

work together to change that. Let's vote to move America's policy in a better and more successful direction.

Last month the House of Representatives voted to pass comprehensive sanctions legislation on a bipartisan basis. Tomorrow the Senate will turn to comprehensive sanctions legislation that builds on what the House passed, and we should pass that measure on a bipartisan basis as well.

The North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act was written by a Republican from Colorado, Senator CORY GARDNER, and a Democrat from New Jersey, Senator BOB MENENDEZ, and reported from the Foreign Relations Committee. It would strengthen congressional oversight. It would give the President more tools to take action against North Korea's growing aggression and require him to do so. It would also reassure our regional allies that we have not despaired in taking any action against North Korea—with or without help from China.

The kind of belligerence we have seen from Pyongyang must not be ignored. Let's work together to make our country and our world safer by passing this bipartisan bill.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

ZIKA VIRUS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I said yesterday and I say again today that I appreciate very much the Republican leader scheduling the meeting to talk about the Zika virus today. As I indicated yesterday, things crop up. I have been called to the White House at that same time, so I personally won't be at the meeting, but I will have people there to make sure that if there is anything I missed, I will be brought up to date on that. Again, I appreciate the Republican leader scheduling that meeting.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am pleased that we are going to be considering the Ambassador to Burma. Everyone knows the personal attention Senator MCCONNELL has shown to the country of Burma for many years. I am pleased we are going to get an Ambassador to Burma.

I hope everyone understands we are really shortchanging the State Department. We have numerous people held up. The Secretary of State has called me on several occasions lamenting the fact that he is having trouble getting the work done because we don't have the people to do the work.

Fifteen foreign policy nominations are being held up by Republicans, and we have a number of Ambassadors who are being held up: Sweden, Norway,

Luxembourg, and Trinidad—a number of countries that are extremely important to what we are doing here. It is a shame that they are being held by Republicans. It is very unfortunate.

FLINT, MICHIGAN, WATER CRISIS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the people in Flint, MI, continue to suffer through a catastrophic series of problems. Basically, it is their water. It is heavily contaminated. Their nightmare, which began almost 2 years ago, is an emergency that requires a Federal response, and that is what we have been trying to do. In the case of emergencies like this, we must act to help Americans dealing with a public health crisis.

For weeks now, we have called on Republicans to work with us to provide assistance for the people of Flint—100,000 people. Nine thousand children under the age of 6 have been poisoned in that little city in Michigan. It is very large by Nevada standards, but by Michigan standards, that city is not one of the bigger ones, but they need help. We need help from the Republicans. Nothing is happening because we haven't had enough Republican support. In the meantime, the people of Flint, MI, are using bottled water to bathe, to drink, to brush their teeth, and to cook with. That is really too bad.

This should not be a partisan issue. This is drinking water we are talking about. Everyone is entitled to pure, clean drinking water, and access to safe water is a right every American deserves. Whether you live in Michigan, Texas, Florida, Arizona, Nevada, Illinois—it doesn't matter where you live, you shouldn't be afraid to drink the water that comes out of your faucet. No one should have to suffer, but the people of Flint, MI have suffered.

Yesterday the American Academy of Pediatrics wrote a long letter to me and to Senator MCCONNELL. In this letter they said that this organization representing 65,000 pediatricians and other pediatric specialists believes something needs to be done with the water in Flint.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the letter from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS,
Elk Grove Village, IL, February 8, 2016.

HON. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

HON. HARRY REID,
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR LEADERS MCCONNELL AND REID: On behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a non-profit professional organization of 64,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical sub-specialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults, I write

regarding Congressional efforts to respond to the tragedy in Flint, Michigan and the exposure of its citizens to lead, a potent neurotoxin, through their drinking water.

The AAP supports federal efforts to provide immediate funding and other assistance to the people of Flint, including the amendment offered by Senators Stabenow and Peters. While their proposal is a vitally important first step, we would urge the Senate to provide additional funding for long-term educational, early literacy, nutrition, medical, behavioral, and other assistance to this community. This includes, but should not be limited to: support for Head Start and Early Head Start; quality child care; literacy programs; Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program enrollment; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children; school meals and after-school feeding programs; and mental health screening and treatment.

There is no safe level of lead exposure for children. Lead damage can be permanent and irreversible. Lasting decreases in cognition have been documented in children with blood levels as low as 5 micrograms per deciliter of lead in blood. It is therefore clear that the children and families of Flint will need comprehensive assistance in both the short- and long-term.

The AAP is eager to assist this community, and federal policymakers, in both immediate and longer-term solutions to this public health tragedy. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Ami Gadhia in our Washington, D.C. office.

Sincerely,

BENARD P. DREYER, MD, FAAP,

President.

Mr. REID. I will only read a short phrase or two out of the letter, which says it all:

The AAP supports federal efforts to provide immediate funding and other assistance to the people of Flint, including the amendment offered by Senators Stabenow and Peters.

The letter goes on to say:

There is no safe level of lead exposure for children. Lead damage can be permanent and irreversible. Lasting decreases in cognition have been documented in children with blood levels as low as 5 micrograms per deciliter of lead in blood. It is therefore clear that the children and families of Flint will need comprehensive assistance in both the short- and long-term.

This is a letter from the American Academy of Pediatrics. These are people who deal with children. They are not politicians. They are willing to tell us that these children have been poisoned.

In order to do something for the children of Flint and other families, we need help from my Republican colleagues. Despite harsh words from several Members of the Republican caucus who have no interest in resolving the crisis in Flint, some Republicans are willing to help. For example, the senior Senator from Oklahoma has been working with Senator STABENOW all weekend to put together an aid package that includes immediate funding for the people of Flint. Now we are once again waiting on Republicans to step forward and to support the chair of the Environment and Public Works Committee. It is incumbent upon the Republican majority to get to "yes" to

help the people of Flint end this man-made emergency that is simply beyond their control.

All Americans deserve safe, clean drinking water, not just some of them. I hope my Republican colleagues will choose to help us to pass legislation to resolve this crisis, sending emergency funds to the people of Flint now.

Mr. President, would the Chair announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The assistant Democratic leader.

NATIONAL SECURITY SATELLITE LAUNCHES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I wish to address an issue of vital importance to America's national security. It is the issue of reliable rocket launches—launches which the Department of Defense and the national intelligence agencies count on on a regular basis to launch satellites to keep America safe.

There is a separate area of launches with NASA involving the civilian side, but this morning I want to focus primarily on the Department of Defense rocket launches.

We made a decision about 10 years ago that was wrong. Two companies that were competing at that time, Boeing and Lockheed, came forward to the Federal Government and said: We have a plan. Instead of our companies competing, we will join together. We will become one company—Boeing and Lockheed—for this purpose, under the term United Launch Alliance. They argued, convincingly at the time, that this was the best way to come up with affordable, reliable launches. Well, that was true for half of the projection. They were reliable.

In the last 10 years, the United Launch Alliance has been a reliable partner with the Department of Defense in launching satellites and other things into space which are critical for our national security. But, unfortunately, because they became a monopoly, with no competition, they became increasingly more expensive and we had no place to turn.

Recently, there have been new entries in this market in terms of launching satellites. One of the most promising is SpaceX. SpaceX, from its infancy, has matured into a company that could play an important role in the future of satellite launches in the United States. I noted this fact, and as chairman of the Appropriations Sub-

committee on Defense, I did something that doesn't happen around here very often. I had a hearing scheduled and brought together the CEOs of United Launch Alliance, the traditional partner of the Department of Defense in launching satellites, and this new company, SpaceX. I invited the CEOs from both companies to sit at the same table and to answer questions from the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense. Then, at the end of the hearing, I did something that I thought might be positive and constructive. I said to each CEO: I would like each of you to write 10 questions that should be in the record answered by your partner at the table there. If we haven't covered everything to give a fair exposition of where this issue stands today, now is your chance.

That was in January 2014. It was the first time anybody had brought together two potentially competing companies and let them plead their case before the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense. But I felt this was the best way to give SpaceX a chance to tell its story as a new entrant into this competition and for ULA to defend its position.

We then decided there was another element that was important. United Launch Alliance has several engines that can take a satellite into space. The most economical one is built by the Russians, the RD-180. I happen to believe that it is not in our best security interest to be dependent on the Russians to supply us with a rocket engine for vital satellites to be launched into space. So I started pushing in the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense to put money into a competition for an American-made, American-built rocket engine to replace the Russian RD-180. For 2 successive years we have appropriated more money for this competition than the defense authorizing committee.

It turns out that we are on the right track, but the timing is challenging. What we have been told is that replacing the Russian engine with an American-made engine will take up to 5 years. Who is the source of that statement? The Secretary of the Air Force. So the obvious question is, If we can't cut off the Russian engine today without jeopardizing our national security, what should we do? We decided in the current appropriations bill to extend the authority to the Department of Defense to take bids on rockets launched by the Russian engine from ULA through this fiscal year. I thought this was a prudent thing to do—to wean ourselves from dependence on Russian-made engines—but to do it in a thoughtful, sensible way that gave the Department of Defense some options. This request, incidentally, for options and flexibility came not just from the Secretary of the Air Force, but it came from the Director of National Intelligence as well as the Secretary of Defense. They said they needed these options to keep America safe.

That was the state of play until the senior Senator from Arizona decided he was going to come to the floor repeatedly and challenge this conclusion by the Appropriations subcommittee, then leading to an op-ed which he published yesterday in the Wall Street Journal. I come to the floor this morning to address that op-ed by the senior Senator from Arizona. It is titled: "Congress's Cynical Crony-Capital Gift to Putin."

The senior Senator from Arizona referenced me by name in this article, as he has repeatedly on the floor of the Senate, though many would argue that violates the Senate rules. Notwithstanding that personal aspect of this, I want to address the issue that is before us.

Why does the senior Senator from Arizona continue to single me out personally? It is because I happen to agree with the Secretary of Defense, the Director of National Intelligence, and the Secretary of the Air Force about a vital, important national security issue. The senior Senator from Arizona disagrees with them.

The issue is deadly serious, despite the name-calling by my colleague. It is about competition for launching defense satellites into space. Here are the facts. One company, United Launch Alliance, or ULA, held a monopoly for nearly 10 years. The cost of launches rose out of control. Today, there is finally an opportunity for competition. A new company I mentioned earlier, SpaceX, has entered space launch. They are challenging ULA. As I said earlier, in January 2014, I recognized this option—this possibility, this opportunity—and held a hearing with the CEOs of both companies testifying under oath. The result of this competition is that costs are dropping, exactly what we wanted to achieve, and the taxpayer is beginning to see savings. However, as I mentioned earlier, the ULA rocket most often uses a Russian-built rocket engine, the RD-180. After the Russian invasion of Crimea and eastern Ukraine, the Department of Defense and Congress agreed it was time for us to phase out any dependence on this Russian-made engine and to make an American product as soon as possible. I couldn't agree with that more.

Developing and testing a new, American-made rocket takes time—more time than I imagined. The Secretary of the Air Force, testifying before the committee of the senior Senator from Arizona, estimated that it would take to at least 2021 or 2022 until there was an American-made rocket engine that can replace the Russian engine that is being used today. However, the senior Senator from Arizona doesn't want to wait that long to replace the Russian engine. In his Wall Street Journal diatribe, he writes that "we don't need to buy any more." And he is apparently considering a total ban on the Department of Defense using these Russian engines, despite the fact that we have received, in writing, from the Secretary of Defense and the Director of