

spending; they certainly don't want to have to pay \$32 trillion in additional taxes to pay for it; and they certainly don't want Washington bureaucrats dictating their families' healthcare choices.

In a speech last week, the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Seema Verma, spoke about these radical healthcare ideas. She said: "These proposals are the largest threats to the American healthcare system."

Let me say that again. Seema Verma, head of CMS, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, called these proposals "the largest threats" to America's healthcare system. So you better believe we will keep fighting to resist this socialist agenda and this evermore liberal wish list.

BIPARTISAN BUDGET ACT OF 2019

Mr. President, on another matter, we will soon be able to vote on a bipartisan, 2-year budget agreement to provide some certainty and stability to the Federal Government and Federal spending. The President and Speaker PELOSI have reached this deal in order to avoid the possibility of another government shutdown and instead leave time and space for a wide-ranging debate on our government spending habits.

I know the Presiding Officer believes as I do; that it is past time to have a genuine, far-ranging debate about government spending habits that is not just focused on discretionary spending, which is what this budget caps deal does, but on all the money the Federal Government spends, which includes the 70 percent of spending which is on autopilot, which this deal does not discuss or deal with.

I will be the first to admit this budget agreement isn't perfect. It never is. Anything negotiated means both sides have to give up a little bit in order to find common ground. As I indicated, I certainly wish it were more aggressive. I wish it did something to deal with our entitlement programs as we continue to face growing deficits, but I am glad to see that the agreement offsets roughly a 1-year increase for non-defense discretionary spending above current law and allows our government to be funded on time and on budget.

It also avoids 30 poison pill policy riders on everything from taxpayer funding for abortion to immigration law, keeping them from reaching the President's desk.

Above all, this agreement delivers on our most fundamental responsibility, which is to provide for our common defense. When our friend, the senior Senator from Oklahoma, first came here, he said: I am a conservative, which means there are really two things that take priority when it comes to the Federal Government. One is national defense, and the other is infrastructure. He said everything else comes below that on the priority list. I found a lot of wisdom in those words. Providing for the common defense is the most impor-

tant thing Congress does, along with the administration.

We know under the previous administration, the Pentagon and our national defense were underfunded dramatically. It operated without any kind of stability or predictability, and this took a serious toll on our military readiness.

After nearly a decade of neglect, President Trump and Senate Republicans are working to rebuild our military and rebuild that readiness and modernize our force.

Let's look at the Army Future Vertical Lift—or FVL—as an example of why this investment is so very important. FVL is a cross-functional team within Army Futures Command headquarters in Austin, TX, that aims to develop two new helicopters for the Army in the 2020s. These next-generation aircraft will replace aging military helicopters and provide our servicemembers with the capabilities they need today and tomorrow.

But right now, these programs are progressing without timely funding. It is hard to make plans when you don't know how the money is going to flow. Without a budget deal and on-time appropriations, the Army has no choice but to significantly delay these programs for years to come, meaning that the Army will continue to operate helicopters built in the seventies and eighties.

The same goes with our artillery. Those years of underfunding have allowed Russia and China to surpass our capabilities in a number of areas, including long-range precision fire. In this and other areas, the military must develop longer range weapons to provide an advantage over our adversaries and maintain our qualitative edge.

As a newer program, the Army would not be able to continue research, development, and testing under a continuing resolution or without a budget deal, putting us another year behind in modernizing our force in an era of great power competition. That means China and Russia continue apace while we are slow to try to catch up.

That is why this deal is so important. It provides stable and reliable funding so that our military leaders can plan for the future and provide for the common defense.

Our newly confirmed Defense Secretary, Mark Esper, talked about this at length when testifying before the Armed Services Committee a couple of weeks ago. He talked about the Department of Defense receiving funding on time last year and said that it really allowed us to accelerate the readiness gains we have made to advance our modernization efforts and to do all of the things the national defense strategy tells us we need to do.

You would think there would be broad bipartisan support for providing America's military with the necessary resources to keep the American people safe. Somehow, though, some of our Members believe that this critical national security mission is optional.

Unfortunately, there are some in our midst who look to reduce military funding at every possible turn. Fortunately, we have a President who shares our commitment to national security. Thanks to the Trump administration's tough negotiating, this deal provides the stability the Pentagon needs, including critical investments in military readiness. Compared to current law, it provides a larger increase in discretionary funding for defense than nondefense discretionary programs and would allow us to regain the ground lost under the Obama administration.

I appreciate the President's work, along with that of the House and the Senate, to deliver a budget deal that supports America's military, and I look forward to supporting this agreement later today and certainly later this week.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes.

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

AMENDING SECTION 327 OF THE ROBERT T. STAFFORD DISASTER RELIEF AND EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE ACT TO CLARIFY THAT NATIONAL URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE RESPONSE SYSTEM TASK FORCES MAY INCLUDE FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 639 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (HR. 639) to amend section 327 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to clarify that National Urban Search and Rescue Response System task forces may include Federal employees.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. CORNYN. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (H.R. 639) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.