

database that contained detailed identity profiles on 220-million Americans. The point is, they used this information on more than 200 million Americans to target Secretary Clinton supporters with negative and misleading Facebook ads, the goal being voter suppression, as clearly stated by a senior member of the Trump campaign.

Well, let's go back to the principle laid out by President Ronald Reagan, and again I quote him: "For this Nation to be true to its principles, we cannot allow any American's vote to be denied, diluted or defiled."

So I call on my colleagues who have been the proponents of voter suppression, who have been the proponents of attacking the Constitution, who have been the proponents of government of, by, and for the most powerful and the most privileged rather than the people, to listen.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. MERKLEY. I ask unanimous consent for 2 more minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I didn't hear how long.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Two minutes.

Mr. CORNYN. No objection here.

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

Mr. MERKLEY. I thank the Chair.

Those words should continue to reverberate in this Chamber. Colleagues, set your sights on the vision of ending your denying, diluting, and defiling of the most fundamental right close to the hearts of Americans and the foundation of a government of, by, and for the people. Only then will we have a government that responds to the real issues Americans face rather than the special goals of the most powerful and the most privileged.

I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

21ST CENTURY CURES BILL

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, yesterday I spoke about the 21st Century Cures bill the House passed by a very large margin last night, and I am looking forward to taking up that legislation here in the Senate. I am particularly grateful that it includes some mental health reform legislation that I introduced here in the Senate. This represents the very first mental health reform in more than a decade, and it is high time we got it done. There are a lot of people who contributed to this effort, and I think it is something we can all be proud of.

With the mental health portion of the bill, we have two chief goals in mind—first, to help those who are mentally ill get the treatment they need, and secondly, to help law enforcement and first responders know how to respond to a potential mental health cri-

sis in order to keep the person they are responding to safe, as well as the first responders themselves.

It opens up existing funds so that they can be used for more outpatient treatment options. That way, local and State governments can help identify mentally ill offenders, assess their mental health needs, and get them in the right treatment to improve their condition, rather than sending them to jail, where they will be warehoused and their condition will likely just get worse and worse.

This legislation will also provide flexibility to State and local authorities so they can use what works in their communities to help mentally ill individuals in the criminal justice system get healthy. This could include things such as assisted outpatient treatments, where families can help their loved ones, with a backstop of court supervision so they will remain compliant with their doctors' orders and take their medication, which will allow them to lead productive lives.

This legislation will make available Federal grants so that our law enforcement officials have the resources to get the kind of training they need. When law enforcement officials are called to the scene of an incident with somebody suffering from a mental health crisis, it is very important that they know how to deescalate that crisis, both for the well-being of the individual suffering that crisis as well as the law enforcement officials responding.

It will allow the creation of more crisis-intervention teams comprised of law enforcement and first responders and even school officials, where appropriate, so they can rapidly respond to and counter a threat of violence in the community.

Yesterday I received messages from some of the people who have worked with us on this legislation and know all too well how mental illness can affect our families. One individual wrote:

After losing both [a] son and a husband to suicide, and having an adult son with bipolar disorder, I know only too well the frustrations of the mental health system. Thank you, Senator, for your determination and hard work to bring change to this broken system.

This is why these mental health reforms are so important. People need help and the mental health system needs reform, and that is why we need to pass the 21st Century Cures bill—for all the good it will do in addition to these important reforms in dealing with mental health challenges around the country. So I look forward to finishing the job next week and sending it to the President's desk.

MILITARY READINESS

Mr. CORNYN. Separately, Madam President, I come to the floor today to highlight a pressing national security concern that just doesn't get enough attention. Members often come to the floor to talk about specific military

threats that other nations pose to the United States, and that is good and right. For example, we have heard a lot about Iran this week as the Senate considers the Iran Sanctions Extension Act—a bill that will help ensure that President-Elect Trump and future Presidents will have the authority they need to reimpose sanctions on Iran, even in spite of President Obama's flawed nuclear deal which provided relief from these same types of sanctions and others without getting a whole lot of meaningful concessions from Tehran in return. This bill passed the House a few weeks ago with more than 400 votes, and I am glad there has been significant bipartisan support to move it forward here.

But today I want to talk about a problem that is partly of our own making, and that is threats to our long-term military readiness. It is no secret that our military leaders continually call on Congress to adequately fund the weapons programs that enable our troops to defend our Nation.

The major concern I have and one that is shared by leadership at the Pentagon is that our military's technological edge on the battlefield is being whittled away by other countries, such as China and Russia, that are working at breakneck speed, investing millions of dollars to erase our advantage in many areas of military capability. That means we have to wake up to the risks that are inherent in this situation and do more to invest in the next generation of weapons to meet the challenges on the battlefields of tomorrow. The nations that are most belligerent and hostile to America and our interests are not cutting back on their investment in military technology, so we simply do not have the luxury of being complacent.

Recently, I had a chance to meet with Under Secretary of Defense Frank Kendall, the Defense Department's top acquisitions person or top weapons buyer. He is charged with equipping our men and women in uniform, and he has been thinking long and hard about the need to get the next generation of our military the very best capabilities possible. As he has said publicly in speeches and in congressional testimony, he is concerned that our enemies are rapidly expanding and building out their technological innovations for military applications.

But it is important to understand that these countries aren't just building up their own militaries to simply defend themselves; countries such as China and Russia are doing all they can to invest in specific technologies to defeat our forces and to be used for purposes of aggressive activity, whether it is in the South China Sea or in Europe, where Russia continues to threaten the NATO alliance. Countries such as China and Russia are preparing not for next week but for the coming decades to effectively counter and defeat the U.S. militarily. That is a big concern of Secretary Kendall, and it

should be a major concern for all of us here in light of the responsibility of Congress to provide for our military.

I have a chart that helps explain where we are headed. Here we can see the research and development projections for the United States, China, and the European Union. It is not hard to see that China will soon outpace the United States.

This represents total research and development spending for the countries involved—not just in military R&D, but given the fact that a large percentage of research and development is spent on defense-related efforts, on military weaponry, it is a useful bellwether for understanding what the future holds in terms of Chinese and Russian military investment relative to our own. Clearly, we can see that China is on track to overtake the United States in this critical area in the next decade.

I should also point out that, according to one report, this isn't just because China is so committed to research and development; it is also because in recent years, due to austerity measures in our own country, U.S. investment in research and development is increasing at a historically low rate.

Why is this important? Well, it is important because China is using some of this R&D to make weapons that are designed to undermine interests of the United States in the Asia-Pacific region. One recent study made headlines just this week, highlighting that both China and Russia are developing high-speed, high-altitude weapons designed to penetrate traditional U.S. defensive systems, such as our ballistic missile defenses, to attack not only our allies but to potentially attack the mainland of the United States as well.

Reports continue to surface about Chinese cyber theft of top U.S. military and industry secrets. Once they have stolen our trade secrets, the Chinese military can create copycat or cloned weapons for their own use without having to invest the years and billions of dollars that we have to in this country for research and testing and development of those weapons. They can simply steal the blueprints and copy them, saving themselves a lot of money and a lot of time in producing those weapons.

So while nations like China are doing all they can to build their capabilities and research the next cutting-edge weapons, the U.S. military is extremely limited in the amount of money we are investing in our own future, instead having to spend that money to maintain the readiness of current forces. That is where the money has gone—to try to maintain the readiness of our current forces, not looking out to the next 5 and 10 years, to the growing threat of our adversaries having weapon systems that will have the capability not only to be used offensively but potentially to defeat American forces around the world.

We know we need a robust military budget in order to allow us to walk and

chew gum at the same time—to both maintain these world-class forces at high levels of readiness and ensure our troops have the cutting-edge weapons of tomorrow. Back in March, the Committee on Armed Services heard testimony by current Secretary of Defense Ash Carter. At the end of his prepared remarks, Secretary Carter made a point we all need to better understand. He said:

We don't have the luxury of just one opponent, or the choice between the current fight and future fights—we have to do both, and we have to have a budget that supports both.

He went on to explain that means being ready to fight the battles of today and train our current troops but also to develop the technologies and perfect the strategies to fight the wars of the future. And we know from Ronald Reagan's doctrine of peace through strength that military readiness is much more likely to make sure that we don't have to fight those battles because it deters the aggressive actions of our adversaries when America leads and when America is the strongest military in the world. But when our opponents see us pulling back, both in terms of our investment and in terms of American leadership, they are all too happy to fill the void left by that withdrawal.

Unfortunately, the Obama administration has apparently failed to see that national defense is the most critical function the Federal Government performs, and so every time we get into this discussion about how do we spend more money to keep the American people safe and secure, they want to enter into a discussion about how we can raise spending caps so we can spend more money on nondefense discretionary spending, and so it goes.

I believe that defense spending—making sure our men and women in uniform have the training and equipment they need for the current fight but also that we are preparing for the mid- and long-term so they will have the weapons and resources they need to fight the fights of the future—is job No. 1 for us here in the Congress.

It is not too late to eliminate some of these spending caps and to adequately fund the Department of Defense. I look forward to working with all of our colleagues to make sure we take care of job No. 1 before we then look to other priorities in our Federal budget.

We can't take for granted the fact that the U.S. military is the best in the world. We are the best in the world, but there is no certainty or guarantee that will always be the case, especially when our adversaries are making investments for the future and as America's leadership pulls back out of the world and allows others to fill that void. There are other nations at our heels spending a lot of money specifically to neutralize our military advantages and defeat us. The threat extends far beyond China. North Korea, for example, continues to threaten us and our allies with their nuclear weapons

and their missile tests. As I indicated earlier, Russia continues to make tremendous advancements in areas such as cyber and electronic warfare, working to render our most effective and advanced capabilities ineffective.

We don't have any time to waste, and we have to spend more time and more energy looking not just at the threats of today but those of tomorrow and beyond. Frankly, once the threat is upon us, it may be too late to do the sort of research and development and investment we need in order to be prepared.

So I am hopeful that the next Congress, working with the new administration, will be able to move the needle in the right direction. We certainly can't just cross our fingers and hope for the best. That is not fulfilling our responsibilities and doing our duty as Members of the Congress. If we want to maintain our position as the most capable military in the world, we have to continue to act, and act without delay.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

IRAN SANCTIONS EXTENSION BILL

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, the Senate will soon act on a measure, the Iran Sanctions Extension Act, that I have long advocated, and I am proud to be a main cosponsor of this measure. It is a critical step toward deterring and impeding support of Iran's development of conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction.

I am here to encourage my colleagues to support this 10-year reauthorization of the ISA, as it is known. We must act before it expires, before the end of the year. We really have no practical choice. The practical effect of the Iran nuclear agreement depends on our resolve and on our commitment to reliably and durably stop a nuclear-armed Iran by using sanctions and other means, if necessary. This measure should remove all doubt and dispel all question that we have that resolve and commitment to make sure the Iran nuclear commitment is enforced effectively. It must be enforced effectively not only for our own security but really the entire world's security. That is the reason I have championed efforts to stop a nuclear-armed Iran and make sure this agreement is both verifiable and enforceable.

I have long advocated for this renewal and most recently urged Leader MCCONNELL to prioritize passage of this measure in the waning days of this Congress. I was joined in this effort by Senators STABENOW, MERKLEY, WYDEN, KLOBUCHAR, HEINRICH, and SCHATZ. I thank Senator MCCONNELL for following through on this request and bringing this bill to the floor for a vote today.

This important bipartisan bill has already been approved by the House—in fact, overwhelmingly passed in November—and now the Senate must do the