

a young child's success later in life. Some of these kids and parents don't have other options without Head Start.

Without this budget agreement, there would have been an additional \$20 billion cut to our defense programs hitting next month. Those defense cuts are going to disproportionately hurt my home State of Hawaii. Without this budget agreement, 25,000 Federal civilian workers in Hawaii could be furloughed or laid off.

Hawaii can't afford that. I voted for this budget to prevent those cuts.

The bipartisan budget agreement finally provides relief from the sequester and a path forward to get our economy on the right track. Most importantly, the budget protects Social Security and Medicare benefits.

Although this budget is the right choice for many reasons, we know it is not perfect. I do believe we need to work together to improve parts of it.

I find it unacceptable and inexplicable that the House of Representatives left town for the holidays without extending long-term unemployment benefits, and I know we are working on making it a priority as soon as we return in January.

In addition, Senator SHAHEEN has introduced legislation—which I am proud to support and cosponsor—to protect military retirees from the cost-of-living pay adjustment. The cost-of-living pay adjustment won't take effect until January of 2015, which means that we have time to fix this issue, but we must fix this issue.

This legislation that I am cosponsoring with Senator SHAHEEN will fully pay for the change by closing a loophole that some companies are using to avoid paying U.S. taxes with offshore tax havens. This is a commonsense fix that I believe we can get bipartisan support for. We need a long-term budget, but not at the expense of our military retirees.

We can replace the money raised by closing this tax loophole that some companies are abusing. We have time to fix this issue, and we have to do so before 2015. But now is the time to move forward, to protect jobs, and to give our country some economic certainty.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

VA EXPIRING AUTHORITIES EXTENSION ACT

Mr. LEVIN. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of H.R. 1402, which was received from the House and is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1402) to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend certain expiring provisions of law, and further purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. LEVIN. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read three times and

passed and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

The bill (H.R. 1402) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

Mr. LEVIN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEVIN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LEVIN. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each and, further, that the time count postcloture.

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

Mr. LEVIN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I rise today to address the dire national security situation and the responsibility of this body to pass a national defense authorization bill this year.

Congress has passed this legislation for each of the last 51 years, always with broad bipartisan support. This year should be no different. Our service men and women are deployed around the globe in defense of our Nation. They put themselves in harm's way to further the American principles of freedom and democracy, yet we have failed to provide these men and women and our senior military leaders the fiscal certainty and legal authorities they need to complete their vital missions.

Instead, we have a Senate majority intent on fundamentally altering the way the Senate conducts business by pushing through bills without a full and open process. This is not the way the Senate was designed to function.

This year's National Defense Authorization Act was reported out of the Senate Armed Services Committee on June 20 of this year. Since that time it has been delayed time and again by the Senate majority leader as our Defense leaders struggle to implement our national security strategy. General Dempsey recently transmitted to congressional leadership an itemized list of 26 authorities that will expire at the end of this year or shortly thereafter.

We are not talking about legislating ancillary programs or nonessential functions, we are talking about military special pay and bonuses for deployed servicemembers, funds to transition security responsibilities to our Afghan partners, and critical counterinsurgency programs in the Middle East, as well as funding for our intelligence community.

While I support the underlying bill, I am deeply disappointed with the process that got us to this point and thus why I did not vote to invoke cloture. Frankly, I had several amendments I would like to have added to this bill addressing such issues as a technical correction giving Reservists and National Guardsmen proper credit toward retirement for time spent deployed, and an important land transfer of Camp Merrill in Georgia between the Army and the U.S. Forest Service.

I have seen many changes during my years in the Senate, but among those is a disturbing trend regarding the NDAA. We seem to be operating on the premise of fewer, faster, and later. By fewer, I mean fewer amendments. All Senators deserve the opportunity to amend this important piece of legislation. The 20-year average is 140 amendments per year. Last year we were only able to pass 106 amendments. This year we debated one.

As we have seen time and time again, the majority uses the amendment tree to shut down debate and move the bill quicker through the Senate. My colleagues and I have filed over 500 amendments to this year's NDAA. Through hard work and bipartisan support, the two Armed Services Committee staffs have striven to accommodate the concerns of the Senate. But even so, there are pressing issues that require full and deliberative debate in the Senate. These include military sexual assault, counterterrorism and detention policy, and sanctions against those regimes that would do America harm, including Iran.

By faster, I mean the bill spends less time on the Senate floor. The 20-year average is over 9 days, with a maximum of 19 days for the fiscal year 2008 bill. The 1 day we spent on this bill in November is insufficient time to debate the critical security issues confronting our Nation.

The Senate majority has gone to great lengths to keep the bill off the floor. When they could no longer avoid it, they have compressed the timeline for consideration or recommitted it to the Armed Services Committee. This is unprecedented and it is totally unacceptable.

By later, I mean a lack of urgency to take up the bill after committee action. Looking back over the last 40 years, the Senate has gone from passing the NDAA consistently before August to later and later in the year. Last year, it was December. This year we are running up against the end of the year.

I am deeply disappointed at the recent turn of events in the Senate.

Under the guise of streamlining the legislative process, the Senate majority has effectively blocked critical legislative priorities such as the National Defense Authorization Act. I urge my Senate colleagues on both sides of the aisle to work together to discharge the fundamental duties our constituents, servicemembers, and veterans demand of us. We should dispose of the fewer, faster, and later mentality and return Congress to regular order.

Leadership matters. No one knows this better than our men and women in uniform. The Constitution of the United States tasks us with providing for the common defense. I fear we have failed in our constitutional obligation, and this failure is a failure of leadership, plain and simple.

With that being said, I want to pay a particular compliment to Chairman LEVIN as well as to Ranking Member INHOFE for their leadership, which has not failed the country nor has it failed this body. They got together and produced a bill that came out of our committee in due course after a full and open debate on many critical issues, with the understanding we would have the opportunity on the floor of the Senate to file amendments, debate those amendments, and have up-or-down votes.

Chairman LEVIN has been more than accommodating throughout the process, before and after the time the bill came out of the Armed Services Committee. Likewise, Senator INHOFE has been more than accommodating in making sure Members on this side of the aisle had free and open access to the debate process. They have provided the kind of leadership we expect.

Unfortunately, the majority leader has made a decision to cram this down the throats of the Senate, and from a national security standpoint that is simply not the way this body is designed to work or should work.

I will support the passage of this bill, because I think the end product, amazingly enough, has turned out to be a pretty good product. Could it have been better? You bet. Could the process have been better? Without question. I just wish we had had the opportunity to debate the serious issues that are on the minds of a number of Members of the Senate when it comes to national security, and that we had had the opportunity to present amendments that would have made this strong bill even stronger and to provide our men and women in uniform and the leadership at the Pentagon with the tools they need to be sure we remain the world's strongest military power and that we are able to not only defend America and Americans but to provide for freedom and democracy around the world.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I wish to engage for perhaps the next 20 or so minutes with Senator CANTWELL, who is arriving shortly. I will begin with some remarks and ask unanimous consent for us to engage in a colloquy.

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I am here today to talk about the health care problem in the country, because I think the fixation of this body on the health care Web site has taken our eye off the fact we have a very significant and fundamental health care problem.

This graph represents how much we spend on health care as a country. It begins back here in 1960. I was 5 years old in 1960. So this is a lifetime: 50-some years, \$27.4 billion. That is what we spent on health care. Now here we are. This is up to 2011, and \$2.7 trillion is what we spend on health care. It is 100 times as much in 50 years. Granted, there are more Americans but not 100 times as many.

This has been an explosive cost growth curve. When we were trying to pass the health care bill, that is what we were looking at for costs. It is a big competitive problem for our country.

This is a really interesting graph. I wish every time anybody talked about health care they would take 1 minute and look at this graph. I will explain briefly what it is.

This column is the up access and measures life expectancy in years, country by country, 65 to 85, where countries fall in terms of their average life expectancy for their population, for their citizens. This along the bottom is the cost, the health spending per capita per person in that country. So if you measure it all out, what you see is a great raft of countries all through here: Japan, Great Britain, Netherlands, Switzerland, Norway, Italy, Greece. There is a whole large group of countries right here, and all of them have a life expectancy 80 or older and they all spend between \$6,000 and \$2,000 per person on their country's health care. Essentially the entire modernized, civilized world is in that zone, from here to here.

Guess where the United States of America is. Boom. Here. We are below them all in life expectancy. We are trailing the pack of modern industrialized nations in our life expectancy. We are competing with Chile and the Czech Republic. But Japan, Greece, Great Britain, France, Germany, Luxembourg, all manage with their health care systems to achieve longer lifespans for their people. And we are doing it at a cost of about \$8,500 per person per year.

To give a comparison, here are Switzerland and Norway. They are the

other two most expensive countries in the world per capita on health care spending, and they are at about \$5,700 per year. If we could bring our per capita health care spending in this country down to the most expensive countries in the world, if we could compete head to head with the most expensive countries in the world, we would save more than \$1 trillion a year.

This is an interesting graph because it shows basically all the modern industrialized nations here, and it shows us here as a way outlier. It is a big deal for us to be an outlier here, because it means we blow about \$1 trillion a year in wasteful and unnecessary health care which could be building infrastructure, solving problems, reducing the deficit, and could be doing other work. Instead, we spend it on a health care system which doesn't produce good health care results—at least not measured by life expectancy, which is a pretty good proxy.

There is a huge \$1 trillion a year cost to our society in being that bad of an outlier. The cost is also measured in lost lives and lost years of life, because we are averaging 77 years and these countries are averaging 82 years of life.

We have a real problem on our hands, and obsessing about a Web site is a complete distraction from getting after this problem—5 years off every human's life in this country and \$1 trillion a year. That is worth paying attention to.

The health care changes we brought are actually making a difference. Here are some interesting graphs. Each one is a projection done by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office of what health care costs are going to look like in the future, and what you see is a progression. They did this graph in August of 2010. This was where they projected health care spending would go when they projected in August of 2010 for this period, from 2014 onward to the next decade. A year later they went back and they projected again, and they projected actually costs would be lower. Then they came back in August of 2012 and they did another projection, and their projection showed that these anticipated costs went down again, every year, lower and lower.

Here is the big one. In May of this year, the Congressional Budget Office went back and redid its projections for Medicare and Medicaid spending from 2014 to 2023. Look how far below what they had projected 1 year ago, 2 years ago, and 3 years ago the current projection. That is a saving of about \$1.2 trillion in that decade.

That is a long way from \$1 trillion a year we could be saving if we just got back to where we were on this graph, if we got back from here to where Switzerland and Norway, the most expensive countries in the world, are. That is \$1 trillion over 1 year. This is \$1.2 trillion over 10 years, but it is still a big change and it is still moving in the right direction. So we shouldn't be too quick to condemn ObamaCare when