

bring down the high cost of prescription drugs. Instead, it is silent, and the best we can do is to get a speech from a Senator from Illinois.

So I hope someone is listening, and I certainly hope Senator McCONNELL's office is listening.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Madam President, thank you to Chairman INHOFE and Ranking Member REED and their staff for their work to produce the Fiscal Year 2020 defense authorization bill. The Senate has spent very little time actually working on legislation this Congress so I look forward to considering this bipartisan bill and debating amendments.

This bill that the Senate is expected to consider soon authorizes \$750 billion for defense—far higher than last year's amount of \$716 billion, and far higher than the House version of \$733 billion. This is because we are all committed to a strong national defense and for the protection of our men and women in uniform. But we also must make critical investments in other parts of the federal government that also contribute to a strong national defense.

Before becoming Secretary of Defense, then-General Mattis was fond of noting that if Congress doesn't fund the State Department then he'd need to buy more bullets.

We cannot hope to compete against China and Russia if we are not making critical federal investments here at home in everything from medical and science research to affordable, quality education.

So while this defense authorization bill is an important step, we must reach an agreement on budget negotiations so that we can begin working on appropriations bills as soon as possible.

Now let me mention a few key issues in this bill.

There is widespread agreement about the importance of space and the seriousness of the threats posed to our assets in space. We also all agree that the Defense Department needs to ensure that it prioritizes space personnel and equipment so that the issue doesn't get lost among many important defense concerns. But many of us were openly skeptical about the Department's proposal for a significant \$2 billion "Space Force" bureaucracy.

Should we spend \$2 billion on bureaucracy, or should we invest it in new, real space capabilities? The NDAA reaches a reasonable compromise on this subject. It elevates U.S. Space Command as a co-equal combatant command. It places more focus on space at the Secretary of Defense level, and it does not impose a large bureaucracy on the Air Force.

I appreciate this compromise, and I look forward to continuing to work with the chairman and ranking member to ensure that we are focused on providing clear organization and emphasizing real capabilities over more bureaucracy.

Another area we need to focus on is the process—the painfully long proc-

ess—that the Department of Defense has for developing and fielding new weapons systems.

One of the most illuminating—and frustrating—hearings this year in the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee was with DOD's head of research, Dr. Griffin.

It is clear from our conversation that the Pentagon is not moving at the speed of relevance in terms of deciding on new weapons systems and delivering them in reasonable timeframes. Dr. Griffin noted that the most advanced aircraft ever built—the SR-71 Blackbird—was designed, built, and flown in less time than it takes some parts of the bureaucracy these days to decide what to do next.

This has to improve. So I thank the chairman and ranking member for incorporating a reform I have proposed to speed up the process that the Pentagon goes through to conduct its initial analysis of alternatives. We know that this analysis of alternatives has dragged on for 18 months . . . 24 months . . . 27 months, in some cases. It is unconscionable. I hope this amendment can limit this nonsense and get the Department moving again.

I also appreciate the chairman and ranking member working with me to extend lease authorities for depots and arsenals such as Rock Island Arsenal in Illinois and on the honorary promotion of Tuskegee Airman Colonel Charles McGee, a true American hero.

I also hope that we can debate two other amendments I have introduced, which go to the heart of Congress's constitutional duties.

The first is the need for Congress to stop abdicating its responsibility on matters of war and peace. Article I of the Constitution gives Congress the sole authority to declare war. I voted for the war in Afghanistan, but I never imagined that we would still be there 18 years later, or that the bill I voted for back in 2001 would still be on the books, unchanged.

My amendment would sunset all authorizations for the use of force after 10 years so that Congress can take up the issue and engage in its constitutional duties.

I have also cosponsored an amendment led by Senator UDALL making clear that Congress has not given the executive branch any authority whatsoever to go to war against Iran.

These are matters of war and peace which demand this Chamber's attention. Think of the places around the globe currently justified under the 2001 AUMF voted on 18 years ago. Think of how dangerous and destabilizing a third war in the Middle East would be. I fear that we are drifting in that direction. Congress must step in.

My other amendment deals with this President's unbelievable decision to take money from our military so that our servicemembers could pay for his medieval wall on the southwest border.

It used to be that Mexico was going to pay for the wall. Remember that?

The President boasted about that more than 200 times on the campaign trail and in the Oval Office. But in February, he announced instead that he would take \$6.1 billion from the troops and put it toward building a wall.

We need a robust debate on the proper, effective way to respond to the humanitarian crisis at our border. But taking money from our men and women in uniform is not the way to do it. I hope we can debate this more.

Madam President, I hope that we may be able to debate these issues during floor consideration of this authorization bill. In the meantime, I reiterate my thanks to Chairman INHOFE and Ranking Member REED for their work on this bill.

Mr. DURBIN. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAMER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, this week we will begin consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act, the annual legislation to authorize funding for our military and national defense. This year's legislation builds on last year's bill, with its emphasis on restoring military readiness and ensuring that we are prepared to meet threats from major powers like China and Russia.

Some may take it for granted that we have the strongest military in the world, but our military strength, built on the service and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform, requires sustained investment. In recent years, budgetary impasses paired with increased operational demands have left our Armed Forces with manpower deficits and under-equipped for confronting the threats of the 21st century. Given the multitude of threats around the world, we cannot afford to become complacent or ease our preparedness. The truth is, the last time our military underwent a comprehensive modernization, Ronald Reagan was President.

In November 2018, the bipartisan National Defense Strategy Commission released a report warning that our readiness had eroded to the point where we might struggle to win a war against a major power like Russia or China. The Commission noted that we would be especially vulnerable if we were ever called on to fight a war on two fronts. Repairing this readiness deficit has to be one of Congress's most important priorities.

Last year's National Defense Authorization Act took major steps forward on modernization, making significant and targeted investments in the research, manpower, and materiel needed to equip our military to face 21st-century threats. We have made real