

Asian carp that threaten our waterways. The list goes on and on. I know every community and every State could write its own list. This legislation matters to every Senator. It matters to all Americans.

I am grateful to Chairman SHELBY, Senator LEAHY, and subcommittee Chairmen MURKOWSKI, COLLINS, HOEVEN, and LANKFORD for all of their hard work. We have considered these bills carefully. We have voted on a number of amendments. This morning, we will consider more amendments and then pass this bill.

Now, this appropriations package is not the only important business the Senate has been working on this week.

Yesterday, we passed an important extension of the National Flood Insurance Program and sent it to the White House for the President's signature. We confirmed the 24th circuit court nominee already in this Congress, and we voted to proceed to conference with the House on the farm bill.

I understand this year marks the earliest, since at least 1965, that both the House and the Senate have passed a farm bill. Here in the Senate, it passed with the widest margin of any recorded vote in the history of this legislation. So Chairman ROBERTS and Senator STABENOW deserve our congratulations and appreciation. I look forward to serving as a conferee myself and to finishing up the farm bill prior to its expiration.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, before we adjourn this week, the Senate will also finalize the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019. Once we pass the conference report this week, this important legislation will head to the President's desk to become law, and we will have fulfilled one of this body's most solemn responsibilities.

The NDAA builds on the progress we made earlier this year in the bipartisan budget agreement, which provided for the largest year-on-year increase in funding for American Armed Forces in 15 years. This legislation authorizes programs that will contribute to the combat readiness of America's military to meet emerging and persistent global threats. It helps to ensure that our servicemembers and their families will receive the full support of a grateful Nation. When we pass the fiscal year 2019 National Defense Appropriations Act, which funds these programs, we will have gone yet further in meeting our commitments to an all-volunteer force.

The NDAA has global and nationwide significance, but it also has tremendous local importance. In representing the Commonwealth of Kentucky, I know just how significant an impact this legislation will have on some of our Nation's finest.

At Fort Campbell, members of the 101st Airborne Division and a number

of Special Operations units will benefit from the authorization of new investments in their training facilities.

At Fort Knox, the Army's Human Resources Command and Recruiting Command will receive the support they need to modernize officer personnel management, and the post will receive much needed certainty and authority for its energy savings program.

At the Blue Grass Army Depot, critical work to support chemical weapons demilitarization will continue because this bill authorizes the resources necessary to conduct safe operations.

Servicemembers will benefit from a well-deserved raise in military pay and expanded authority for military family housing and education.

So none of my colleagues need to look far to find examples of how the needs of our servicemembers will be met by the legislation before us.

Our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee carefully developed it. It reflects more than 300 amendments, and it rightly bears the name of our colleague and friend JOHN MCCAIN. I know he is proud of all this legislation accomplishes for our men and women in uniform.

I also thank the senior Senator from Oklahoma and the ranking member from Rhode Island for steering this bill through conference. I look forward to sending it to the President's desk this week.

TAX REFORM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on one final matter, the U.S. economy continues to receive a lot of attention.

In June, from the New York Times: "New milestones in jobs report signal a bustling economy."

In July: "Sales of small businesses are going through the roof."

Just yesterday, in the Wall Street Journal: "U.S. workers get biggest pay increase in nearly a decade."

Let's explore the last headline.

According to data from the Department of Labor, employee compensation grew by 2.8 percent over the past 12 months. That is the fastest employers have increased what they spend on employee pay and benefits in any 12-month period since the one that ended in September of 2008. Given what we know about the labor market, this is hardly surprising. From Main Street businesses to manufacturers, job creators are faced with heightened demand. That means more Americans can come off the sidelines and find a quality job, and that means that businesses compete to hire and retain workers.

Every week—practically every day—yields more impressive headlines, more testimony from middle-class families and small businesses about how this economy has improved their lives.

It has been little more than 7 months since a united Republican government passed historic tax reform, and it has been about as long since the House Democratic leader predicted our poli-

cies would bring about "Armageddon," and about 7 months since my friend the Democratic leader, here in the Senate, predicted that no part of tax reform would turn out to suit the needs of the American worker—none of it.

But Republicans saw past the scare tactics and did what we knew to be right for the country. We pursued a pro-growth agenda to get Washington's foot off the brakes that were restraining job creators, to take Washington's hand out of the pockets of working families, and to help create the conditions for communities across the country to succeed. Any one of these goals could have been a bipartisan priority, just like all of the other good work I have discussed this morning.

Tax reform, historically, had been bipartisan, but this time, our colleagues listened to the far left and decided to stand in complete partisan opposition to letting Americans keep more of their own money. Now the American people are reaping the benefits of a pro-growth, pro-opportunity agenda. Now they see whose policies benefit them.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, FINANCIAL SERVICES, AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2019

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 6147, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6147) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior, environment, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Shelby amendment No. 3399, in the nature of a substitute.

Murkowski amendment No. 3400 (to amend amendment No. 3399), of a perfecting nature.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, we are beginning to wrap up the appropriations package, which includes the