Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Mr. Speaker, my vote was not recorded on rollcall No. 224 on H.R. 2048—USA Freedom Act of 2015. I was present for the vote but not recorded due to a mechanical problem with my voting card. I intended to vote "aye."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I was not able to be present for the following rollcall votes on May 13, 2015 and would like the record to reflect that I would have voted as follows:

Rollcall No. 221: No.
Rollcall No. 222: Yes.
Rollcall No. 223: No.
Rollcall No. 224: Yes.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the question on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal, which the Chair will put de novo.

The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PERMISSION TO EXTEND DEBATE TIME ON H.R. 1191, PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ACT

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that debate under clause 1(c) of rule XV on a motion to suspend the rules relating to H.R. 1191 be extended to 1 hour.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2016

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on H.R. 1735.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 255 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 1735.

The Chair appoints the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. GRAVES) to preside over the Committee of the Whole.

□ 1750

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 1735) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2016 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes, with Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. THORNBERRY) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. SMITH) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 4 minutes.

Mr. Chairman, I am proud to bring to the floor H.R. 1735, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016. This measure was reported by the Armed Services Committee by a vote of 60 members voting for and two members voting against. Of the two members, there was one from each party.

This bill follows the bipartisan tradition of the committee working collaboratively with an integrated staff to support the men and women who serve and protect our Nation.

All members of the committee have contributed to this product, and I am very grateful for all of their efforts throughout the year. I am especially grateful to the efforts of the ranking member, Mr. SMITH, not only for his contributions and for his partnership in the committee but doing so at a time where he has been dealing with surgeries and a variety of things. But it has been a true pleasure and continues to be to work with him for the benefit of our Nation.

Mr. Chairman, this bill authorizes spending for the Department of Defense at a level that is consistent with the congressional budget resolution and a level that is consistent with the President's budget request. So there have been differences, and there will continue to be some differences about how some of that spending gets categorized, but when you add it all up together, this authorization measure meets exactly what the President has asked for, which is essentially $611.9 billion for national defense.

Included is a program-by-program authorization for all of that spending; whether it is in the overseas contingency account or the base budget, it is all authorized program by program.

This bill also contains some significant reforms, including acquisition reform, to improve the way the Department purchases goods and services. We have been working with the Pentagon and with industry to thin out regulations, simplify the process, and make it easier to hold industry and government personnel accountable for the results.

This bill has overhead reform to reduce the amount of money that we are spending on overhead and bureaucracy so that more resources can be devoted to the men and women on the front lines.

This measure has reform in the area of personnel pay and benefits. Of the 15 recommendations by the personnel commission, this measure does something in 11 of those 15 so that we can be in better shape to continue to recruit and retain the top quality people that our Nation needs for decades to come.

Now, some people say, Well, there is too much reform here. Some people say, Well, there is not enough reform here. There isn't enough if enough means you solve all the problems. But there is a start at significant reform that helps make sure we get better value for the money we spend and also that the Department is more agile in meeting the national security challenges we face.

Mr. Chairman, this morning in reading the papers, I made some notes about the headlines just in one newspaper today, May 13, 2015. Some of those headlines are "Kerry Meets Putin," "U.S. Weighs Plan to Confront China in the South China Sea," and "Fresh Earthquake Rattles Nepal."

By the way, Mr. Chairman, I know that the Marines and their families who were involved in the helicopter, which has not yet been found to my understanding, are certainly in our thoughts and prayers. Our military is called upon to do humanitarian efforts.

The CHAIR. The time of the gentleman from Texas has expired.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself an additional 1 minute.

"Somali Men Plead Guilty in Terror Plot," "North Korea Executes Defense Chief," and "Assad Still Has Chemical Arms." The list goes on and on. This is the world that we face. This is the world we send our men and women out into to protect us and to defend our Nation. They deserve the best from us. They deserve something other than political games. They should not be used as pawns to make a point.

We should give them our best by doing our job under the Constitution, just as they give us their best in defending this country. Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I think this bill, H.R. 1735, deserves the support of all Members in this House, and I hope they will do so.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 5 minutes.

Mr. Chairman, I want to congratulate the chairman—this is his first year as chairman—on his hard work on this bill, and there are a lot of very good things in this bill. I think most prominently is the reform the chairman mentioned, the compensation reform. We formed a commission to study how we do personnel compensation and the retirement system. In a very rare move, we actually followed some of the advice of that commission in this bill and made, I think, some very positive reforms to the personnel compensation system. There are a variety of other reforms the chairman has worked on that are important. There is also a whole slew of provisions in there that do, in fact, do an excellent job of providing for the men and women who defend our country. So there are a lot of very positive things about this bill.

I appreciate the hard work of everyone involved.

Unfortunately, for the first time in 19 years, I am going to be opposing the NDAA on the floor for two reasons, but one is really the big one, and it is understanding how our budget has worked.

We have not had a normal budget appropriations process since 2011, and this has affected every single government agency—and keep that fact in mind—not just the Department of Defense. I will talk about the Department of Defense at length. But the lack of a normal appropriations budget process has impacted every single Federal agency: transportation, infrastructure, education, housing, on down the line.

Ever since 2011, Mr. Chairman, they have faced one government shutdown and a succession of threatened government shutdowns and continuing resolutions. This has made it absolutely impossible to plan long term and also has cut a pretty dramatic amount of money out of all of these agencies. It has been particularly hard on the Department of Defense, which tries to do a 5-year plan when they are figuring out what they can procure. This sort of halt, stop, we are going to fund you, we are not going to fund you, we are going to shut down the government, CR, has had a devastating impact on the ability to fund government.

The budget resolution passed by the House and the Senate this year does not fix that because it relies on the overseas contingency operation fund, which is limiting. It is 1 year of money. It, again, does not allow the Department of Defense to be planned. I want everyone to know the Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, in the Senate, testified on why OCO, funding $38 billion of the Defense bill through OCO, is unacceptable, and he doesn't support it and doesn't support this bill.

But the reason we oppose this—and this is very important to understand—to fix the problem, to get us to the point where we can fund Defense and everything else in a reasonable way, we need to get rid of the budget caps from the Budget Control Act. That is the only way. And we do not do that here. We take money out of the overseas contingency operation fund to give Defense 38 billion additional dollars.

But, in one sense, Mr. THORNBERRY is wrong when he says that in all senses what we do here matches what the President did. Within the Defense budget, the number is the same. But the President's budget also lifted the budget caps for the 11 other appropriations bills.

I know we serve on the Armed Services Committee, and I have heard members of the Armed Services Committee say, ''Don't talk to me about that stuff. I serve on the Armed Services Committee. That is not my department.''

□ 1800

I would love to know what district those people are living in because roads and bridges and schools and housing, it affects all of us, and those budget caps remain in place.

What this Defense bill does, unfortunately, is it locks in the Republican budget. It locks in the deal they made with the Senate to continue to provide devastating cuts at the Budget Control Act level for everything else and then let Defense and only Defense out of jail in an awkward sort of backdoor way through the overseas contingency operations.

To agree to this bill is to agree to cuts in those 11 other bills—to cuts in transportation, to cuts in research, to cuts at NIH and CDC, in all of these programs that we care about. If we accept this, then those cuts are locked into place.

Don't get me wrong. I support spending $38 billion more on the Defense budget; I support the President's level; I support this level, but I also support lifting the budget caps for all of the other areas of our government that are facing the same sort of devastating cuts and difficulties that the Defense Department has. If we agree with this, we lock in the budget.

Lastly, I want to point out that the President has said he does not support this process. He opposes all the appropriations bills, and he will oppose this Defense bill. The President hasn't gone away. There is not a sustainable veto override number for those appropriations bills in the House and the Senate.

The CHAIR. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. I yield myself an additional 2 minutes.

Everything that we are doing on this bill and in the appropriations bills between now and October is—and I know the Republican plan is to hope the President just sort of changes his mind and signs all those bills; I consider that highly unlikely—so what is going to happen is we are going to get to October, and this is all going to blow up anyway because the President is not going to sign it.

He is still there. I know the Republicans won the Senate, but the President didn't go anywhere, and the Constitution didn't change, and nothing becomes law unless he signs it.

What I urge is that the President, the House, and the Senate—all three—sit down and come up with a budget solution that ends the budget caps for all of these bills so we can start working on something that is real. I mean, this $38 billion is great, but like I said, between here and when it heads up Pennsylvania Avenue, it is going away, and then we are going to have to double back and try to fix this anyway.

I guess all I am saying is we should start now instead of risking another government shutdown, risking another continuing resolution, and get a true budget agreement that actually addresses the Budget Control Act in its entirety, doesn't just find a sort of awkward workaround through the overseas contingency operations just to take care of Defense.

I support this level, but not this way. It has too devastating an impact on the rest of our budget, and as Secretary of Defense Ash Carter said, OCO funding is no way to fund the Defense Department if it is not legitimately for OCO expenses.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 30 seconds.

Mr. Chairman, I have enormous respect for the distinguished ranking member. I think, however, it is a very hard argument to make that we are going to oppose the bill that takes care of our men and women in the military because we want to try to pressure Congress and the President to reach an agreement on spending on other stuff.

How could that possibly happen in this bill? It can't. That requires other legislation. I think that is a poor reason to oppose this bill.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN), my friend and colleague, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Readiness.

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Chairman, I want to commend Chairman THORNBERRY and the members of the Armed Services Committee on a very strong mark. I want to especially thank my distinguished ranking member, MADELEINE BORDALLO, for working with me to address some of our most critical readiness challenges.

The FY16 National Defense Authorization Act makes notable strides in restoring full spectrum readiness in helping move us away from what the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dempsey, referred to as the ''ragged edge'' of being able to execute the current Defense strategy.

Specifically, this year's NDAA prohibits the Department from pursuing an additional BRAC round or any other effort aimed at locking in unwise force structure reductions during a time of accelerated transition and uncertainty, but does task the Department to conduct an assessment of where we may be overcapitalized in facilities so Congress can make informed decisions going forward.

We must be strategic about our long-term decisions, such as how we treat our headquarters and civilian personnel. We need to keep those things in mind. They do important work for this Nation, and on their behalf, we owe it to them to take the time to look at how provisions in this bill could negatively affect their efforts.

This year's NDAA also restores many critical shortfalls across the force. For example, for the Navy, the bill fully funds the operation and maintenance accounts for an 11th carrier and the 10th air wing, aircraft maintenance reset, and ship operations.

For the Army, the bill fully funds collective training exercises resulting in 19 Combat Training Center rotations for brigade combat teams, as well as fully funding the initial entry rotary

wing training program and restoring funding to meet 100 percent of the flying hour program requirement.

The bill also provides the Marine Corps with additional resources to meet aviation readiness requirements to ensure adequate numbers of mission-capable aircraft.

For the Air Force, the bill provides additional training resources for high-demand areas such as pilots for unmanned systems, joint terminal controllers, cyber operations, insider threats, and open source intelligence.

Finally, the bill addresses several other shortfalls by resourcing many of the Department's most pressing unfunded requirements.

I am proud of what we have accomplished in this year's bill and encourage all of my colleagues to support its passage.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Chairman, I yield 30 seconds to myself just to respond briefly to Mr. THORNBERRY's remarks.

The problem, too, why this won't actually fund our troops is it is OCO funding to begin with; and, as the Secretary of Defense said, it makes it very difficult to do it in any sort of comprehensive way.

More importantly, when we get to the end of the process, if the President doesn't agree to it, then we haven't funded the troops at this $38 billion additional level. If that is where he is at on the veto on these appropriations bills, then we haven't done it. We simply run the clock out for another 4 or 5 months.

We have got to get to a budget agreement that the President agrees to, or we are not going to fund the troops at the level that I agree with the chairman that we need to fund them at, and this bill does not do that.

I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank Dr. HECK and the committee staff for working in a bipartisan manner to develop this bill, and I also want to thank Chairman THORNBERRY and Ranking Member SMITH for their leadership during this process.

The bill takes important steps toward personnel reform by including recommendations from the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission, and I think we all want to thank them for their work.

A key provision is the modernization of the military retirement system. While maintaining the 20-year defined retirement, a thrift savings plan is added not just for retirees, but for all servicemembers. This will positively impact the 83 percent of the force—I am going to say it again—83 percent of the force that leaves prior to the 20-year mark.

The NDAA continues the committee's critical work towards the prevention of and response to sexual assault. Several provisions will increase access to better trained special victims counsel, prevent retaliation against servicemembers, and increase awareness and training to better aid male victims of sexual assault.

Once again, the bill does not contain the Department's request to administer changes to the commissary system, reductions to the housing allowance, or TRICARE reform, but we must address these issues in some way in the future. Reform of the military healthcare system is crucial to ensure that care is elevated to a level befitting our servicemembers, our wounded veterans, retirees, and their families.

Important issues were addressed in this bill, and I support many of the provisions and all the hard work that went into it. However, national security is borne from many factions, including the education of our people, investment in science and technology, and the support of sustainable resources and infrastructure.

All of these realms, Mr. Chairman, must be funded adequately and properly in order for our military to remain the most elite force in the world. I am disappointed that this NDAA, although meeting the President's budget number request, does not follow the funding rules we have abided by in the past, thereby placing our national security in jeopardy.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. FORBES), the chair of the Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces.

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016.

I want to commend the leadership of Chairman THORNBERRY in bringing this bill to the floor. His leadership has been instrumental in tackling many of the tough issues this committee has had to address and in getting this bill finished on schedule.

That being the case, I am absolutely perplexed by a President that would even suggest that he would veto a bill or Members of Congress who would suggest they would support him in vetoing a bill that gives every dime he requested for the support of the men and women who are fighting to defend this country and for the national security of this country unless he gets everything he wants for the EPA and the IRS and whatever part of his other political agenda he wants to keep.

Mr. Chairman, it is time that we put national security and the men and women that defend this country first and leave politics for another day.

As to the Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee, this bill fully funds the carrier replacement program, two Virginia class submarines, two Arleigh Burke class destroyers, and three littoral combat ships.

It reverses the administration's request to close the Tomahawk production line and keeps the Ticonderoga class cruisers in active service. It also accelerates the modernization of our existing destroyers and increases valuable undersea research and development activity and sustains our next-generation tanker and bomber programs.

I am pleased with the Seapower and Projection Forces' effort in this bill and believe that it is another positive step on a long road to adequately support our national security. Perhaps that is why the bill passed out of committee with such an overwhelming bipartisan margin of 60–2, with so many people on the other side of the aisle being for it before they were against it.

I urge my colleagues to support the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SPEIER), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations.

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the chairman and the ranking member for their accepting amendments to address military sexual assault, increase oversight, transgender rights, whistleblower protection, and equal access to contraception for military women; but, despite these improvements and many others from my colleagues, I cannot support this bill in its current form.

Instead of making tough decisions with our limited resources, this bill uses an accounting gimmick to further parochial and political interests above the readiness of the men and women protecting us and the interests of taxpayers we represent.

We chose to address the sage grouse rather than the elephant in the room. By irresponsibly sheltering $38 billion—above the self-imposed budget gap—in the OCO account, this bill attempts to decouple national security from economic security.

In reality, these are one and the same. Our military leadership gets it, but this seems to be lost on us. Admiral Mullen, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, stated that the deficit that we are unwisely adding to in this bill is the single greatest threat to our national security.

Rather than empowering our military to align our force structure with the capabilities we need, we tied their hands; and, rather than addressing wasteful overhead, needless spare parts, or outdated weapon systems, we chose to ensure that corporations that move their headquarters overseas to avoid taxes continue to get Defense contracts.

Provisions of this bill also attempt to force the DOD to keep our detention facility in Guantanamo Bay open. GTMO is a propaganda tool for our enemies and a distraction for our allies. Those aren't my words; they are George W. Bush's and 15 to 20 retired generals and admirals.

Another provision of this bill prevents the military from saving lives by

purchasing alternative fuels. Costly refueling operations and convoys are extraordinarily dangerous; yet, because the existence of climate change is a political talking point, somehow, servicemember safety is second rate.

The military is not separate from the rest of the country. Along with defending us, members of the military need to drive on roads that are not crumbling, cross bridges that are not falling, and send their children to public universities that are not bankrupt.

It also makes it difficult to fund basic research, which has been a key element to our global competitive advantage and the source of much of the technology that our military relies on.

We are choosing to spend vast quantities of money on planes that the military does not want, while refusing to address problems that everyone in the Nation, including military members, needs fixed.

We have to face the reality that we can't keep our Nation secure if we let our country rot from the inside.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this bill.

□ 1815

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON), the chair of the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of the National Defense Authorization Act and also to thank Chairman MAC THORNBERRY for his leadership and hard work to bring this important bill to the floor.

Committee support was bipartisan—60–2—and politics should not be raised to obstruct. I am honored to serve as the chairman of the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, which oversees some of the most forward-looking and critical aspects of the Department of Defense, including defense-wide science and technology efforts; Special Operations Forces; Cyber Command and the cyber forces of the Department of Defense; and many other programs and activities that deal with evolving and emerging threats, from weapons of mass destruction, to Putin's aggression against Ukraine, to the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, ISIL or Daesh. The Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee has been active in conducting oversight in all of these important areas.

It is also worth noting that much of the oversight conducted by the subcommittee is classified and takes place behind closed doors where we review and remain current on sensitive activities and programs involved in Department of Defense intelligence capabilities, Special Operations Forces, and cyber forces. The subcommittee takes this sensitive oversight role very seriously as we consider Department of Defense authorities and programs that enable these sensitive activities.

Overall, our portion of the bill provides for stronger cyber operations capabilities, safeguards our technological superiority, and enables our Special Operations Forces with the resources and authorities to counter terrorism, unconventional warfare threats, and to defeat weapons of mass destruction.

I thank Chairman THORNBERRY, and I would like to thank my friend and subcommittee ranking member, Mr. JIM LANGEVIN of Rhode Island.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Chairman, at the outset, I want to extend my compliments to the chairman of the committee for his first NDAA bill and for the way he conducted a 19-hour markup that went until close to 5 o'clock in the morning. I also thank the ranking member, who provided just really great leadership in terms of moving that process along, and the strong vote that came out of the committee.

On the Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee—and Mr. FORBES ticked off some of the priorities that came through the report—I just want to add one item which, I think, is really important to note. In terms of the future challenges for the shipbuilding of this country, the replacement program for the ballistic submarine program, the Ohio replacement program, is going to cost, roughly, $70 billion to $80 billion. It has been identified by Secretary Carter on down as the top priority of the Defense Department as well as the Department of the Navy. The question is not about whether or not we are going to build that sub. The question, really, is: What is going to happen to the rest of the shipbuilding account?

This year's NDAA bill activates the national sea-based deterrence fund, which is an off-shipbuilding budget account to build this once-in-a-multigeneration program, using clear precedent of the past of the national sea-based deterrence account, which took that program off the shipbuilding budget's shoulders, and we are using that same approach to make sure that, in meeting this critical need, the Ohio replacement program is not going to suffocate the rest of the shipbuilding account. $1.4 billion is going to be infused into this fund with the Defense Authorization Act, and that is going to provide a path forward to make sure that we meet this critical need as well as to make sure that we have a viable, 300-plus-ship Navy, which every defense review over the last few years or so has identified as critical.

This is an important item which, I feel, as part of this evening's debate, should be identified, and it is something that was a bipartisan effort on both sides of the Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee. I look forward to a vigorous debate over the next 2 days.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TURNER), the chair of the Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces.

Mr. TURNER. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 1735, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016.

I had the privilege of serving as the chairman of the Tactical Air and Land Forces Subcommittee. I want to thank my ranking member, LORETTA SANCHEZ, for her support in completing the markup of this bill, and I want to extend my thanks to the subcommittee's vice chairman, PAUL COOK. I also want to thank our chairman, Chairman THORNBERRY, for his leadership and his bipartisan work.

Now, I had a sentence here where I said I was thanking Ranking Member SMITH for his work on a bipartisan basis because of his support for this bill when it came out of the committee, but due to his recent opposition to this bill, I am going to cross that part out.

Mr. Chairman, the committee's focus, though, has been on a bipartisan basis, and you will hear the members stand and talk about the provisions that we worked on on a bipartisan basis, and that is why it actually deserves, I think, everyone's support.

It supports the men and women of the Armed Forces and their families. It provides the equipment they need and the support that they deserve. I believe that the committee's bill strikes the appropriate balance between equipping our military to effectively carry out its mission and providing oversight.

Under this bill, Congress provides additional funding for new National Guard Blackhawk helicopters, F–35 Joint Strike Fighters, Navy strike fighters, unmanned aerial systems, lethality upgrades for Stryker combat vehicles, improved recovery vehicles, Javelin antitank missiles, and aircraft survivability improvements for Apache attack helicopters.

We support the National Guard and Reserve component. This bill provides additional funds as part of a National Guard and Reserve equipment account to address significant equipment shortages and modernization equipment for the Guard and Reserve.

This bill also calls for continued action to eradicate sexual assault in the military. I want to thank Congresswoman TSONGAS, Chairman WILSON, my ranking member, Ms. SANCHEZ, and Ranking Member SUSAN DAVIS for working on a bipartisan basis for these provisions. This bill provides greater access to Special Victims' Counsel for Department of Defense civilian employees. It addresses issues of retaliation against victims and those who report sex crimes. It enhances sexual assault prevention for male victims. It prohibits the release of victims' mental health records without an order from a judge, and it provides additional training for our military leaders.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Guam (Ms. BORDALLO), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Readiness.

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank Ranking Member ADAM SMITH and my dear friend, Chairman WITTMAN, for working collaboratively with me on the readiness section of the NDAA.

I believe that this bill provides our servicemen and -women with what they need to be prepared to face the challenges that are constantly thrown at them by a dangerous and unpredictable world. However, as Chairman THORNBERRY often likes to remind us, this gets us to the bear, ragged, lower edge of what is required to respond to the full spectrum of the challenges we face.

In addition to funding our readiness requirements, our bill looks to the future by requiring GAO reports on Army and Air Force training requirements, a review of the Army's Pacific Pathways program, and an assessment of the adequacy of support assets for the Asia-Pacific rebalance. These reports will provide the information necessary to enable us to determine whether the programs are achieving their intended purposes or will allow us to take corrective action if they are not. The bill also authorizes a 2.3 percent pay increase for all servicemembers.

The bill continues our strong tradition here in the House of supporting the rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region. I am pleased that this bill authorizes funding for the relocation of marines from Okinawa to Guam and authorizes the improvement of critical infrastructure on Guam. Further, we have provided clear language that, for the first time ever, shows support from Congress on the need for continued progress on the development of a Futenma replacement facility as the only option for the marines on Okinawa. This bill also requires the administration to develop a Presidential policy directive that would provide guidance to each of the agencies and departments on how to resource and support the rebalance strategy.

As I have been saying for some time, the best thing we could do to increase our readiness above the minimum threshold that we are on is to eliminate sequestration and get away from the gimmick of using OCO funding, which adds to our Nation's credit card bill. I agree with the President and with the Secretary of Defense that OCO funding is not a permanent solution and that it hampers DOD's ability to utilize funding in a responsible manner and to plan for future years. I do hope, Mr. Chairman, that this Congress can, once and for all, find a solution and fix this bill to end sequestration across the board.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. ROGERS), the chair of the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces.

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1735, the fiscal year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act, the 54th consecutive Defense Authorization Act, which recently passed out of the Armed Services Committee by a vote of 60–2.

I want to thank Chairman THORNBERRY for his leadership in getting us here today. Without his guidance, we might have been here with a bill that failed to provide the $612 billion requested by the President for national defense. I wouldn't have been able to have supported that bill. Instead, we do have one that does meet the minimum needs as outlined by Chairman Martin Dempsey.

I am also particularly proud of the provisions of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee's jurisdiction:

We authorize $475 million for the Israeli missile defense, including the U.S.-based coproduction;

We direct development of U.S. military capabilities to counter Russia's violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. Putin must recognize that his illegal actions will have real consequences;

We require the adaptation of the Aegis Ashore missile defense sites the U.S. is deploying in Romania and Poland so that they are capable of self-defense against airborne threats. It is simply immoral to deploy U.S. personnel to these sites and then remove an intrinsic self-defense capability;

We strengthen our decision made last year to end U.S. reliance on Russian rocket engines by putting real money behind a new rocket engine program;

We set priorities in NNSA by controlling the size of the bureaucracy, ending ineffective nonproliferation programs, and seriously tackling the $3.6 billion deferred maintenance backlog that we suffer at our nuclear weapons complexes. We can no longer ask the best and the brightest we have to work in decrepit infrastructure.

I am also pleased that language was included to prohibit furloughs at Working Capital Fund facilities, like the Anniston Army Depot, provided there is funded workload. Also included was my amendment with Congressman ROB BISHOP that would exempt civilian jobs funded by the working capital fund, like those jobs at the depot, from the planned 20 percent reduction at headquarters.

The Anniston Army Depot is one of the largest employers in east Alabama and is the most efficient production and maintenance facility the Army has.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. HARTZLER), the chair of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the fiscal year 2016 NDAA, and I want to thank Chairman THORNBERRY for bringing this important bill to the floor.

We have a proud tradition in the Armed Services Committee of supporting our national defense in a bipartisan manner, and I hope that tradition will continue this year.

This country is facing a vast array of threats, both from state and nonstate actors, and I am pleased that the NDAA provides for the resources needed to address those threats today while also preparing for those of tomorrow.

As Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee chairwoman, I am proud of the provisions included to address issues related to detainee transfers. I remain frustrated and concerned with the administration's lack of cooperation in the investigation of the Taliban Five transfer. I consider it prudent to withhold funding from DOD until more information and support is given so that we may continue proper oversight.

This bill is good news also for the men and women at Fort Leonard Wood and Whiteman Air Force Base. One of my top priorities since I got to Congress has been to support Whiteman commanders' requests for the construction of the Consolidated Stealth Operations and Nuclear Alert Facility. This facility is included in this NDAA, and it will bring substantial, immediate, and long-term benefits to the base and to its B–2 operations. Additionally, I requested the provision to authorize 12 additional F/A–18F Super Hornets. These aircraft will fill an immediate need in the fight against ISIL and allow them to be converted to airborne electronic attack Growlers later, if necessary.

After a marathon 18-hour-long debate throughout the day and night, my colleagues on the House Armed Services Committee and I have produced a bipartisan bill that allocates vital funds for our Nation's defense. I am proud of this bill, and I urge Members to support its passage.

□ 1830

Mr. COURTNEY. I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. HECK), chair of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

Mr. HECK of Nevada. Mr. Chairman, the military personnel provisions of H.R. 1735 are the product of an open, bipartisan process. The mark provides our warfighters, retirees, and their families the care and support they need, deserve, and earned.

Some highlights from this year's proposal include continued emphasis on the Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program by addressing shortfalls in the program identified in the Judicial Proceedings Panel initial report.

There is also rigorous oversight and consideration of the recommendations made by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission. Specifically, the mark would require the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a joint formulary that includes

medications critical for the transition of an individual undergoing treatment related to sleep disorders, pain control, and behavioral health conditions.

It requires the Secretary of Defense to establish a unified medical command to oversee medical services to the Armed Forces and other DOD health care beneficiaries.

And it modernizes the current military retirement system by blending the current 20-year defined benefit plan with a defined contribution plan allowing servicemembers to contribute to a portable account that includes a government automatic contribution and matching program.

It also requires the Secretary of Defense and the military service chiefs to strengthen and increase the frequency of financial literacy and preparedness training, establishing a more robust training and education program for servicemembers and their families.

I want to thank Ranking Member DAVIS and her staff for their contributions to this process. We were joined by an active, informed, and dedicated group of subcommittee members, and their recommendations and priorities are clearly reflected in the NDAA for fiscal year 2016.

Mr. Chairman, I have always said that I felt myself lucky to serve on the Armed Services Committee because I thought it was the most bipartisan committee in Congress. We, over at least the past 4 years, have been unified in making sure that our men and women in uniform have the resources they need to keep themselves and our Nation safe.

That is why today I find myself very confused and disappointed by the comments made on the floor. This is the National Defense Authorization Act, whose sole purpose is to provide for the common defense, not education, not transportation, not any other government function.

To vote against this bill is to breach the faith that we have with our men and women in uniform and is unconscionable. I, therefore, urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. COURTNEY. I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. THORNBERRY. I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FRANKS), the distinguished vice chair of the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

Mr. Chairman, I rise today to join in this chorus of support for the fiscal year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act. I want to sincerely congratulate Chairman THORNBERRY in this, his inaugural bill as chairman of the Armed Services Committee, which passed with a small vote of 60–2.

While this bill sets DOD policy, it also reflects the House-passed budget figure for authorized spending at the Department of Defense. It represents the will of Congress that we ought to be spending more on national security, as nearly every corner of the world has become less safe under President Obama's continued foreign policy failures.

The fiscal year 2016 NDAA makes needed reforms to strengthen civilian retiree packages and begins to reform the way that we buy weapons and other systems at the Pentagon, which will save tax dollars for years to come.

I also want to thank the chairman and the committee for including some of my amendments to reestablish the EMP Commission, beginning an initial concept for development of a space-based missile defense system, and guaranteed assistance to the Kurdistan regional government.

As we know, President Obama has, unfortunately, issued a veto threat toward this bill. Mr. Chairman, the NDAA has been passed year after year for 53 straight years, under both Democrat and Republican administrations.

Among the provisions the President stands ready to reject are a joint formulary to ease troop transition from the Department of Defense to the VA; providing aid to Ukraine in the midst of Russian-backed attacks; providing full funding to the Department of Defense which he, himself, requested; a stronger missile defense and cyber capabilities; a greater accountability for political reconciliation in Iraq; greater protection of our troops from sexual assault; and better pay and benefits to those who serve us so that we may stand here and debate this bill today. These are among the provisions of this bill Mr. Obama opposes.

I want just to reiterate to my colleagues that this bill did pass out of the Armed Services Committee 60–2, and this list of accomplishments is too long. So I will just express congratulations again to Mr. THORNBERRY for his leadership under this massive undertaking. I urge adoption of the bill.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. SMITH), the ranking member of the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Chairman, I just want to respond briefly when basically it is called unconscionable to oppose something. Aside from being unbelievably arrogant, it is wrong to say that there is no reason whatsoever to vote against this bill.

I mentioned earlier that there were—I am sorry, if he can call me ''unconscionable,'' I suppose I can call him ''arrogant.'' I don't know; it seems fair.

At any rate, there is another reason not to vote for this bill, and that is that it underfunds readiness once again. It says this matches the President's budget, and overall it does, but it has $2.4 billion less in money for readiness. Last year's bill had $1.5 billion less in readiness. Why?

Because every effort that the Department of Defense makes to cut just about anything—the movements that they wanted to make to start a BRAC, the changes that they wanted to make to the National Guard to save money, the plan they had to lay up 11 cruisers, the efforts to get rid of the A–10—efforts to move anything around are blocked by this committee, and they take that money out of readiness to fund what really amounts to a personal priority.

What does it mean to take money out of readiness? It means that our troops do not get the training that they need to be prepared to fight. It is just that simple. Readiness money is the money for the ammo. It is the money for the fuel. It is the money for the mechanic to fix equipment. That has been going down and down and down and down as we block every effort to save money anyplace else because just about anything the Pentagon is going to do is going to affect somebody's district. The A–10 is in somebody's district. Every other project is made in somebody's district.

We protected all that at the expense of readiness, and I think that is the worst thing that we can do. It has created a situation where we may well be sending our men and women off to fight unprepared and untrained. And you talk to the people who are serving. They are not able to fly as much as they used to. They are not able to train as much as they used to. They are not able to use their weapons as much as they used to because of those continuous cuts to readiness, because we fund other priorities. That is number one.

Number two. Funding through OCO, as the Secretary of Defense has said, is not the same as actually funding the Department of Defense through a regular appropriations process. It is one-time money. What the Secretary of Defense has said is:

Giving us this one-time money makes it impossible to plan. We don't know if it is going to be there next year. You can't have a 5-year plan under OCO money. You are restricted in where you can spend it and how you can spend it. So this is not adequately funding our troops.

I do take offense at the notion that opposition to this bill means that you just don't support our troops. That is the bumper sticker—sorry, I won't use that word. It is wrong to say that about anyone who opposes this bill. I oppose this bill because I don't think it does adequately fund our troops. It doesn't take care of the budget problems that are in front of us.

The CHAIR. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. COURTNEY. I yield the gentleman an additional 1 minute.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. The only way to adequately fund our troops is to get rid of the Budget Control Act, so we can actually fund it under regular order with a normal amount of money that allows them to plan for over 5 years.

Lastly, I am sorry, but the infrastructure of this country matters. The fact that bridges are falling down matters. The fact that we don't have

enough money to do research on critical disease matters. Yes, it is important to defend this country. Yes, that is the paramount duty. But if the country itself crumbles while we have a military to defend it, that too is a problem and one I think worth fighting for, worth standing up and saying we are not going to accept a budget that guts all of these other things and uses the overseas contingency operation as a work-around to fund defense.

It is basically acting like this is free money. Well, it is not free money. It costs, and it undermines the entire rest of the budget. Let's get rid of the Budget Control Act. Let's get rid of the caps. Let's get rid of sequestration. We don't do that in this bill, and it is my contention that if we don't do that, then we are not adequately funding our troops and adequately funding our defense.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 30 seconds.

Mr. Chairman, I will just make two brief points. One is the extra OCO funding that has been so criticized is 100 percent for operations and maintenance, for readiness. That is what it all is devoted to in this mark.

Secondly, if we start holding our troops hostage because we want more spending over here or we want some other change in law over there, where does that stop? Where does that stop? What are we not going to hold our troops hostage to because a Senate and a House and a President can't agree on some other issue? I think it is dangerous to start down that road.

At this time, Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. LAMBORN), the vice chairman of the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces.

Mr. LAMBORN. I thank the chairman of the committee for his great work on this bill and for yielding me this time.

Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2016. This is an important bill that provides funding and authority for the men and women in uniform who are willing to go in harm's way to keep our country safe. This bill takes some of the important steps to reform the Department of Defense, both in acquisition and in retirement benefits. It includes a number of provisions that I worked on regarding military space, missile defense, and tunnel detection, to name just a few.

This is a bipartisan bill. Dozens, if not hundreds, of provisions were authored by Democrats. It came out of committee by a vote of 60–2. Only one Democrat voted against it in committee. Nothing substantive has changed; only now NANCY PELOSI is calling the shots, and Democrats have flip-flopped.

I understand that NANCY PELOSI and the Democrats want to increase taxes and increase spending on domestic programs, but that debate should not be fought on the backs of our troops. If you vote against this bill, it is a vote to cut our defense budget. It is even a vote against President Obama's requested defense budget.

Today we have troops doing humanitarian relief in Nepal, dropping bombs on ISIS, fighting the Taliban, deterring Iran in the Straits of Hormuz, and supporting our European allies in the face of Russian aggression. Now is not the time to cut the defense budget. Let's support our troops, not NANCY PELOSI's partisan agenda. Vote ''yes'' on H.R. 1735.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Chairman, could I inquire how much time remains on both sides?

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Connecticut has 9½ minutes remaining, and the gentleman from Texas has 7 minutes remaining.

Mr. COURTNEY. I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. STEFANIK), the vice chair of the Subcommittee on Readiness.

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of the fiscal year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act, and I would like to first thank and applaud Chairman THORNBERRY on his leadership and commitment to this thoughtful and comprehensive bill. Additionally, I am grateful to our subcommittee chairs for their exhaustive efforts.

While the end results may not be perfect, it is a strong, bipartisan piece of legislation that I am proud to support. Our committee spent 19 hours debating this bill, and all members put forward their ideas. We worked together across the aisle, which led to significant strides in maintaining and establishing our Nation's defense policy.

In today's unstable global environment, we are asking our Armed Forces to do more with less over and over again, and as a representative of Fort Drum, home of the 10th Mountain Division, such a high operational tempo unit, I too am concerned about long-term impacts due to the budget cap constraints.

Recently, I had the honor to attend a small congressional delegation visit to CENTCOM's AOR. On this trip, I was able to get a firsthand perspective on the detrimental effects these budget caps have on our Nation's overseas missions.

Thankfully, the fiscal year 2016 NDAA provides our U.S. Armed Forces with the tools and resources to maintain current efforts, and it passed out of our committee on an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote of 60–2. I want to remind my colleagues, 60–2.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for putting forth a great bill that I am pleased to support. I urge my colleagues to support this bill, particularly those colleagues on the committee who already have.

Mr. COURTNEY. I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MACARTHUR), the vice chair of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

□ 1845

Mr. MACARTHUR. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in strong support of the National Defense Authorization Act. It is a bipartisan bill that passed the full Armed Services Committee with nearly unanimous support, as we have already heard.

This bill meets our national security needs; it cares for our troops, invests in next-generation weaponry, and brings necessary reforms to the Pentagon.

No bill is perfect, and I urge my colleagues not to allow the perfect to be the enemy of the good. And there is certainly a lot of good in this bill.

As vice chairman of the Military Personnel Subcommittee, I am especially proud of our work to care for our troops and their families. This bill acts on 11 of the 15 recommendations of the Commission on Military Pay and Benefits, including things like revamping our military retirement system to bring it into the 21st century, providing increased financial literacy for our troops.

I am especially pleased that the bill includes an initiative I proposed to help our retiring military personnel transition to civilian jobs.

Importantly, this bill precludes another round of base realignment and closure, or BRAC, which threatens to shutter military bases around the country. We have seen that BRAC is simply not cost effective. In my home State of New Jersey, we have seen the devastation it brings to local communities. The last round of BRAC cost $14 billion more than it was supposed to, and the savings were reduced by 73 percent. It doesn't even break even for 13 years.

I am a businessman, and spending more to save less while you ruin local economies and weaken our military just makes no sense.

Finally, this bill fulfills our constitutional duty to provide for the common defense of our Nation. We face new threats like the Islamic State, a newly resurgent Russia, and our military has to be ready to face them head-on.

This bill funds the Pentagon at the level it needs and avoids the disastrous blind cuts of sequestration that hurt our military's capability and readiness.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Let me emphasize again that there are a lot of good things in this bill. I won't disagree with anything that was said. The reform agenda that Mr. THORNBERRY has, I think, taken a leadership role on is incredibly important, and I think that is a huge positive.

There are a lot of programs in this bill that are absolutely critical to our

national defense, but the most critical thing, I think, to our national defense is getting us back to the normal budget process, getting us out from under the Budget Control Act, out from under the budget caps, and having a normal appropriations process. If we vote for this bill, we allow that unnatural process where the Pentagon does not have long-term funding and long-term predictability to continue.

The biggest thing that has changed since we were in committee is, number one, the President did not issue a veto threat. I actually had a conversation with leadership before we went to committee as to where they were at on that. The fact that the President has now said that he will not support this bill with the additional OCO funding is a major change. It means that what we are working on here is not going to happen. And that is not political; that is substantive. We have to have a bill that the President will sign if we are, in fact, going to fund our troops.

The second thing that happened was the budget resolution, which was being debated back and forth. The House passed one and the Senate passed one, but they came together and it became clear that the budget resolution was the budget resolution, and they were locking in place the budget resolution that I have described that takes advantage of the OCO fund to basically create free money—money that doesn't count under the Budget Control Act—to plus-up defense and keep everything else where it is at.

Once that was locked in and the President looked at that and said he would not support that appropriations process, we created a situation where what we are doing here is not going to pass. It is not going to be sustainable. We are not going to fund our troops doing it this way. Unless we make those other changes in the budget process, we are just not going to get there.

On the gentleman's comments about the BRAC round, the military said they are over capacity in facilities. They are spending money on facilities that they don't need to spend just because they can't close those bases. Yes, in the short term it costs more money, but in the long term, the first four rounds of BRAC have saved us hundreds of billions of dollars over the long term.

So not being willing to do BRAC, not being willing to make cuts in certain programs, is undermining readiness.

Yes, it is good that we took the OCO money. And because OCO money is so fungible, you can do it this way. You took the rest of the money and you funded all of these programs that the Pentagon was trying to cut, and then you tried to backfill as much as you possibly could with the OCO money and readiness. And that is better than not, but it is still less to $2.4 billion short of what the President's budget was on readiness.

And I still contend that we are short-changing readiness to fund the priorities that are more parochial and more political, and that is something that I mentioned last year that put me on the edge of whether or not I could support last year's bill. Because at the end of the day, the one thing I think we owe our troops is that if we send them into battle, they are ready. They are trained and they are ready to fight. If they don't have the equipment and they don't have the readiness dollars, then they won't be. So for those two reasons, I am opposing this bill.

I am hopeful between now and when we come back from conference that we can reconcile this issue and that we can actually adequately fund the military and work through this, because I totally agree we need to do this. But where we are at right now is a bill that I don't think does adequately fund our troops in a predictable enough way to give them the training they need and to give the Pentagon leadership the predictability they need in terms of budgeting to have a defense budget.

So, reluctantly, I will oppose this bill. And I hope we continue to work to get to a bill that we can support in the end. I do not view this in any way as the end of the bipartisan tradition of our committee. We worked very closely together on putting together this bill, and we will continue to work closely together to find a bill that did actually pass through the entire process.

Again, if the President doesn't sign it, then all of our work is for naught, and it is the troops who suffer. So we are going to have to work on finding a way to reach an agreement with all the people who need to approve this bill before it becomes law. I pledge to continue to do that.

I do want to thank the chairman and the Republicans on this issue. I think they have done a fabulous job of working on this bill. I just disagree on that one fundamental point that, frankly, has more to do with the Budget Committee than it does with our committee, but it does have a profound impact on our product.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Chairman, let me just take up where the gentleman from Washington left off.

You have heard from a number of speakers that the product before us is a bipartisan product, that our committee works in a bipartisan way. Just to put a little bit of quantification on that, over the course of our markup in committee, 96 amendments sponsored by Democratic members of the committee were adopted; and prior to that, at least 110 specific requests by Democratic members of the committee were incorporated into the committee and subcommittee marks. So it leaves one wondering: If Democratic Members are forced to oppose the bill because of something the Budget Committee hasn't done, how can this bipartisan tradition continue?

That is one of the things that concerns me, because it is something that I think we are all very proud of, that we worked together, that we put the national defense interests ahead of these other differences that we have.

This makes it harder when we don't fix the budget or we don't fix health care or we don't fix the environment or we don't fix taxes. There is no end if that is the way that this is going to go.

I think it is ironic, Mr. Chairman. I believe we need to find a better way to impose fiscal responsibility in our government than the Budget Control Act, and I am absolutely anxious to work with any Member who wants to find a better way to go ahead. But we can't do it on this bill. It is impossible.

And so what we are doing, for those who would oppose this bill, is to hold the pay and benefits of our troops, all of these decisions, we are holding that hostage to something that we can't resolve here in this measure.

As the gentleman from Washington said at some point, this is not the end of the process. This is a step in the process. There are a lot of things to go with appropriation bills and conference reports and so forth before the President ever has an opportunity to veto a bill. As a matter of fact, Mr. Chairman, this President has threatened to veto, I think, pretty much all the defense authorization bills at some point in the process. That is not a reason for us not to take the next step.

I think we should build upon the bipartisan work that came out of committee. I suspect there will be bipartisan work with amendments from Republicans and Democrats on the floor and that we should pass this measure, go to conference with the Senate, and keep working towards the end of the process where, hopefully, we can have something better than the Budget Control Act. But to say I am not going to support our troops unless we do that first I don't think is the proper way to go.

This is a normal budget process. We have a House and Senate budget resolution for the first time in years.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. THORNBERRY. I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. It is not a matter of not supporting our troops. To say that the decision to oppose the defense bill is because you don't support the troops I hope the gentleman would agree is not where we are coming from.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Reclaiming my time, I do not mean to say that is the intention of the gentleman or those who might oppose this bill. It is the effect, however, because there are 40 essential authorities that have to be in a defense authorization bill. One of those authorities is to pay the troops. Without those authorities, it doesn't happen.

Mr. Chairman, I believe this bill should be supported, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. Chair, I ask that the following exchange of letters be submitted during consideration of H.R. 1735:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
Washington, DC, April 28, 2015.

Hon. WILLIAM M. ''MAC'' THORNBERRY,
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. THORNBERRY: I am writing concerning H.R. 1735, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016.

This legislation contains provisions within the Committee on Agriculture's Rule X jurisdiction. As a result of your having consulted with the Committee and in order to expedite this bill for floor consideration, the Committee on Agriculture will forego action on the bill. This is being done on the basis of our mutual understanding that doing so will in no way diminish or alter the jurisdiction of the Committee on Agriculture with respect to the appointment of conferees, or to any future jurisdictional claim over the subject matters contained in the bill or similar legislation.

I would appreciate your response to this letter confirming this understanding, and would request that you include a copy of this letter and your response in the Committee Report and in the Congressional Record during the floor consideration of this bill. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

K. MICHAEL CONAWAY,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, May 1, 2015.

Hon. K. MICHAEL CONAWAY,
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your letter regarding H.R. 1735, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016. I agree that the Committee on Agriculture has a valid jurisdictional claim to a provision in this important legislation, and I am most appreciative of your decision not to request a referral in the interest of expediting consideration of the bill. I agree that by foregoing a sequential referral, the Committee on Agriculture is not waiving its jurisdiction. Further, this exchange of letters will be included in the committee report on the bill.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM M. ''MAC'' THORNBERRY,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE,
Washington, DC, May 1, 2015.

Hon. WILLIAM M. ''MAC'' THORNBERRY,
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I am writing to confirm our mutual understanding with respect to H.R. 1735, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016. Thank you for consulting with the Committee on Education and the Workforce with regard to HR. 1735 on those matters within the Committee's jurisdiction.

In the interest of expediting the House's consideration of H.R. 1735, the Committee on Education and the Workforce will forgo further consideration of this bill. However, I do so only with the understanding this procedural route will not be construed to prejudice my Committee's jurisdictional interest and prerogatives on this bill or any other similar legislation and will not be considered as precedent for consideration of matters of jurisdictional interest to my Committee in the future.

I respectfully request your support for the appointment of outside conferees from the Committee on Education and the Workforce should this bill or a similar bill be considered in a conference with the Senate. I also request you include our exchange of letters on this matter in the Committee Report on H.R. 1735 and in the Congressional Record during consideration of this bill on the House Floor. Thank you for your attention to these matters.

Sincerely,

JOHN KLINE,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, May 1, 2015.

Hon. JOHN KLINE,
Chairman, Committee on Education and the Workforce, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your letter regarding H.R. 1735, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016. I agree that the Committee on Education and the Workforce has valid jurisdictional claims to certain provisions in this important legislation, and I am most appreciative of your decision not to request a referral in the interest of expediting consideration of the bill. I agree that by foregoing a sequential referral, the Committee on Education and the Workforce is not waiving its jurisdiction. Further, this exchange of letters will be included in the committee report on the bill.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM M. ''MAC'' THORNBERRY,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE,
Washington, DC, May 1, 2015.

Hon. WILLIAM M. ''MAC'' THORNBERRY,
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN THORNBERRY: I write to confirm our mutual understanding regarding H.R. 1735, the ''National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016.'' While the legislation does contain provisions within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, the Committee will not request a sequential referral so that it can proceed expeditiously to the House floor for consideration.

The Committee takes this action with the understanding that its jurisdictional interests over this and similar legislation are in no way diminished or altered, and that the Committee will be appropriately consulted and involved as such legislation moves forward. The Committee also reserves the right to seek appointment to any House-Senate conference on such legislation and requests your support when such a request is made.

Finally, I would appreciate a response to this letter confirming this understanding and ask that a copy of our exchange of letters be included in the Congressional Record during consideration of H.R. 1735 on the House floor.

Sincerely,

FRED UPTON,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, May 1, 2015.

Hon. FRED UPTON,
Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your letter regarding H.R. 1735, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016. 1 agree that the Committee on Energy and Commerce has valid jurisdictional claims to certain provisions in this important legislation, and I am most appreciative of your decision not to request a referral in the interest of expediting consideration of the bill. I agree that by foregoing a sequential referral, the Committee on Energy and Commerce is not waiving its jurisdiction. Further, this exchange of letters will be included in the committee report on the bill.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM M. ''MAC'' THORNBERRY,
Chairman.

The CHAIR. All time for general debate has expired.

Under the rule, the Committee rises.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BABIN) having assumed the chair, Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1735) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2016 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

JOINT REAPPOINTMENT OF INDIVIDUALS TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF OFFICE OF COMPLIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces, on behalf of the Speaker and minority leader of the House of Representatives and the majority and minority leaders of the United States Senate, their joint reappointment, pursuant to section 301 of the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 (2 U.S.C. 1381), as amended by Public Law 114–6, of the following individuals on May 13, 2015, each to a 2-year term on the Board of Directors of the Office of Compliance:

Ms. Barbara L. Camens, Washington, D.C., Chair

Ms. Roberta L. Holzwarth, Rockford, Illinois

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBER TO BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker's appointment, pursuant to sections 5580 and 5581 of the revised statutes (20 U.S.C. 42–43), and the order of the House of January 6, 2015, of the following Member on the part of the House to the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution:

Mr. BECERRA, California

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBER TO BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE HARRY S. TRUMAN SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker's appointment, pursuant to 20 U.S.C. 2004(b), and the order of the House of January 6, 2015, of the following Member on the part of the House to the Board of Trustees of the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation: