

Russia or any other adversaries copy their playbook.

Unfortunately, the White House and the leadership on the majority side of the Senate seem to be the only ones not taking this threat seriously.

Since 2016, this body has failed to vote on a single piece of stand-alone election security legislation. Four times in the last year, I have come to the floor in an attempt to pass my bipartisan election security legislation, known as the FIRE Act, by unanimous consent, and each time these efforts were blocked by my Republican colleagues.

Of course, when they blocked it, they got what they were looking for. They earned applause from the President on Twitter. In a different time with a different President, this bill wouldn't be controversial at all. It would simply say to all Presidential campaigns going forward that if a foreign power reaches out to their campaign offering assistance or offering dirt on a political opponent, the appropriate response is not to say, thank-you; the appropriate response is to call the FBI.

What a sad statement about partisan politics in our country when we can't even agree on that. We can't even agree that there ought to be a duty to report an offer of foreign assistance in a Presidential campaign.

I introduced this legislation months before the facts came to light about the President's pressuring Ukraine into announcing politically motivated investigations into the Bidens. I am not here to rehash the impeachment trial, but I do want to note one thing. A number of my Republican colleagues justified their vote by saying that, while not impeachable, it was wrong for the President to solicit foreign interference in our elections.

I take my colleagues across the aisle at their word that they believe foreign interference has no place in our elections, but at some point you have to put your money where your mouth is.

We know the President tried to trade election favors with Ukraine. According to the new book from John Bolton, the President tried to trade political favors with Xi Jinping during trade negotiations. Maybe that happened; maybe it didn't. But I would be much more inclined to give the President the benefit of the doubt if he hadn't asked China to investigate the Bidens on national television, if he hadn't asked Russia to hack Hillary Clinton's emails during the 2016 campaign, or if he had shown even a shred of interest in defending our democracy from foreign interference over the last 4 years.

We are under attack from adversaries who see this new area of cyber warfare and disinformation as a golden opportunity to undermine American democracy. We cannot afford to have a system that allows Presidential candidates to welcome this interference with open arms. If we can't trust the President of the United States and his campaign to do the right thing and re-

port foreign interference, then we need to require it by law.

I spent over a year inviting my colleagues across the aisle to work with us on this already—and I point out “already”—bipartisan legislation. I have tried to answer every objection and work through the right channels to get this legislation to the floor as part of the NDAA. What did we do? We went back to the Intelligence Committee—again, the only committee engaged in a serious effort to prevent foreign election interference. We made sure this year's intel authorization bill included several provisions to strengthen our defenses ahead of the November elections. The committee voted 14 to 1 to pass an intel authorization bill that included the FIRE Act, the act that I just described, so that if a foreign government interferes or offers you assistance or offers you dirt, you don't say thanks; you call the FBI. So you can imagine my surprise and frustration when I learned of a backroom deal to strip the FIRE Act out of the Intelligence Committee's legislation because of a supposed turf war with another committee.

I am back again today because the security of our elections cannot wait. Let's not hide behind process or jurisdictional boundaries. The stakes are far too high to continue the partisan blockade of election security legislation that we have seen over the last 3 years.

If, behind closed doors, my Republican colleagues want to strip this legislation out of the NDAA, then I am going to offer it up as an amendment to force an up-or-down vote and put every Member of this body on the record: Are you for election security or are you for allowing foreign entities to interfere and offer assistance with no requirement to report?

More than ever, it is time to put country over party and defend our democracy from those who would do it harm. I encourage my colleagues to support this amendment and send a clear message: Foreign interference has no place in our elections.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:31 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. CAPITO).

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

MULTIEMPLOYER PENSION SYSTEM

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, since I reclaimed chairmanship of the Finance Committee at the start of this

Congress, one of my top priorities has been to fix the failing multiemployer pension system and to help secure retirement benefits of more than 10 million workers and retirees in these multiemployer plans.

This is especially important since 150 multiemployer plans have failed or terminated, and many others are expected to run out of money in the coming 10 years. In the decade after that, many more plans are expected to fail. In all, more than 1.5 million Americans would be affected by the failure of these multiemployer pension plans.

Now, the coronavirus has had its effect on these plans as well. We don't yet have a firm read on how much the economic downturn has affected plans' funding or even the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation's insurance fund backing up those plans that have failed. We expect more details on those issues later this summer.

Now, one thing that we do know for sure is that this problem is only going to get worse and more costly to resolve if we wait longer to solve it. That is why all this concentration at this point. Now we have a real opportunity to get it fixed—and hopefully this year.

Last November, Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee chairman LAMAR ALEXANDER of Tennessee and I released a draft plan to reform the multiemployer pension system, protect retirees, and at the same time secure the PBGC's insurance fund. We received many thoughtful and constructive comments, and we worked over the past several months to address those comments to make our reform plan as effective and balanced as possible.

So what is standing in the way? The usual thing: You have got to have bipartisanship to get anything done in the U.S. Senate. The short answer is that the Democratic leadership doesn't seem to be very interested in working to find that bipartisan solution. They seem to think the no-strings bailout which they tried to force into the CARES Act in March and which now appears in the House's HEROES Act is somehow a take-it-or-leave-it proposition. That doesn't work very well, particularly in the Senate, where it takes bipartisanship to get anything done.

I would also hope that they are not playing election-year politics. If they are, then they are playing those election-year politics with the retirement security of millions of Americans. As every day goes on, the prospects of people retiring on what they thought they were going to retire on—these multiemployer plans—is getting less and less. Delaying a solution until next year is only going to make it more costly, and it will still require bipartisan support.

We can and we must do better if we want a healthy multiemployer system for the long haul. We have a chance to fix this problem long term. Otherwise, we will be right back here in 5 or 10 years dealing with the same problem.

To put this in perspective, let's consider what it means to do nothing and to leave the current law unchanged, versus what Chairman ALEXANDER and I propose in several key areas.

First, for retiree benefits, doing nothing means the PBGC insurance fund runs out of money in 2027. If the fund goes broke, that means the PBGC will only be able to pay benefits equal to the premium revenues that it receives, which are minimal compared to the potential claims. That means retirees could receive cuts in the range of 90 percent.

Let me say that another way. If these plans go broke and these people are forced into the government-run insurance backup plan, they are going to potentially get 90-percent cuts in their retirement. That is the necessity for us to work hard now to get this job done.

Now, in contrast, the plan Senator ALEXANDER and I are proposing would preserve benefits and ensure solvency of the PBGC's multiemployer system over the long run. It would save many failing plans by having the government pay a portion of benefits earlier than under current law. That would help the plan to stretch its assets much longer and at the same time preserve benefits as promised under that plan.

Second, for plans that aren't able to be saved, our proposal would increase the insurance guarantee amount from the current \$12,870 maximum for a retiree with 30 years of service to over \$20,000.

Benefits will be preserved with the help of additional support from employer and union stakeholders and a modest retiree insurance premium for retirees in plans that face financial challenges. That premium would be no more than 10 percent and eliminated entirely for older and disabled retirees, as well as for plans that are well funded. That is far better than the 90-percent cut that I already told you about if we just do nothing.

Doing nothing also means more and more plans will become underfunded or maybe even worse, insolvent, resulting in major benefit cuts and then only that very small benefit that is covered by the government's guaranty program, the insurance fund that we call the PBGC.

The Grassley-Alexander plan would provide relief to the failing plans, and, without an upfront benefit cut, it would restore the benefit cuts that some plans chose to make under the Multiemployer Pension Reform Act in 2014. It would also increase the PBGC insurance guarantee amount by more than 50 percent.

Third, for other plans not on the brink, doing nothing would mean that the current minority of multiemployer plans that are better funded would continue to shrink, with many more likely to move into the danger zone in the coming years. Our plan would provide significant funding reforms—with emphasis on reforms—to help prevent that from happening. In other words, those

that are in pretty good shape wouldn't get worse.

Key variables, like the discount rate that plans use to estimate future assets and liability values, would be subject to new standards to help ensure that plans are funded to provide the benefits they promised. But we have taken to heart comments we have heard from stakeholders that those changes need to be phased in over a sufficient period of time to allow plans to transition smoothly.

Our plan would institute other changes to improve the early warning system so multiemployer plans can avoid flirting with the underfunding danger zone. It also provides needed oversight for plans in trouble, and it would provide unions and employers the opportunity to set up composite plans—a new type of hybrid retirement plan that enjoys wide bipartisan support.

Something pretty important to note, the fundamental tenet of the Grassley-Alexander reform plan is that all stakeholders have a role in fixing the multiemployer pension system that has been on the current path to failure now for four decades.

Employers and unions have a role in ensuring that adequate contributions are made to the plans to ensure sufficient funds to pay the promised benefits.

Plans have a role in ensuring that the PBGC insurance fund backing up those benefits is adequately funded through reasonable premiums, with higher risk plans contributing more for that insurance backup.

Employees and retirees have a role in contributing to the insurance coverage that protects their benefits, just like they do now for auto, home, and life insurance.

Last, but not least, is the Federal Government. I don't want to shock people, but if you study this, you will know that the government had a role in setting out the rules that have governed these plans and regulating the operation of these plans, so the government has a role in fixing the resulting situation we are in this very day. That means taxpayer funds may be needed to help the PBGC provide the partition relief for plans on the brink of failing, but those funds must come with important reforms to ensure that taxpayers are not back here on the hook again in 5 or 10 years.

This legislation I am talking about looks way ahead, solving two problems: the multiemployer pension plans individually—dozens of them—and also the insurance fund, the PBGC, that the government has for backup so it doesn't go broke by 2027. We take care of two big problems all at once. As I just said, we don't want to be back here in 5 or 10 years.

Unfortunately, no matter how sensible of a reform plan we come up with, it has no chance of success unless our Democratic colleagues are willing to sit down and discuss a comprehensive solution.

The other side has the idea of “my way or the highway.” That approach is not the pathway to a successful solution. That was clear when they tried that tactic during the negotiations of the CARES Act in March.

So how many times do I have to say it? We all know it, all 100 Senators know it—nothing happens in Congress without bipartisanship.

I invited our colleagues on the other side of the aisle—I have had more than one conversation with Speaker PELOSI—asking all to join me and Senator ALEXANDER in finding a bipartisan solution. That invitation still stands, and we remain ready to talk. Let's use the time that we have to negotiate a balanced, sensible solution to this increasingly critical problem so that we are ready whenever that opportunity presents itself to enact that solution this year. The retirees in each of our States, the businesses in each of our States, and the unions in each of our States that support these pension plans and our long-term Federal budget deserve no less consideration than what I have laid out.

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. LEAHY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 2740

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, it may seem like a long time ago, but it was only 3 months ago when Congress came together, in a rare bipartisan fashion, and we passed the CARES Act. We did that to help address the unprecedented needs of the country and the American people as we began to address the global pandemic. It was the third emergency appropriations bill Congress has passed this year to address the impact of the coronavirus. Yet despite its scope and size, we knew then, and we all acknowledged then, that absent a miracle, it would not be the last emergency appropriations bill required.

At that time, we all knew the number of COVID cases would continue to grow at an alarming rate, as would the number of deaths. Each death has left in its wake friends, family, and loved ones, all devastated by a loss that can never be undone. In those 3 months, we have also seen our economy grind to a halt. More than 47 million men and women have filed for unemployment. Families are struggling to pay their bills. They are worried about putting food on the table, paying their rent, and caring for their children. Lines at food banks are at historic highs, including in my home State of Vermont. For many, the situation is desperate.

I wish we could say we were through the worst of it and things could now return to normal. We know that we cannot. Florida, Texas, Arizona, North

Carolina, Alabama, and Oklahoma, just to name a few, are seeing an alarming spike in cases. Health experts are ringing the alarm bell, including the Secretary of Health and Human Services, who had previously spent a lot of time trying to defend this administration's anemic response.

We all know this virus is far from vanquished. As numbers continue to rise across the Nation and new hot spots emerge, it is clear we are going to need another emergency appropriations bill to address this epidemic, and, frankly, we need it now.

At times like this, the country needs real leadership and vision. We need to get out in front of this crisis, not make all kinds of response after the fact. We know our leadership is not coming from the White House. The President has made very clear in his statements that he believes opening the economy and fighting the virus are competing actions. He gives the American people a false choice.

I believe that only if we effectively fight the virus are we then able to open the economy, whether in my State or any other State. Now, 6 weeks ago, the House of Representatives passed the Heroes Act. It is a strong proposal. It provides assistance to struggling families. It supports State and local governments. It battles the virus by sponsoring a responsible testing program. It recognizes the sacrifices being made by grocery store clerks, first responders, nurses, doctors, truckers, and more. It makes critical changes to programs such as SNAP, which supports those among us who are struggling the most.

Let's talk about what we have done. The first week or the second week or the third week or the fourth week or the fifth week or the sixth week since the House passed that bill, what has the Senate done? Nothing. Despite numerous calls from myself and Democratic leadership in the Senate, weeks have gone by and the White House and the Republican majority refuse to move forward on a bill, or even start negotiations.

In fact, the majority leader has publicly stated that he and the White House want to take "a pause" before considering any further emergency legislation related to COVID-19. The White House alternates between silence on the issue and sending contradictory messages of what it thinks needs to be done. While we wait, cases continue to climb; the death toll mounts; and people continue to struggle. You cannot tell the people who have COVID to pause and it will go away.

You cannot tell the doctors and nurses who are working around-the-clock and to the point of exhaustion to just pause. That does not work. The fact is, they are dealing with this every single day and night, 7 days a week. They would love to have a pause, but the reality is such that they cannot.

To those who say it is premature to act on another bill—well, let's look at what we already know. At the end of

July, the Federal pandemic unemployment compensation program that Congress included in the CARES Act expires. That is next month. Next month starts tomorrow. This program provides an additional \$600 per week in unemployment benefits to more than 28 million Americans. In many cases, the money is the difference between paying the rent and getting evicted. The money keeps the electricity on and food on the table. It feeds the children. At the same time, many State-initiated eviction moratoriums expire next month, which begins in just a few hours, as does the eviction moratorium for people in federally assisted housing included in the CARES Act. It is a one-two punch with the end of Federal benefits and the end of eviction protections, which will potentially displace a record number of Americans into homelessness. As eviction proceedings mount and Americans find they have no way to pay for alternative housing, the homeless shelters will almost certainly swell. But the shelters themselves are already over capacity and ill-equipped to handle an influx. We must act.

What about our struggling small businesses? The small businesses in my State of Vermont are the backbone of our economy. What about them? As of today, the Small Business Administration can no longer approve loans for the popular Paycheck Protection Program.

Parents are worried about their children. They struggle to find safe childcare. They wonder, Are schools going to open in the fall or not? And when they open, many schools will be using some form of online instruction. Over 16 million children in this country do not have internet service at home, and 12 million children do not have a home computer or laptop to use. This is the wealthiest nation in the world. We need to close this gap by providing reliable internet and broadband service to the millions of households in this country who do not have it. All kids deserve a good education, not just those from families who can afford it. Coming from a rural State, this is something I am particularly concerned about. We can't wait until the fall to figure this out; it will be too late.

I know that every Senator here has rural areas in his or her State, and in a lot of those areas there is no internet service.

We also know we need to protect our elections. Due to the pandemic, voters are using common sense, and they are choosing to vote by mail in record numbers, something we have already done in Vermont, but many States aren't prepared to meet this demand. They look at us. Every one of us will say, yes, of course we want to protect voters; of course, we want to protect voters; of course, every vote counts; of course, it is the American way to vote; of course, we want people to vote. Ha, ha, and ha. Congress has provided only a fraction of the funding needed by

States to prepare for the general election. Voters don't have to choose between exercising their constitutional right of voting or getting very ill.

Now, we know States cannot cover election costs on their own. They are cash-strapped already from responding to the coronavirus pandemic. The Wall Street Journal has estimated that State and local governments have already furloughed or eliminated 1.5 million jobs since the pandemic began. That might look like just a statistic to some, but these are teachers; these are firefighters; and these are healthcare workers. Congress, for the sake of this country, needs to enact another tranche of funding for State and local governments. We have to help them deal with lost revenue or our economy is not going to recover. It will never recover.

As revenues fall and costs to address COVID increase, Native American Tribes have also been forced to furlough workers, curtail healthcare services, and in some cases close down clinics entirely.

There are numerous other examples of urgent needs, too many to list. Due to declining revenues and incoming fees, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services—USCIS—may be forced to cut back drastically on services and furlough at least 13,000 employees, including up to 1,700 in Vermont, by August 2. That is 4 short weeks from now. The notice to these employees went out this week, leaving these dedicated employees and their families in limbo wondering if they will have a job in August and wondering why Congress will not act to prevent it.

COVID has caused a 3-month delay in field operations for the Census, and the Department of Commerce needs additional money to ensure we get an accurate count. Our federal prisons, a hotspot for COVID, have already depleted the money we provided to them in CARES and need more if they are to prevent further outbreaks. Even the Senate has depleted the funding Congress provided in CARES to conduct deep cleaning of the Capitol and Senate and House buildings and to provide important personal protective equipment for Senators and staff.

It is also imperative for America to step up and address the pandemic abroad. We are part of the world. The COVID-related needs around the world are spiking. We cannot defeat the virus right here at home if we do not act now to assist other countries in the global fight against this pandemic as we have in the past. Senate Republicans and President Trump must demonstrate leadership. You are not going to stop this health crisis by tweets; you are going to stop it by real action.

Now, in a few short days, the Senate is going to recess for 2 weeks. If we do nothing else before the Senate goes out of session, we should do what all the experts agree is needed if we are going to defeat this virus: Create a comprehensive testing and contact tracing

program and provide the resources needed to implement it for all 50 of our States. This is how other countries have succeeded in flattening the curve and containing the spread.

Yet, in a shocking abdication of leadership, the President has thrown up his hands. He has walked away from this issue. He even said at a recent campaign rally that we should be doing less testing, not more. That is not leadership; that is politics. That is not keeping Americans safe. I want all Americans to be safe. I do not care whether they are Republicans, Democrats, or Independents. I want all Americans to be safe.

His political Press Secretary tried to say he was kidding, but he said he was not. The Federal Government recently announced it shut down numerous federally funded testing sites across the country, including seven in Texas where cases are rising. It is astonishing.

I have been in the Senate with Republican and Democratic Presidents alike, from the time of President Ford. All of these Presidents, in both parties, were willing to show leadership in serious matters, but if this President cannot or will not show leadership, then the Congress must step in and do it.

I will tell you what I learned when I came here. I never expected to become the dean of the Senate, but I think about it often. I was told by both Republican and Democratic leaders at that time that the Senate can and should be the conscience of the Nation. I have seen Republicans and Democrats come together and exercise that conscience at times when we so need it. Where is that now? Nobody owns a seat in the U.S. Senate, but we are given 6-year terms in which we should be able to think of doing the right thing and not just worry about the next tweet or the next newsbreak or what is said 5 minutes from now. We have 6-year terms so that we can sit back and do what is right. Let us be the conscience of the Nation. I have always been proud of this body when I have seen Republicans and Democrats come together and do that.

The Heroes Act passed 6 weeks ago in the House. It created the COVID-19 National Testing and Contact Tracing Initiative. It requires the Department of Health and Human Services, in coordination with State and local governments, to develop a comprehensive testing, contact tracing, surveillance, and monitoring system. It provides \$75 billion to implement it. If we want to save lives, if we want to reopen the country, and if we want to get our economy going again, we ought to at least pass this initiative. I want my family to be safe. I want my wife and my children to be safe and their children and their spouses to be safe. I want all Vermonters and everybody in all 50 of our States to be safe, and we need testing.

I am soon going to ask unanimous consent on a particular item, and I un-

derstand that Senator ALEXANDER is going to come to the floor to object, so I will withhold making that request.

There are only 100 of us. We represent over 320 million Americans, across the political spectrum. They are all races and all economic backgrounds. They are all ages. But they have 100 people who can speak for them and speak for the conscience of this Nation.

I am proud to be a U.S. Senator, but I am not proud when we don't stand up and act as the conscience of the Nation. What is the use of being one of the 100 people who represent this great country, who represent and know and hold the history of this country, who have helped shape the history of this country through treaties, through constitutional amendments, and through debates on everything? What does it do to be a Member of the 100 in this body if we cannot reflect the conscience of the Nation?

Now, as Senator ALEXANDER is not yet here, I am going to suggest the absence of a quorum, but I want to ask unanimous consent that I be the person next recognized to call off that quorum call.

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

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

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

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, as I noted before, I was withholding a unanimous consent request until the very distinguished senior Senator was here.

So I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 140, H.R. 2740; that the Leahy substitute amendment that would provide funding for COVID testing and tracing and is at the desk be considered and agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I am glad to see my distinguished friend from Vermont of many years, and what I would like to say to him is that we, all together, appropriated a record amount of \$3 trillion—another \$3 trillion in credit—most of which, much of which has not even been spent yet, and some of which hasn't been distributed to States yet. We are in the midst of reviewing the spending of that money. I know our own committee has had five hearings this month on COVID

and its consequences, and I think the wiser course with the taxpayers' money is to wait until the \$3 trillion we have appropriated has been distributed to States, has been spent, and is carefully reviewed. In the meantime, we will work very closely with our friends on the other side to determine what else needs to be done during the month of July. So I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). The Senator from Vermont.

S. 4049

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, in this unprecedented moment in American history, I think there is a crying out all across this country for us to rethink who we are as a nation and what our national priorities are.

Whether it is fighting against systemic racism and police brutality, whether it is the need to combat climate change and transform our energy system away from fossil fuel, whether it is the absurdity of being the only major country on Earth not to guarantee healthcare to all people as a human right, or whether it is the grotesque level of income and wealth inequality, where three people today own more wealth than the bottom half of our Nation, all across this country people are crying out for change—real change.

When we talk about the need for real change, it is beyond comprehension the degree to which Congress continues to ignore our bloated \$740 billion defense budget. We talk about everything. Democrats and Republicans disagree on almost everything, but when it comes to this huge budget, which has gone up by over \$100 billion since Trump has been President, there is, unfortunately, a broad consensus, and that is wrong.

Year after year, Democrats and Republicans come together with minimal debate to support an exploding Pentagon budget, which is now higher than that of the next 11 nations combined and represents some 53 percent of our discretionary spending. We are spending more on the military than the next 11 nations combined. That is Russia, China, UK, France, and you name it. That is more than all of them combined, and we are spending on the military budget over half of our discretionary spending.

Incredibly—and I know we don't talk about this too much—after adjusting for inflation, we are now spending more on the military than we did during the height of the Cold War, when we were in opposition to the Soviet Union, a major superpower, or during the wars in Vietnam and Korea. After adjusting for inflation, we are spending more today than we did during the time of the Vietnam war.

This extraordinary level of military spending comes at a time when the Department of Defense is the only agency

of our Federal Government that has not been able to pass an independent audit. It comes at a time when defense contractors are making enormous profits while paying their CEOs exorbitant compensation packages and when the so-called War on Terror will end up costing us some \$6 trillion. This is an agency that has not passed an independent audit.

I believe this is a moment in history when it would be a very good idea for the American people and my colleagues here in the Senate to remember the very profound statement made by Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower back in 1953. I think all of us remember that Eisenhower was a four-star general who led the Allied forces to victory in Europe. He knew a little bit about the military.

Eisenhower said:

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children.

What Eisenhower said 67 years ago was true then. It is true now. If the horrific pandemic we are now experiencing has taught us anything, it is that “national security” means a lot more than building bombs, missiles, jet fighters, tanks, submarines, nuclear warheads, and other weapons of mass destruction.

“National security” also means doing everything that we can to make sure that every man, woman, and child in this country lives with dignity and security, and that includes many people and many communities around this country that have been abandoned by our government decade after decade.

Without a moment’s hesitation, we spend billions and billions on the military, while we come to work and step over people who are sleeping out on the streets and move away from communities where children are getting totally inadequate educations and where teachers are underpaid.

I believe that the time is long overdue to begin the transformation of our national priorities, and I cannot think of a better way to do that than by cutting military spending.

I have, for this bill, filed three separate amendments, and I would like to discuss them briefly.

The first amendment would reduce the military budget by 10 percent and use the \$74 billion in savings to invest in distressed communities around the country that have been ravaged by extreme poverty, mass incarceration, deindustrialization, and decades of neglect. We are proposing to transfer money from the military into distressed communities all over this country where people are suffering, where people are hurting, where people are unemployed, where people don’t have any healthcare, where infrastructure is crumbling, where people need help.

This amendment is being cosponsored by the Senators from Massachusetts—Senator MARKEY and Senator WARREN. Importantly—and I hope my colleagues hear this—this amendment has the support of more than 60 organizations throughout this country, representing millions of workers, environmentalists, and religious leaders, including Public Citizen, Union of Concerned Scientists, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Greenpeace, and the United Methodist Church.

At a time when more Americans have died from the coronavirus than were killed in World War I, when over 30 million people have lost their jobs in recent months, when tens of millions of Americans are in danger of being evicted from their homes, when education in America, from childcare to graduate school, is in desperate need of reform, when over half a million Americans are homeless, when close to 100 million people are either uninsured or underinsured, now is the time to invest in our people, in jobs, in education, in housing, and in healthcare—not in more nuclear weapons, not in more tanks, not in more guns.

Under this amendment, distressed cities and towns in every State in this country would be able to use these funds to create jobs by building affordable housing, building new schools, childcare facilities, community health centers, public hospitals, libraries, sustainable energy projects, and clean drinking water facilities.

These communities would also receive Federal funding to hire more public schoolteachers, provide nutritious meals to children and parents, and offer free tuition at public colleges, universities, or trade schools.

This is a pivotal moment in American history, and it is time to respond to those crises that we are facing by transforming our national priorities.

Do we really want to spend more—billions more—on endless wars in the Middle East, or do we want to provide decent jobs to millions of Americans who are now unemployed? Do we want to spend more money on nuclear weapons, or do we want to invest in a childcare system that is dysfunctional, in an education system where community after community lacks the funds to provide decent, quality education for their kids? Do we want to invest in affordable housing when half a million Americans are homeless and 18 million families in America are spending half of their incomes on housing?

Those are the choices that we face, and I think the American people are clear that the time is now to invest in our people, not in more weapons systems.

When we analyze the Defense Department budget, it is very interesting to note that Congress has appropriated so much money for the Defense Department that the Pentagon literally does not know what to do with it. According to the GAO, between 2013 and 2018, the Pentagon returned more than \$80 billion in funding back to the Treasury.

People sleep out on the streets, children go hungry, schools are crumbling, people have no health insurance, but we have given the Department of Defense so much money that they are actually returning some of it back to the government.

In my view, the time is long overdue for us to take a hard look not only at the size of the Pentagon budget but at the enormous amount of waste, cost overruns, fraud, and the financial mismanagement that has plagued the Department of Defense for decades.

Let us be clear. About half of the Pentagon’s budget—and people, I think, don’t know this—goes directly into the hands of private contractors, not the troops. Over the past two decades, virtually every major defense contractor in the United States has paid millions and millions of dollars in fines and settlements for misconduct and fraud, all while making huge profits on those government contracts. This is at a time when we are not very vigorous in terms of our oversight.

Despite that, since 1995, Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and United Technologies have paid over \$3 billion in fines or related settlements for fraud or misconduct—\$3 billion. That is what they have been caught doing. That is what they have been found guilty of or agreed to in a settlement. God knows what else is going on that we still don’t know about.

Yet those same three companies received around \$1 trillion in defense contracts over the past two decades alone.

Further, I find it interesting that the very same defense contractors that have been found guilty or reached settlements for fraud are also paying their CEOs excessive compensation packages.

Last year, the CEOs of Lockheed Martin and Northrup Grumman both made around \$20 million in total compensation, while around 90 percent of the companies’ revenue came from defense contracts. In other words, these companies—and I am talking about Lockheed Martin and Northrup Grumman—for all intents and purposes, are governmental agencies. Over 90 percent of their revenue comes from the taxpayers. Yet the CEOs of those companies made over 100 times more than the Secretary of Defense. It is not too surprising, therefore, that we have a revolving door where our military people end up on the boards of directors of these major defense companies.

Moreover, as the GAO has told us, there are massive cost overruns in the Defense Department’s acquisition budget that we have to address. According to GAO, the Pentagon’s \$1.8 trillion acquisition portfolio currently suffers from more than \$628 billion in cost overruns, with much of the cost growth taking place after production. In other words, they quote a price, and then they come back after they get the contract and say: Oh, we made a slight mistake; you are going to have pay

twice as much or 50 percent more, whatever it might be, for the weapons system you wanted.

GAO tells us that “many DoD programs fall short of cost, schedule, and performance expectations, meaning DoD pays more than anticipated, can buy less than expected, and, in some cases, delivers less capability to the warfighter.”

A major reason why there is so much waste, fraud, and abuse at the Pentagon is the fact that the Department of Defense remains the only Federal agency that hasn't been able to pass an independent audit. That is why I have filed an amendment with Senators GRASSLEY, WYDEN, and LEE that would require the Defense Department to pass a clean audit no later than fiscal year 2025.

When you have an agency that spends some \$700 billion, I don't think it is too much to ask that we have an independent audit of the Department of Defense.

Interestingly enough, many of us will recall what then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld—not one of my favorite public officials—told the American people on the day before 9/11 about the serious financial mismanagement at the DOD. Here is what Donald Rumsfeld said. Needless to say, the following day was 9/11. That was the terrorist attack against the United States, so what Rumsfeld said the day before that never got a whole lot of attention. But this is what a conservative Republican Secretary of Defense said:

Our financial systems are decades old. According to some estimates, we cannot track \$2.3 trillion in transactions. We cannot share information from floor to floor in this building—

That is the Pentagon.

because it's stored on dozens of technological systems that are inaccessible or incompatible.

And yet, nearly 20 years after Donald Rumsfeld's statement, the Defense Department has still not passed a clean audit, despite the fact that the Pentagon controls assets in excess of \$2.2 trillion or, roughly, 70 percent of what the entire Federal Government owns.

The Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan concluded in 2011 that \$31 billion to \$60 billion spent in Iraq and Afghanistan had been lost to fraud and waste.

Separately, in 2015, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction reported that the Pentagon could not account for \$45 billion in funding for reconstruction projects. More recently, an audit conducted by Ernst & Young for the Defense Logistics Agency found that it could not properly account for some \$800 million in construction projects.

It is time to hold the Defense Department to the same level of accountability as the rest of the government. That is not a radical idea. And support for this concept is bipartisan. That is why I am delighted that this amendment is supported by Senators GRASS-

LEY and LEE, as well as Senator WYDEN, and we hope it will be supported by a strong majority of the Members of the body.

I believe in a strong military, but we cannot continue to give more money to the Pentagon than it needs when millions of children in our country are food insecure—there are kids all over this country, in every State in this country, who are hungry—and when we have 140 million people who cannot afford the basic necessities of life without going into debt.

Further, let us be very clear, when we are talking about the need to protect the American people, we are talking about the need to defeat our most immediate adversary right now, an adversary that has taken in recent months over 120,000 American lives, and that, of course, is the coronavirus.

When we talk about defense, when we talk about protecting the American people, we must get our priorities right and do everything we can to protect the American people from the coronavirus. I don't think nuclear weapons are going to do it. I don't think tanks are going to do it. I don't think F-35s are going to do it. But we need to do everything we can to protect the lives and the health of the American people in terms of the coronavirus.

What virtually every scientist who has studied this issue will tell us—and they just told me that this morning as a member of the HELP Committee—is that the most effective way to prevent the transmission of this deadly virus and to stop unnecessary deaths from COVID-19 is for everybody in this country to wear a mask. It is not rocket science, not very complicated, but if you wear a mask when you are in contact with other people, the likelihood that you will spread the virus or get the virus is significantly reduced.

That is why I have filed an amendment which requires the Trump administration to use the Defense Production Act to manufacture the hundreds and hundreds of millions of high-quality masks that this country needs and to deliver them to every household in America.

This is not a radical idea. It is an idea that is being implemented all across the world, in countries like South Korea, France, Turkey, Austria, and many other countries; that is, they are distributing high-quality face masks to all of their people for free or at virtually no cost. That is what I believe we have to do.

There was a study that just came out from the University of Washington very recently, which suggested that if 95 percent of the American people wore face masks when they interact with others, we could save some 30,000 lives and hundreds of billions of dollars.

I think this is a commonsense amendment. It is beyond my comprehension how in the wealthiest nation in the world, with the strongest economy, we have not been able to

produce the personal protective equipment—the masks, gowns, gloves—that our doctors and nurses and medical personnel need. We have to do that, but we also have to produce the masks that the American people need.

As everyone knows, over the past 3 months, the coronavirus has infected more than 2.5 million Americans and caused nearly 130,000 deaths. More Americans have died from the coronavirus than were killed fighting in the wars in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq combined.

Sadly, there is new evidence that this pandemic is far from over and may kill many tens of thousands more. In the past few days, new COVID-19 cases in the United States have increased dramatically—jumping to their highest level in 2 months and returning to where they were at the peak of the outbreak.

If we take bold action now, we could prevent tens of thousands of Americans from dying. That is exactly what we have to do. Unfortunately, the Trump administration continues to endanger millions of Americans by ignoring the most basic recommendations of medical professionals and recklessly downplaying the most effective tool we have to contain the pandemic; that is, simply wearing a mask.

This amendment is nothing more than listening to science and saving lives. Again, this morning, I participated in a hearing with Dr. Fauci and many others from the Trump administration. They were very clear: Masks work. Social distancing works. And we should listen to the scientists.

We are, as I mentioned earlier, at a pivotal moment in American history. We as elected officials have to respond in a transformational way. We have to stand up for people. We have to rethink the way we have done things in the past. The amendments I have offered begin the process of changing American priorities. I hope all three of those amendments will pass.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Kentucky.

STOPPING IMPROPER PAYMENTS TO DECEASED PEOPLE ACT

Mr. PAUL. Madam President, I think it is a terrible thing that the government pays checks to dead people. The problem is that Social Security is not sharing that information with Treasury. I have a bill to do that and will ask unanimous consent for it to be joined with Senator CARPER's bill and Senator KENNEDY's bill.