

Mr. Chairman, I want to take a moment as we approach the conclusion of this debate to again express my appreciation to the members of the Armed Services Committee, to all of the Members of the House who have contributed to this product, as well as to our staff.

Mr. Chairman, I think many Members do not realize that it requires a lot of long, hard, late work on the part of the staff to sift through the 578 amendments that were filed for the Rules Committee in order to make our floor consideration go as smoothly as it has.

I want to express again, as I have started our general debate, my appreciation to not only our committee staff, who have been doing this throughout markup and on to floor consideration, but the Rules Committee staff and the leadership staff on both sides that have facilitated this product.

It was a good bill to begin with, but with the assistance of a number of Members, it has become a better product, and it is certainly a worthy cause for Members to participate in and to show our support for the men and women who serve.

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

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I, too, want to thank all the people who worked to put together this product. As always, our committee, I think, was a fine example, both of how to legislate and how to do it in a bipartisan way, starting at the committee process, starting with the chairman's mark.

As the chairman has mentioned, just about everybody in this House has contributed to this product, either in committee or once we got to the Rules Committee with the amendments that they offered.

It took an extraordinary amount of work on behalf of the Members, but, most importantly, on behalf of staff to sift through all of those amendments, to reach agreements where they could, to set up reasonable debate where they couldn't, and they did an outstanding job.

This is the best staff I have ever worked with. They do an amazing job.

And we all have to remember the baseline reason why we are doing this. As the authorizing bill for the Department of Defense, this is the bill that sets the policy that helps the men and women who fight and serve to protect our country. So it is an incredibly important task.

I want to particularly thank the chairman. It has been a great working relationship this year, as always. I think we have an excellent product. I look forward to getting it passed today and going to conference with the Senate.

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

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

Wisconsin (Mr. RYAN), the distinguished Speaker of the House.

(Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Chairman, this has been a very busy week in the House.

I just came to the floor from a ceremony where I signed three major pieces of legislation that are now headed to the President's desk to become law.

This House has been very busy keeping its promises: to unleash our economy, to take care of our veterans, to provide hope for the terminally ill.

We just signed those three things that are now on their way to the President's desk.

But perhaps the most important promise that we made was the one that we made to the men and women who serve in our Armed Forces.

We promised to start rebuilding our military to give them the resources that they need to do their jobs, to reassert the United States' dominance in our military in the world.

After tax reform, that was my most important legislative priority, because that was our most important legislative priority.

Mr. Chairman, it is another promise kept.

Earlier this year, we enacted a historic increase in military funding, made possible by the bipartisan budget agreement that came before it.

This allowed us to advance the bill that we have before us right here today.

I want to thank the members of the Armed Services Committee, the ranking member, but I especially want to thank Chairman THORNBERRY for his work on this bill and his tireless advocacy for our men and women in uniform.

This National Defense Authorization presents another major step toward rebuilding and reforming our military. It will repair the damage done over the previous decade. It starts with readiness. It starts with readiness because this country has had a readiness crisis that has been costing us lives.

More American servicemembers are being killed in accidents and training exercises than on the battlefield. As Secretary Mattis put it, he was shocked by the poor state of our readiness. We must reverse that.

This bill invests in training. This bill invests in equipment. It grows the size of all branches of our military, and it prioritizes missile defense and our nuclear deterrent.

It is a very dangerous world, and this legislation will help us counter the threats, whether they are new or traditional, whether from China or Russia or Iran or North Korea.

But, like I said, we are not just rebuilding our military, we are reforming our military. The legislation streamlines the bureaucracy and improves the buying practices so that we are not devoting more resources to waste, we are

devoting more resources to what counts: keeping this country strong and keeping this country safe.

And, of course, we are taking care of our servicemembers and their families with the biggest pay raise for our troops in 9 years.

I am so proud of this legislation. I am so proud of our legislators. I am so proud of the chairman for making this moment possible.

Here we are, not just keeping our promise, but making this a better, stronger, safer United States. This will have a lasting impact, and this will ensure that America continues to lead in the 21st century.

Mr. Chairman, I thank the chairman and the members of the committee, and I urge adoption of this bill.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Chairman, with appreciation for the kind words, but especially for the commitment from the Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendments en bloc offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. THORNBERRY).

The en bloc amendments were agreed to.

The Acting CHAIR. The Committee will rise informally.

The Speaker pro tempore (Mr. FERGUSON) assumed the chair.

SENATE ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

The Speaker announced his signature to enrolled bills of the Senate of the following titles:

S. 204. An act to authorize the use of unapproved medical products by patients diagnosed with a terminal illness in accordance with State law, and for other purposes.

S. 292. An act to maximize discovery, and accelerate development and availability, of promising childhood cancer treatments, and for other purposes.

S. 1282. An act to redesignate certain clinics of the Department of Veterans Affairs located in Montana.

S. 2155. An act to promote economic growth, provide tailored regulatory relief, and enhance consumer protections, and for other purposes.

S. 2372. An act to establish a permanent community care program for veterans, to establish a commission for the purpose of making recommendations regarding the modernization or realignment of facilities of the Veterans Health Administration, to improve construction of the Department of Veterans Affairs, to make certain improvements in the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs relating to the home loan program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Committee will resume its sitting.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019

The Committee resumed its sitting.

AMENDMENT NO. 168 OFFERED BY MR. FERGUSON

The Acting CHAIR (Mr. AMODEI). It is now in order to consider amendment No. 168 printed in House Report 115-702.

Mr. FERGUSON. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of my amendment