Mrs. TAUSCHER. Mr. Chairman, I stand in significant opposition to this amendment. The committee's bill provides $9.3 billion for missile defense, fully funding the administration's request. The budget supports our efforts to build a robust defense against threats from nations such as North Korea, and increases funding for proven missile defense systems like The Aegis BMD and the Terminal High Altitude Aerial Defense, called THAAD, by $900 million over the budget level for last year.

This amendment would result in wasteful, unnecessary spending. As Secretary Gates told our committee, the security of the American people and the efficacy of the missile defense system are not enhanced by continuing to put money into programs that in terms of their operational concept are fatally flawed or research programs that are essentially sinkholes for taxpayer dollars.

With all due respect, Mr. Chairman, I find myself here trying to rescue the missile defense program from its strongest advocates, because all they want to do is spend money. We have spent $120 billion over the last 10 years on missile defense. I am a strong supporter of missile defense, but unless you have oversight and unless you have an operationally effective system to protect against the existing threats and deploy those systems to protect our forward-deployed troops, the American people and our allies, it is just spending money after money after money.

The advocates of missile defense that just want to spend money don't seem to want to deal with the fact that in this bill we authorize $1 billion to test, sustain and improve the existing system, because what we found out recently is that the system that is deployed has got some problems. It has got problems with operation and maintenance. But enough of that money during the previous administration wasn't spent to make sure that the system was maintained.

Democrats are strong on missile defense. We want to make sure we have a proven system, one that is going to not only work but one that is also going to deter, and the best way to do that is to have a system that is operationally effective and tested, one that is maintained properly, and one that is fielded to array against and deter and defeat the threats.

I think that on our side, we believe that we have done that, both during the time of the Bush administration and certainly now in full support of the President's budget request.

Mr. Chairman, I am happy to reserve my time.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Chairman, I would just respond by suggesting that to say $1.2 billion in missile defense spending would be wasteful, in the light of the fact that when three airplanes hit this country, it cost us $2 trillion in our economy and nearly $100 billion to clean it up. I think that is shortsighted.

With that, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished ranking member of the committee, the gentleman from California, Mr. McKeon.

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

In the last 2 months, North Korea has followed through on its provocative threat to conduct a nuclear test and launch missiles. Today we hear that Pyongyang is vowing to enlarge its nuclear arsenal and has warned of a “fire shower of nuclear retaliation.” These are grave and serious threats.

However, at a time when Iran and North Korea have demonstrated the capability and intent to pursue long-range ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons programs, the defense bill endorsed reductions to capabilities that would provide a comprehensive missile defense system to protect the U.S. homeland, our forward-deployed troops and our allies.

This amendment is common sense. It is a sound measure that would reverse the administration’s $1.2 billion cut to missile defense. It would reallocate 35 percent reduction to the Nation’s Ground-based Midcourse Defense system, located in Alaska and California, which is signed to protect the U.S. homeland. It would restore investments in vital research and development like the airborne laser program, which is the cusp of demonstrating breakthrough technologies.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment. To do otherwise would be irresponsible.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished ranking member of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee, Mr. Turner.

Mr. TURNER. Mr. Chairman, I rise to speak in favor of the Franks amendment. I was very disappointed with the administration’s decision to cut $1.2 billion out of missile defense funding below the fiscal year 2009 funding. Make no mistake, this is a cut. We are going to spend $1.2 billion less than we spent in 2009.

We are going to do this while we have increasing threats, not decreasing threats, to the United States. And make no mistake, the Department of Defense has not provided one data point. They have not provided one study. They have not provided any information, no intelligence that indicates we have a reduced threat, all the while we know with this reduced threat, there is no justification for a reduction.

I am concerned with the top-line missile defense cut. I am deeply concerned about the specific cuts that include a 35 percent cut to the Ground-based Midcourse Defense system in Alaska and California, and the administration decision to decrease the planned number of field interceptors, which is our response to North Korea’s ICBMs, terminate construction of a missile field in Alaska that is partially complete, and curtail additional GMD development.

I support the Franks amendment. While we have an increased threat, we should not be decreasing our commitment to missile defense.

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. Andrews), a long-standing member of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee.

Mr. ANDREWS. The issue is not whether the country will have a missile defense; the issue is whether the country will have an effective missile defense.

Ninety-nine percent of the threat comes from regional missiles, so this budget increases by about 50 percent of the missile defense are not enhanced by continuing to put money into programs that in terms of their operational concept are fatally flawed, or research programs that are essentially sink holes for taxpayers’ dollars.

We would not invest in Civil War-era technology that doesn’t work to defend our country. We would invest in the 21st-century technology that does work, and that is what we are doing.

We should oppose this amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. The Committee will rise informally.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. Larsen of Washington) assumed the chair.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a bill and a concurrent resolution of the following title, in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 962. An act to authorize appropriations for fiscal years 2009 through 2013 to promote
an enhanced strategic partnership with Pakistan and its people, and for other purposes.

S. Con. Res. 29. Concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress that John Arthur "Jack" Johnson should receive a posthumous pardon for the racially motivated conviction in 1913 that diminished the athletic, social, and historic significance of Jack Johnson and unduly tarnished his reputation.

The message also announced that pursuant to Senate Resolution 203, 111th Congress, the Acting President pro tempore, upon the recommendation of the majority leader and the minority leader, appointed the following Senators as members of the committee to receive and report evidence in the impeachment of Judge Samuel B. Kent, Judge of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas.

The Senator from Missouri (Mrs. SHAHEEN) (Chairman).

The Senator from Minnesota (Ms. Klobuchar) (Chairman).

The Senator from New Hampshire (Mr. JOHANNS).

The Senator from South Carolina (Mr. Kennedy).

The Senator from New Mexico (Mr. Heinrich).

The Senator from California (Mr. Boxer).

The Senator from Texas (Mr. Baucus).

The Senator from Arizona (Mr. McCain).

The Senator from Washington (Mr. Locke).