

debt. Republicans agree with that too. But, again, both Democrat bills we have seen would saddle Americans with hundreds of billions of dollars of additional debt, making the situation even worse. Just yesterday, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve warned that unless we get serious about spending and debt, we are endangering not only our recovery from the current recession but also endangering future economic growth. That is why he said any health care reform must get control of costs. Otherwise, it could bankrupt both our government and eventually our entire economy.

So the last thing we need is a flawed health care bill that adds to the national debt and increases long-term health care costs. Instead of trying to rush through proposals that don't work, we need to take the time to do it right and make the reforms the American people are asking for—reforms that won't put us on the road to bankruptcy.

DEBT AND SECURITY

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, earlier this year I came to the Senate floor and outlined a number of foreign policy principles that have served our Nation well in the past and which I believe would serve us well in the future. In doing so, it was my hope that these principles would serve as the basis of steady bipartisan cooperation between the Senate and the new administration. These principles transcend party; they are time-tested; and they can be summed up in a single sentence: the cornerstone of U.S. National security policy lies in maintaining a strong and ready defense and in keeping our alliances strong.

As the Senate continues to debate the Defense authorization bill, I would like to take the opportunity to reiterate the importance of this fundamental principle of action and to highlight something that seriously endangers our ability to uphold it. I am referring to our Nation's staggering National debt.

The national debt threatens our way of life; it threatens the value of our national currency; and it threatens our ability to pay for entitlements that millions of Americans depend on. Yet, just as importantly, the national debt also endangers our position in the world, the long term capabilities of our military, and the long-term viability of the all-volunteer force that is currently serving us so ably and courageously in two very challenging wars. And that is why it is increasingly urgent that we focus on this growing threat and do something about it.

Let us put the current situation in context. The story of the American military over the past century reflects what historians have described as a feast or famine approach to defense. The pattern goes back at least as far as our entry into World War I and extends through our involvement in World War

II, the Korean war, and Vietnam. In every case, the U.S. military underwent an abrupt expansion of manpower and armaments only to be followed by calls for a drawdown in the size of our force and a reduction in defense spending. This pattern, though not always well-advised, may have been understandable in some cases in the past. But the nature of our current threats and position in the world makes it indefensible today.

With developments in weapons technology, America no longer has the luxury of isolation. And September 11 showed us that we can no longer leave ungoverned territories unwatched. The demands on today's military are constant. We are either on offense, or we are at risk. Feast or famine and isolationism no longer work.

And this is why our ever-growing national debt is so perilous—because even those who believe as I do that a strong and ready defense is the cornerstone of our security will not be able to guarantee it if current fiscal trends persist. Put simply: if we do nothing to pay down this debt and address the needs of Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, then America risks finding itself so weakened financially that some day in the not-too-distant future we just will not have the resources we need to equip and maintain our forces in the places they are needed most.

Consider the fact that the Federal Government is now spending an average of \$100 million a day just to pay the interest on a single piece of legislation, the \$1 trillion stimulus bill that Congress passed earlier this year. Or that it is estimated we will pay \$347 billion in interest on just this one bill over the next 10 years. At current rates of spending, that is enough to provide health care for our Nation's veterans for more than 5 years. It is enough to cover the salaries and benefits of all our active-duty and reserve forces for 2½ years. Or it is nearly \$350 billion we could put back into the pockets of the American people at a time when they could really use it.

And that is just one piece of legislation. Now imagine what it costs to finance our entire national debt. By the end of the decade, it is estimated that under the President's budget we will spend nearly \$800 billion a year just to cover the interest on the national credit card—not reducing what we owe, but just keeping the creditors from knocking on the door. Here is the frightening part of where we are: by 2017, the amount of money we are expected to spend on interest alone will exceed the amount of money we are expected to spend that year on all of defense.

The implications of this for our national security are clear. More and more, our ability to deploy forces with state-of-the-art weaponry is in competition with our financial obligation to the countries that hold our debt, and we get closer to the day when countries that hold large amounts of U.S. debt, such as China and Saudi Arabia, could

directly influence the foreign policy decisions of a future President.

We also get closer to the day when our allies and partners will rethink the value of a relationship with the United States.

Sooner or later, we will have to face the fact that we are on a path that leads to some very unpleasant choices. Either we default on our debts, which we will not do, print more money to cover those debts and tempt a massive inflationary spiral, or be forced to withdraw from our security commitments, just as Great Britain did at the end of the Second World War.

America's all-volunteer force costs a lot of money to maintain. Indeed, one of the major reasons we have been able to avoid conscription in this country since the Vietnam war has been our ability to maintain recruiting and retention policies through an attractive retirement system, recruiting bonuses, incentive pay and sensible housing allowances. In current dollars, military personnel costs have increased from \$69 billion to \$131 billion a year over the past decade.

But these necessary expenses will soon be crowded out by the growing cost of long-term entitlements and the growing principal and higher and higher interest payments on our debt. And spending increases we now regard as necessary may no longer be possible. The choice is clear: in order to provide for the common defense, we must reform entitlement programs that are consuming a larger and larger share of our budget and reduce the national debt.

Cutting \$100 million here or there in discretionary costs will not do the trick. In 1965, discretionary spending accounted for 62 percent of the budget. Today, it accounts for just 38 percent. As discretionary spending has become a smaller and smaller part of the pie, mandatory spending on entitlements and debt has become a bigger and bigger part of the pie. In 1965, mandatory spending and interest accounted for 38 percent of the budget. Today, they account for 62 percent or nearly two-thirds of the entire budget.

This means that in order to face our problem head on, we will have to address the problem of entitlement spending. And the only serious option on the table is the Conrad-Gregg proposal which would provide a clear pathway for fixing these long-term challenges by forcing us to get debt and spending under control.

I have had a number of good conversations about this proposal with the President. Based on those conversations, I am hopeful it will be given serious attention. For the safety and security of our Nation, the Conrad-Gregg proposal deserves broad bipartisan support.

Every Secretary of Defense must confront the tension between America's near-term readiness and future investment. But some future Defense Secretary will no longer be able to make

either choice if we do nothing to address the problem of long-term debt. Regardless of the global threats we face, we will be forced to field a smaller and less capable force. The money will not be there.

When most Americans think about threats to our security, they come up with a standard list. But few people include our growing national debt. They should—because it is real and it is serious.

Based on current trends, it is quite possible to imagine some future Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff walking into the Oval Office one day and informing the Commander in Chief that he has no choice: he can either protect the sealanes in the Persian Gulf or he can protect the sealanes in the Sea of Japan, but he cannot do both. On that day the United States of America will no longer be the guarantor of the international trading system, sea lines of communication, the security of our allies, or even our own independence.

All of this should matter to Members of the Senate. Americans trust our Nation's intelligence and uniformed personnel to protect them from distant threats. But it is incumbent upon the men and women of this body—those of us who control the purse strings—to make sure the Nation's resources are managed in a way that enables these forces to do their work. The men and women of the Senate must look beyond the narrow demands of a single political term in office or the next election to the long-term security of our Nation and, indeed, the world. No one else can protect the American people from the diminishment of power and capability that come with our dangerous and ever-increasing national debt.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS BRIAN L. GORHAM

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, with sadness I rise today to speak about a fallen warrior from my home State of Kentucky. On December 31, 2007, PFC Brian L. Gorham succumbed to injuries sustained earlier that month when an explosive device struck his vehicle while on patrol in Afghanistan.

Private First Class Gorham hailed from Woodburn, KY. He was 21 years old and was able to spend the last days of his life not halfway around the world but back in America—in a hospital in Fort Sam Houston, TX, to be precise—surrounded by his loving family.

For his bravery in uniform, Private First Class Gorham received several medals, awards, and decorations, including the Army Good Conduct Medal, the Purple Heart, and the Bronze Star Medal.

At Brian's funeral service in Franklin, KY, hundreds of people came to offer their sympathies to his family and friends. Brian's father, Toney Gorham, said:

It's hard to believe that so many people, a lot of them I don't know, walked up to me,

shook my hand or patted me on the back, and told me, "We're proud that your son fought for us and sacrificed for us."

Maybe it is not so surprising if you know the dedication Brian put into everything he did from a very early age. Jack Wright, Brian's Sunday school teacher, remembers when Brian was a young middle school student who would participate in the two-hand touch football games that were played after Bible study services on Wednesday nights.

"Brian was never the biggest or fastest," Jack says, "But no one put more effort into the game and no one enjoyed playing any better than Brian."

That enthusiasm carried over when Brian joined the football team at Drakes Creek Middle School. Brian also liked basketball and baseball and could often find a pickup game with the neighborhood kids many nights after school.

In high school, Brian joined the Junior ROTC Program, and just like in those football games, he put his all into becoming the best. He succeeded by being in the first group to complete his ROTC Program's Leadership Academy.

That achievement was symbolized, on Brian's dress uniform, by a silver band around his right shoulder. Jack Wright remembers Brian would proudly wear his ROTC uniform to services at Woodburn Baptist Church for many years.

Brian still found time for fun, of course. He loved to fish, explore the caves near his house, and float down the creek in his friend's boat. One time Brian and some of his friends were racing go-carts and decided to hold a contest to see who could drive through a huge mud puddle and come out the muddiest.

This is one contest Brian's parents are probably glad he did not win. Another boy was so muddy that when his mom came to pick him up, she made him ride home in the trunk rather than on the seat.

Brian was close to his sister Brandie and his brother Henry. When they were kids, Brandie made Brian play dolls with her, although the easy-going Brian did not seem to mind. Henry was his big brother's little shadow. The two would watch wrestling together and act out the wrestling moves.

Henry remembers during one of his football games at school, both his parents were unable to attend. Henry was not doing so well until he heard his big brother Brian cheering him on from the sidelines. That gave him the extra confidence he needed.

Brian's mother Shirley also remembers a time when she and Toney went away for the weekend, and Brian called her to say he was cooking dinner for some friends and not to worry, they were sharing the cost. He said he would have food ready for them, too, when they got back.

So Shirley and Toney came home to find Brian had barbecued, and they sat

down to a wonderful meal. It was not until the next day when Shirley realized Brian had emptied out the freezer, and there was nothing left in the house to cook.

Brian graduated from Greenwood High School in 2003, and after serving as commander of his school's Junior ROTC Program, he enlisted in the Army. He was assigned to Company D, 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, stationed in Vicenza, Italy.

Brian's family remembers how Brian loved what he was doing and took pride in his work. His mother Shirley was proud of her son's humanitarian work in uniform. In Afghanistan he distributed seeds to the Afghan farmers and helped provide security for the engineers to build roads and rebuild the country.

Madam President, we must keep Brian's family and friends in our thoughts as I recount his story for the Senate today. We are thinking of his mother and father, Shirley and Toney Gorham; his sister Brandie Dixon, and her husband Lawrence; his brother Henry; his maternal grandparents, Roger and Esther Bunch; his paternal grandmother, Neil Tabor; his aunt, Regina Peterson; and many other beloved family members and friends.

Madam President, Brian had a 1976 Chevy pickup that was passed down through the family. He called it Old Blue. He would often have a hard time starting it and had to wake up his sister to start it for him on some days.

When Brian was in the hospital in Texas, he told his father that he wanted the two of them to work on restoring Old Blue together. Brian did not get to finish that task. But Toney has the pickup in his garage now, and he promises to fulfill his son's wish.

Our country must also fulfill a promise to PFC Brian L. Gorham and forever honor his service. It is the least we can do after his tremendous sacrifice.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2010

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1390, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1390) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2010 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Kyl amendment No. 1760, to pursue United States objectives in bilateral arms control with the Russian Federation.