

The language I included in this bill stresses the importance of addressing this danger and requires the Secretary of Defense to explain how the Department of Defense is responding to this threat. When Secretary Mattis testified before our committee, I asked him about this ongoing threat and he told me that nuclear proliferation has not received enough attention over quite a few years.

This amendment is a welcome first step in the development of a robust strategy against nuclear proliferation.

□ 1445

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. WENSTRUP), who is a very valued member of our committee.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Speaker, providing for the common defense, that is a constitutional duty that this governing body was tasked with. By passing the NDAA, we are working to ensure that our country keeps faith with those who bravely serve and their families.

While the world has grown more dangerous, our military has grown smaller. Our men and women in uniform and their equipment have been stretched thin after years of war, billions in budget cuts, downsizing, and continued funding uncertainty. The 2018 NDAA reverses these trend lines.

Passing this bill fully funds the 2.4 percent pay raise our troops have earned so we can support our troops and they can support their families.

This legislation brings attention to maximizing our military health systems and includes a study on safe opioid prescribing practices for our troops so our warfighters receive the best possible treatment.

Rebuilding our readiness along with acquisition reform, equipment modernization, and increased end strength will better prepare our men and women as they put on the uniform and fight for us. Our troops serve so that we can sleep well at night, and they ask for nothing in return.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the full House to vote in favor of the NDAA.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time each side has remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Washington has 6 minutes remaining. The gentleman from Texas has 12 minutes remaining.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. VEASEY), who is a member of the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, the House and Senate Armed Services Committees have demonstrated admirable bipartisanship in completing this year's NDAA.

This past weekend, as I celebrated Veterans Day in the Dallas/Fort Worth area by honoring local veterans, we spoke about the importance of taking care of our servicemembers, and I think this year's NDAA does a good job in doing that.

I am very proud of the assistance to legal permanent residents who serve in our Armed Forces in understanding their naturalization options. I am also very happy about investments we made in improving diversity, such as the DOD Cyber Scholarship Program, grants for women and minorities in STEM, and funding for HBCUs. I think that these investments will yield a diverse and stronger national defense workforce for our country's future.

I am also happy that we have continued support for the tactical aircraft that are manufactured in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, which are very critical to our local economy and our Nation's defense.

I am very happy to have been a conferee, and I am very proud of the hard work that the committee staff has done to help complete this vital piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on this conference report, and I want to respectfully remind my colleagues on both sides of the aisle how critical this funding is to our national security.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. KELLY), who is another valuable member of our committee.

Mr. KELLY of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman THORNBERRY for his continued leadership in rebuilding and reforming the Department of Defense.

Today I rise in strong support of H.R. 2810, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018.

As a 32-year veteran of the Mississippi Army National Guard and two Iraq deployments, I know the national security challenges facing our country firsthand.

This year's NDAA makes important strides toward achieving equipment and benefits parity for our armed services' Reserve component. The enemies of this country do not distinguish between the Active component and Reserve component of our military, and neither should we.

I am happy to report that this year's NDAA increases the size of both our Active component and our Reserve component. It also increases benefits parity to our Reserve component soldiers by authorizing those deployed on title X orders to receive preactivation and postactivation TRICARE coverage when on 12304a and 12304b orders. Additionally, the FY18 NDAA will allow for procurement of much-needed equipment for our Reserve component.

Finally, I would like to thank my subcommittee chairmen—Mr. COFFMAN, Mr. WILSON, and Mr. TURNER—for their leadership and hard work through this process.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Guam (Ms. BORDALLO), who is the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Readiness, for purposes of a colloquy with the chairman.

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding and wish to engage the gentleman from Texas, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, in a colloquy.

Let me first start by thanking Chairman THORNBERRY, Ranking Member SMITH, and the committee staff for working diligently with us to address the workforce issues impacting the military realignment on Guam.

The conference agreement includes a provision to remedy the H-2B visa denial issue, particularly affecting construction projects on Guam, by granting USCIS the authority to approve temporary workers for construction work directly connected to or associated with the military realignment occurring on Guam through 2023.

Providing for this small, temporary workforce is very important, given the strategic importance of Guam as the sole U.S. territory in the western Pacific capable of basing significant joint force capabilities and the reality that exceedingly few U.S. mainland workers are willing to travel to Guam to perform this temporary work.

My understanding is that the intent behind the inclusion of the phrase “associated with” is to allow for approval of visas for individuals performing work not only on military-funded facilities and infrastructure, but also for civilian infrastructure projects outside the gate, for example, infrastructure projects funded by the Federal Government, the government of Guam, or nongovernmental sources that are being done, in part, because of the increased number of military personnel and military families moving to Guam.

Is that the chairman's understanding of the intent behind the provision?

Mr. THORNBERRY. Will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. BORDALLO. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the ranking member of the Readiness Subcommittee for her work on this issue.

From my visit to Guam last year, I have seen the tremendous military buildup and military value of Guam, and I understand that more is needed as Guam remains a strategic fixture in ensuring peace and stability in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield an additional 30 seconds to the gentlewoman from Guam if she would continue to yield to me.

Ms. BORDALLO. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. THORNBERRY. I agree with the gentlewoman's understanding of the provision.

Further, I support efforts to ensure that Guam has the workforce needed to maintain its strategic posture and military presence necessary to the national security of the United States. I look forward to continuing to work with the gentlewoman from Guam toward that end.

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman very much and appreciate his great support and look forward to continuing to work with him on the implementation of this provision and to address future workforce needs on Guam in support of the military realignment.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BANKS), who is a valuable member of our committee.

Mr. BANKS of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, it is a great honor of my time in Congress to serve on the House Armed Services Committee with Chairman THORNBERRY, and I am grateful for his leadership.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the fiscal year 2018 National Defense Authorization Act conference report.

As the most recently deployed veteran serving in Congress, I have seen the national security challenges facing our country, firsthand. While these challenges are not easily solved, this legislation represents a significant step forward.

Whether it is giving our troops a well-deserved raise, significantly increasing end strength numbers for each of the services, allowing for the continued transfer of excess defense articles to allies abroad who are in need, or funding our vital missile defense programs, this legislation begins the long process of rebuilding and reforming our military so we are ready for whatever comes next.

Mr. Speaker, my gratitude goes out to those serving both here at home and abroad, and I urge my colleagues to support this important bipartisan legislation.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BACON), who is a valuable member of our committee.

Mr. BACON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act and commend Chairman THORNBERRY for his exemplary leadership in our national defense.

I join my House colleagues in sending a strong, bipartisan message to the

American people that national security must be and will be a national priority for this Congress.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee and a conferee, I am proud of the strong, bipartisan consensus we have forged in both Chambers to reversing our dangerous decline in military readiness. Yet we must temper any pride we feel with the sober reality of the state we are in today: defense spending as a percent of GDP is at historic lows, operational tempo is at historic highs, and threats are growing more stark.

There have been 31 CRs in 10 years, which is a disgrace: a decade of deferred maintenance and modernization, aircraft that don't fly, ships that don't sail, and vehicles that can't move, shoot, or communicate on the modern battlefield. Mishap rates are rising, fatalities are rising, and training is at an all-time low. We have got to fix this.

Despite the lessons of history, we are simply unprepared to fight a modern war in space, cyberspace, in the air, on land, and at sea.

I served in uniform under the past five Presidents and witnessed this erosion of battle readiness firsthand. For me, this is personal.

This NDAA repairs the damage. The additional funding authorized in this bill makes a credible down payment in preserving the common defense and sends a message to both our adversaries and our military of peace through strength.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote for this conference report.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GALLAGHER), who is another valuable member of our committee.

Mr. GALLAGHER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues in the House to support the 2018 NDAA conference report.

This body has no higher or more urgent priority than providing for the common defense and restoring our military readiness. I am proud of the final text that my colleagues in the House and Senate worked together on so diligently.

Not only does this legislation authorize a total of nearly \$700 billion in defense spending, a \$26 billion increase above the President's budget request, but it also provides the largest pay raise for our troops in 8 years.

This NDAA also gets us closer to the critical goal of a 355-ship Navy and includes funding for three littoral combat ships, helping to meet the Navy's urgent and enduring requirement for more small surface combatants.

I want to thank Chairman THORNBERRY for his leadership and my colleagues in the House and Senate who fought tooth and nail to give our warfighters the resources they need to deter threats, support our allies, and, above all, keep the American people safe.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from

Pennsylvania (Mr. ROTHFUS), who is a strong proponent of a strong national defense.

Mr. ROTHFUS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman, Mr. THORNBERRY, and the committee for their diligent work on this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this NDAA conference report. I applaud this bill's goal to improve the readiness level of our military which has been depleted of critical resources after many years of defending this country.

Not only does this legislation begin to rebuild our forces, it includes a long overdue pay raise for our troops.

I applaud the bill's reforms to improve the military healthcare system and make sure taxpayer resources are used appropriately.

I especially want to highlight the current situation in Afghanistan, which needs drastic improvement. Shoring up Afghan security forces is only part of a short-term solution. We need a long-term strategy that brings stability to Afghanistan as well as the entire region. The NDAA directs Secretary Mattis to develop such a 5-year strategy. This is a good step, and I urge the military to continue thinking long term.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support this report.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. LAMBORN), who is a valuable member of our committee.

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for his great work throughout this whole process leading the committee and getting this to the finish line, but we need to push it over the finish line.

Mr. Speaker, for 56 years, this bill has been the primary way in which Congress executes its Article I constitutional duty to provide for the common defense. This year's bill finally begins to rebuild our military after a half decade of cuts which slashed nearly one-quarter of the defense budget. For 6 years, we have just been barely getting by: cutting resources as the world becomes more dangerous, asking more and more of those who serve, and putting off tough choices. We are at a key decision point.

This bill will continue to save billions of taxpayer dollars while cutting wasteful bureaucracy and streamlining acquisition, but it will also strengthen missile defense and, in many ways, make our military more focused on its core mission of preparing to fight and win wars.

There are so many good things in the bill, I can't go over all of them. I sincerely ask my fellow Members to support this NDAA.

□ 1500

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close, and I yield myself the balance of my time.

As has been mentioned, this is an excellent bill that a lot of people did very good work on. I thank them for that.

The only issue I want to raise in closing is the money. That is the sticking point and the difficulty that we have.

This bill, as it is currently constructed, is \$80 billion above the budget caps. In the 6 years since the budget caps passed, we have been unwilling to raise those.

But we have a larger problem. We have a \$20 trillion debt. Our deficit is close to \$700 billion. It has no prospect of going down anytime soon. At the same time, we have other needs.

During this debate, we focused like a laser on armed services and the needs of national security and our troops, as well we should. Those needs are incredibly important. I don't doubt that for a second. But you have to look at the whole or we are not going to be able to meet the needs of our national security and our troops. The amount of revenue that we take in as a country, unsurprisingly, impacts—or should impact—the amount of money that we can spend.

We are having this debate now. We are talking about how underfunded the military is and how badly we need to shore up our readiness. I agree with all that. The rest of this week we are going to figure out how to make sure that our government takes in trillions of dollars in less money. That is wildly inconsistent. If we believe we have these needs, we ought to be able to pay for them.

Then there are the other aspects of the budget. I know we are not supposed to talk about that during the Armed Services Committee debate on the National Defense Authorization Act, but the needs for infrastructure and education are things that also make our country strong, not to mention the Department of Homeland Security, the intelligence agencies, and other aspects of our national security, which are all part of the same whole.

If we are going to get to a fiscally responsible place, we can't just say defense gets whatever it wants and then let the chips fall where they may elsewhere.

On the Armed Services Committee, if we truly care about making sure that our troops have enough money, we need to do two more things in addition to this bill.

Number one, we need to argue that we shouldn't do a massive tax cut to undermine our ability to fund defense and national security.

Number two, we need to take a hard look at our national security strategy and figure out where we can save money.

If we keep looking at every single section—it is too short here; it is too short here—we do not have enough money. Even if we had a fit of fiscal responsibility and decided to make cuts elsewhere—which hasn't happened, by the way—and we decided to raise revenue instead of cutting it, even if we did that, we are still looking at needs within the national security budget. When you look at the programs that

people want to fund over the next 10 years, they are wildly beyond the amount of money that we have.

We need a national security strategy that has an honest look at how much money we are going to have. Otherwise, we are not serving our troops.

I know the comeback is: How can you put a price on national security? They should get whatever they need.

The only problem with that is that they don't. If we have a national security strategy that exceeds the amount of money we have, the ones left holding the bag are our troops. They are the ones who are asked to do missions that they are not adequately trained to perform. They are the ones who are asked to train without the adequate resources to train properly.

That is what we must fund. To do that, we need to do more than just pass this bill. We need to have a fiscally responsible approach to the overall budget.

Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I, again, want to thank all the Members who have participated in this debate, and even more importantly, all the Members who have contributed to this product, especially the members of the Armed Services Committee. Truthfully, Members from both sides of the aisle throughout the House have contributed to it.

We have spent several moments here talking about a lot of the details that are in this bill. Mr. Speaker, it is a rather large bill. It covers everything from how much we pay our troops to how many ships and tanks and planes and bullets we buy, as well as what we research and various policies of the Department of Defense. So there is a lot in here.

Let me take a moment just to step back and remind everybody what this is all about. Our Constitution says one of the reasons we have a Federal Government is to provide for the common defense. As a matter of fact, I think that is the first job of the Federal Government: to defend the country, to defend our lives, and to defend our freedoms.

As a matter of fact, Article I, section 8 of the Constitution says specifically it is this Congress' responsibility to build and support, provide and maintain the military forces of the United States of America. That is our job.

By passing this bill, that is how we fulfill that job. But as we have talked about, what has happened in recent years is the world has grown more dangerous. Yet we have cut the defense budget.

As a matter of fact, we are spending 18 percent less now on defense than was spent in 2010, if you measure it in real terms, apples to apples. I cannot think of another significant Federal program that has been cut nearly 20 percent over the last 7 years, yet that is what has happened in defense.

What has happened as a result of that?

Our troops have borne the burden. We are 2,000 pilots short in the Air Force today. Sixty percent of the F-18s in the Navy and Marine Corps cannot fly today.

As Mr. WILSON said, we have just seen tragic accidents in the Pacific, where 17 soldiers have lost their lives. We have had other accidents where others have lost their lives and other accidents where they have not.

The point I am trying to make is that part of the responsibility for all of that happening rests here with the Congress of the United States not fulfilling adequately, in my view, its job under the Constitution.

I would say one more thing, Mr. Speaker. I agree with virtually all of what the ranking member said about the importance of having a strategy and then resourcing that strategy. It is true.

We have not had—and there is some responsibility with administrations of both parties—a coherent strategy that holds together and resources that flow from that. We should.

The fundamental issue is that it is morally wrong to send men and women out on missions with our military for which they are not fully supported, fully trained, and equipped with the best equipment our country can provide. It is wrong for us to do it, and that is exactly what has been happening.

As I mentioned at the beginning, we are not going to turn this around in a single bill or a single year, but we can make a start. This bill makes a start.

I will absolutely agree with the gentleman from Washington and others that we can't really start to turn this around without an appropriations bill that follows it, that matches it, and that really does repair our ships and planes, increases our end-strength, and provides the training that I believe we deserve to give to the men and women who serve.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would just remind everyone that there are really two reasons we do this bill. One is that we owe it to the people who risk their lives to defend us. Secondly, for the national security of the United States.

The challenges to our Nation's security have grown more ominous in recent years, certainly more complex than at any time in our lifetimes. This is, I believe, a real opportunity on a bipartisan basis to show the troops that we support them and to show adversaries and allies alike that the United States is going to stand up and defend ourselves by passing this piece of legislation and by following it up with a budget agreement and an appropriations bill that follows.

That is what I think the Constitution requires of us. I hope my colleagues will agree and support this conference report.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I am outraged that for the third consecutive year, an amendment to create a service medal for our Atomic Veterans has been dropped from the NDAA Conference Report. I find this particularly shocking as this amendment, which I offered with my Republican colleague, Congressman TOM EMMER, was approved by the House unanimously by a vote of 424–0.

It is unclear to me why our colleagues in the Senate are determined to deprive our Atomic Veterans this most basic recognition of their honorable service.

Between 1945 and 1962, about 225,000 members of our Armed Forces participated in hundreds of nuclear weapons tests. These GIs were placed in extremely dangerous areas and were constantly exposed to potentially dangerous levels of radiation in performance of their duties. They were sworn to secrecy, unable to even talk to their doctors about their past exposure to radiation.

Thankfully, Presidents Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush recognized the Atomic Veterans' valiant service, and acted to provide specialized care and compensation for their harrowing duty.

In 2007, our allies Great Britain, New Zealand and Australia enacted their versions of this amendment by authorizing a medal to honor their Atomic Veterans who served with the United States.

Regrettably, the Pentagon remains silent on honoring the service of our Atomic Veterans, arguing that to do so would diminish the service of other military personnel who are tasked with dangerous missions. Mr. Speaker, this is a pitiful excuse.

Tragically, more than 75 percent of Atomic Veterans have already passed away, never having received this recognition. They served honorably and kept a code of silence that most certainly led to many of these veterans passing away prematurely.

Past Administrations and Congresses have dealt with the thornier issues of legality and compensation. What remains is recognizing these veterans' duty, honor and faithful service to our nation. And time is running out.

I thank my colleagues here in the House for supporting this amendment. With their continued support, I hope we can convince the Senate or the Pentagon to finally do the right thing, before it's too late. We owe it to our veterans to honor them for their selfless service to our nation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee). All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 616, the previous question is ordered on the conference report.

The question is on the conference report.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

21ST CENTURY FLOOD REFORM ACT

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 616, I call up

the bill (H.R. 2874) to achieve reforms to improve the financial stability of the National Flood Insurance Program, to enhance the development of more accurate estimates of flood risk through new technology and better maps, to increase the role of private markets in the management of flood insurance risks, and to provide for alternative methods to insure against flood peril, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 616, in lieu of the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Financial Services printed in the bill, the amendment printed in part A of House Report 115–408, modified by the amendment printed in part B of the report, is adopted and the bill, as amended, is considered read.

The text of the bill, as amended, is as follows:

H.R. 2874

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled.

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE AND TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “21st Century Flood Reform Act”.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title and table of contents.

TITLE I—POLICYHOLDER PROTECTIONS AND INFORMATION

Sec. 101. Extension of National Flood Insurance Program.

Sec. 102. Annual limitation on premium increases.

Sec. 103. Flood insurance affordability program.

Sec. 104. Disclosure of premium methodology.

Sec. 105. Consideration of coastal and inland locations in premium rates.

Sec. 106. Monthly installment payment of premiums.

Sec. 107. Enhanced clear communication of flood risks.

Sec. 108. Availability of flood insurance information upon request.

Sec. 109. Disclosure of flood risk information upon transfer of property.

Sec. 110. Voluntary community-based flood insurance pilot program.

Sec. 111. Use of replacement cost in determining premium rates.

Sec. 112. Cap on premiums.

Sec. 113. Premium rates for certain mitigated properties.

Sec. 114. Study of flood insurance coverage for units in cooperative housing.

Sec. 115. Pilot program for properties with preexisting conditions.

Sec. 116. Federal Flood Insurance Advisory Committee.

Sec. 117. Interagency guidance on compliance.

Sec. 118. GAO study of claims adjustment practices.

Sec. 119. GAO study of flood insurance coverage treatment of earth movement.

Sec. 120. Definitions.

TITLE II—INCREASING CONSUMER CHOICE THROUGH PRIVATE MARKET DEVELOPMENT

Sec. 201. Private flood insurance.