

this season, finishing with a 22–4 record.

Senior Tyler Serb threw a 2-hit shut-out and went 3-for-3, while the Eagles pounded out 10 hits in 4 at-bats.

Mr. Speaker, as an alum of Bald Eagle, I congratulate my alma mater team and the coaching staff on their hard work and impressive season. The team showed true grit and determination throughout the season as they worked their way to the State championship.

Congratulations again on this very impressive victory. Go Eagles.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2670, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 582 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 582

Resolved, That at any time after adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2670) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2024 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and amendments specified in this section and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services or their respective designees. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. In lieu of the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Armed Services now printed in the bill, an amendment in the nature of a substitute consisting of the text of Rules Committee Print 118-10, modified by the amendment printed in part A of the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution, shall be considered as adopted in the House and in the Committee of the Whole. The bill, as amended, shall be considered as the original bill for the purpose of further amendment under the five-minute rule and shall be considered as read. All points of order against provisions in the bill, as amended, are waived.

SEC. 2. (a) No further amendment to the bill, as amended, shall be in order except those printed in part B of the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution and amendments en bloc described in section 3 of this resolution.

(b) Each further amendment printed in part B of the report of the Committee on Rules shall be considered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole.

(c) All points of order against the further amendments printed in part B of the report of the Committee on Rules or amendments en bloc described in section 3 of this resolution are waived.

SEC. 3. It shall be in order at any time for the chair of the Committee on Armed Services or his designee to offer amendments en bloc consisting of amendments printed in part B of the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution not earlier disposed of. Amendments en bloc offered pursuant to this section shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for 40 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services or their respective designees, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole.

SEC. 4. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment pursuant to this resolution, the Committee of the Whole shall rise without motion. No further consideration of the bill shall be in order except pursuant to a subsequent order of the House.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Oklahoma is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN), my very good friend and the ranking member of the Committee on Rules, pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on House Resolution 582.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Rules Committee met and reported out a rule, House Resolution 582, providing for consideration of H.R. 2670, the National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA as we commonly know it, for fiscal year 2024, under a structured rule. It provides for 1 hour of general debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking member of the Committee on Armed Services. It provides the Committee on Armed Services with en bloc authority so that the House can expeditiously consider hundreds of Member priorities.

I rise today in support of the rule and the underlying legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the NDAA is one of the most critical pieces of legislation the House considers each year. Congress has a constitutional obligation to provide for the common defense, and this is an obligation I know the House takes very seriously. Each year, the NDAA enables Congress to set appropriate defense policies, to provide guidance and direction to the armed forces, and above all, to set authorization levels for defense funding. Collectively, these efforts provide our warfighters

with the training, equipment, and strategy necessary to meet any challenge around the globe.

Congress has enacted the NDAA every year for the last 62 years. While we have a long road ahead of us, I am confident that we will do so again this year, and I am gratified that the House is moving forward with consideration of this measure on the floor.

Last month, the House Armed Services Committee reported out H.R. 2670 with an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote of 58–1. From a review of the bill, it is easy to see why.

□ 1230

H.R. 2670 authorizes \$886 billion for defense programs, an increase of \$28 billion. This funding level will ensure our men and women in uniform are equipped for all threats and are prepared and ready to defend freedom all around the globe.

In proposing this funding level, the Armed Services Committee stayed within the parameters of the funding levels set in the Fiscal Responsibility Act. Additionally, they identified nearly \$40 billion that was repurposed to respond to our current national security needs. This ensures that the tax dollars of hardworking Americans are being used in the most efficient and appropriate way possible.

H.R. 2670 includes a 5.2 percent pay increase for our servicemembers, the largest pay increase in over 20 years. It includes critical policies that will counter aggression from the Chinese Communist Party, advance investments in tools to counter emerging threats, and bolster the reliability of our supply chains. What is more, it includes critical oversight measures designed to ensure that defense dollars are wisely spent.

Mr. Speaker, it doesn't stop there. H.R. 2670 also ensures that the Biden administration cannot continue to put policies ahead of national security. It rejects the Biden administration's efforts to indoctrinate our troops with progressive ideology like critical race theory training, and instead, ensures that the Pentagon's focus is where it should be, on military readiness and preparedness so that our warfighters can defeat aggression and defend freedom anywhere in the world.

In drafting H.R. 2670, the Armed Services Committee followed a robust bipartisan process. They considered 760 amendments during the markup and adopted 731 of them.

In preparing today's rule, the Rules Committee sought to continue this robust, collaborative process. We reviewed over 1,500 amendments, a record number. In keeping with our longstanding tradition at the Rules Committee, we welcomed any Member who wished to come testify about their amendments. Dozens of Members from both parties took part and educated the committee on their proposals for this bill, and, indeed, we would have welcomed dozens more.

In all, today's rule makes in order 290 amendments, reflecting substantive ideas from Members on both sides of the aisle and ensuring that Members will have an opportunity to present their priorities to the House. I look forward to debating these ideas on the floor and to full and fair consideration of these proposals before the entire House.

Mr. Speaker, all in all, H.R. 2670 is a strong bill, and the rule we are considering today is an appropriate one for consideration of such an important measure. I urge the Members to support both the rule and H.R. 2670, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE), the distinguished chairman of the Rules Committee for yielding me the customary 30 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I respect the gentleman, and I appreciate his remarks, his commitment to civility and decency and fairness. I know that he wants this House to run better and reflect the will of the Members. Quite frankly, I just don't believe what is happening in this Chamber lives up to the standard that he has set.

Last night, the Rules Committee met at 11 p.m. to advance a rule, not for the whole National Defense Authorization Act, which we were supposed to start debating today, but for part of the National Defense Authorization Act.

I get it. I have been in the majority before. I understand it is not always easy. What is happening today on the floor—not knowing when we are coming back to finish the second rule for this bill, or what offensive amendments will be included—is not just weird, it is nuts.

A small group of radical, hard-right Members, the MAGA circus I call them, is threatening to take down the NDAA rule unless they get their way. The “unless they get their way” part is really becoming a theme in this Congress.

I don't envy the gentleman from Oklahoma because what he is dealing with is truly bizarre. The MAGA circus wants to load up what could and should be a bipartisan bill—a bipartisan bill that passes every single year. They want to load it up with every single divisive social issue under the sun via the amendment process. Anti-abortion? Check. Anti-LGBTQ rights? Check. Anti-gun safety? Check.

It is not just that they are demanding it, it is that Republican leadership is probably caving. It is embarrassing, but, quite frankly, it is not surprising. This is just the latest example of how KEVIN MCCARTHY has ceded control of this body to the most extreme Members of his own caucus while hanging everyone else out to dry and cutting mainstream Members out of the process. KEVIN MCCARTHY may be the ringmaster, Mr. Speaker, but the clowns have taken over the circus.

This is a group of Members that are so far to the right that they have now begun purging Members from their own ranks for not being ideologically pure enough. It is honestly kind of scary. That is who is trying to write this year's defense bill.

The party of single-issue bills wants to turn the NDAA into an anti-abortion, anti-LGBTQ bill that weighs in on every wedge issue and culture war from guns to border and beyond.

Give me a break. If they want to do a single-issue bill, get this stuff out of here and pass a bipartisan NDAA bill.

By the way, I would say that I find some of the amendments that have been introduced to this NDAA incredibly offensive. We have Members saying they want to get woke out of the military, but they can't even define “woke.”

Was desegregating the military woke?

Was allowing women in combat roles woke?

Was repealing Don't Ask, Don't Tell woke?

That is what I want to ask some of my colleagues. I am pretty sure what their answer would be.

Mr. Speaker, why all the backroom dealing and negotiating with MAGA clowns?

By the way, I say that as somebody who has voted against the NDAA in the minority and in the majority because, quite frankly, I am sick and tired of sending blank checks to the Pentagon while we nickel and dime programs that help everyday people.

Mr. Speaker, I wish the Republicans luck in trying to solve this internal power struggle. I have to say, I don't have a whole lot of faith that this is going to work out in a way that will be good for this country.

I don't think it will work out in a way that will be good for most people in this country.

This is an example. I think when people are watching these proceedings and are seeing the kind of extortion that the MAGA Republicans are exacting from the current leadership, this is what I think people look at and say: This is what is wrong with Washington.

Mr. Speaker, I say this with no disrespect to the chairman, who I think is an example of what is right in this place. I will be voting “no” on this rule. I urge all of my colleagues to vote “no” on this rule. I hope and pray that my Republican friends can get their act together so we can actually start doing the people's business.

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

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend. As always, he is a thoughtful and reflective speaker, even when we disagree on certain things.

Mr. Speaker, the process in front of us is undoubtedly going to go longer than we originally anticipated. I don't think that is a bad thing. I actually

think that is a good thing. I suspect we will, in the end, have more votes on a whole variety of issues than we might have originally had.

Again, I don't think that is a bad thing. That is broadly allowing the House, within the fine parameters, to work its will as we work toward a solution. I think we will ultimately get there.

Mr. Speaker, I would also remind my friend that however a bill changes here, it is going to change again. The NDAA by its very nature is, at the end of the day on final passage, a bipartisan bill. I would just suggest to people to not get too upset or get too worried.

You are going to see the House very vigorously debating a whole variety of issues. That is good for the institution. I think at the end of the day, the House will work its will and we will pass an NDAA bill out of here. At some point we will sit down and conference it with the Senate, and it will come back, and we will have another pretty vigorous debate.

What we are seeing is a pretty robust democracy working its will and a pretty robust House of Representatives working its will.

Mr. Speaker, today will be a bipartisan discussion. Most of the amendments, indeed, have been agreed to by both sides, but they need to be fully aired and debated. We think that is a good thing. I suspect it will be somewhat of a more contentious debate later on in the process, but the process will work out.

At the end of the day, I am confident we will pass an NDAA bill. At the end of the day, I am confident that once the bill is worked through the Senate and signed by the President, it will, as most NDAA bills are, be a bipartisan bill.

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments. I would just say for the record that we are not objecting to more amendments being made in order.

I will remind my colleagues that when I was chairman of the Rules Committee, we had made 650 amendments in order for the National Defense Authorization Act, which is far higher than the 290. We hope that you have at least 650, and maybe you can surpass us. That would be wonderful.

We don't object to a process that allows for more amendments to be considered or more amendments to be made in order. What we object to is the extorting of your leadership by a small group of extremists in this House who are trying to force their rightwing and hard-line views on Congress and the people of this country.

We are concerned, quite frankly, that some of these ideas that the MAGA circus is proposing couldn't even pass if it were brought up as a freestanding amendment. We are worried about a self-executing rule as part of the next

rule that will make them part of the base bill. That is what we are concerned about.

Mr. Speaker, I would say to the gentleman, we want more amendments in order. We think that is a good thing. What we are worried about is what this small group of individuals that seems to be engaged in extortion on every single major bill that comes to this floor, what they will end up winning in this process. What they will win is not reflective of what I think the majority of this Chamber believes. That is deeply concerning to us.

Mr. Speaker, I urge that we defeat the previous question. If we defeat the previous question, I will offer an amendment to the rule to provide for consideration of a resolution which states that it is the House's sacred responsibility to protect and preserve Social Security and Medicare for our future generations and reject any cuts to these essential programs.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to insert the text of my amendment into the RECORD, along with any extraneous material, immediately prior to the vote on the previous question.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. BOWMAN), to discuss that proposal.

Mr. BOWMAN. Mr. Speaker, if we defeat the previous question, we can bring up H. Res. 178, an important piece of legislation affirming the House's commitment to protecting Social Security and Medicare.

Protecting Social Security and Medicare must be a front and center priority of this Congress. We should be doing everything we can and using all of our power to work in a bipartisan way to make sure we protect Social Security and Medicare, as opposed to moving forward aggressively to raise military spending once again where we already spend more on our military and on our military industrial complex than the next 10 countries combined.

The American people need to know the Republican Party is attempting to invest more in war than it is in protecting our seniors.

□ 1245

Some of our seniors—55 million Americans—have been paying into Social Security and Medicare for 50 years, and by 2035, 75 million Americans will call themselves seniors.

We must protect our seniors. They have paid into our system. We must ensure that they have access to healthcare, to housing, to money in their pockets, and to food on the table. We often, particularly my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, seem to continue to marginalize and neglect the most vulnerable people in our society—our seniors included, our children

included, and those who live in poverty included.

I represent New York's 16th Congressional District. It is one of the most diverse districts in the country. We have urban, suburban, and rural areas. I am constantly in the community talking to my neighbors. Never do I hear that we should invest more in the military industrial complex than we do in protecting Medicare and Social Security. I never hear those words.

I also want to identify our veterans as another vulnerable group that Republicans continue to leave behind, as not one Republican in the House voted in support of the PACT Act.

I thank the chairman for yielding me this time, and once again, let us do everything in our power to preserve and protect Medicare and Social Security. Let's not let the Republican Party cut it.

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I will state for the record that I certainly have no objection to defending Social Security and Medicare. As a matter of fact, for, I think, six Congresses in a row, I have introduced legislation, which was originally drawn up with my good friend John Delaney, a former Democratic Member, on doing just that, on trying to save Social Security.

What we proposed is what we did back in 1983 that actually worked, that extended the life of Social Security for almost half a century, which would be to actually do a commission and make a set of reasonable reforms. I would put revenue on the table. Personally, I think that has to be part of it. It certainly was then.

Again, my friends haven't been very serious about reforming Social Security, in my view. To be fair, I don't think anybody has been. We have been trying to get people to look at this problem for a long time.

I invite my friend from New York or any of my Democratic colleagues to look at what we have proposed—again, originally with a Democratic cosponsor. It is the only way we are going to get there. It is going to have to be a bipartisan sort of deal.

That is what Ronald Reagan, Tip O'Neill, and Howard Baker did back in that timeframe. We should do the same thing.

To say we are not interested in Medicare and Social Security is simply wrong. Again, I am the last guy probably to say that to because I have consistently put out a proposal to try and move forward in that regard.

I will say this. In 1983, when they saved it, we were within 2 months of it going broke—not going broke but having to make the cuts that you make to adjust your outflow to the revenue coming in. We have 10 years. We ought to take care of that.

Unfortunately, nobody or not enough people seem to be interested. That includes the President of the United States, who, back in 1983, actually

voted for that commission to be created and then voted to accept its recommendations. The current White House says it doesn't want to do any commissions and politicizes the issue.

I see this on both sides of the aisle, Mr. Speaker, where people tell us they want to protect Social Security. If you want to protect it, Mr. Speaker, then you have to legislate on it because it is steadily becoming less solvent over the years.

Also, to my friend from New York's remark about the focus on military spending, I just would point out to the House that the total budget in the NDAA that is proposed this year is actually the one the President recommended. Personally, I think it is too low. I would have gone higher. I will be the first to tell you that, Mr. Speaker.

The number that the committee chose is the President's number. So, for those of my friends who are critical of how much is being spent, I would suggest you direct your concerns to the White House because the Appropriations Committee took the President's recommended number.

Again, if my colleagues think we are misfocused, my friend's first argument is with the President of the United States and not with your colleagues on the other side of the aisle.

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to include in the RECORD the Statement of Administration Policy for H.R. 2670.

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

There was no objection.

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY

H.R. 2670—NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024

(Rep. Rogers, R-AL, and Rep. Smith, D-WA)

The Administration strongly supports enactment of a National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for a 63rd consecutive year and is grateful for the strong, bipartisan work of the House Armed Services Committee on behalf of America's national defense.

The Administration looks forward to continuing to work with the Congress to set appropriate and responsible levels of defense and non-defense spending to support the security of the Nation, consistent with the Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA). Alongside a strategically sound defense budget, a strong economy and investments in diplomacy, development, and economic statecraft are critical to ensuring that the Nation is positioned to respond to the myriad of national security challenges we face today and in the future.

The Department of Defense's (DoD) Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 budget request was informed by the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS), which calls on DoD to advance four key priorities: defend the homeland, deter strategic attacks, deter aggression while being prepared to prevail in conflict when necessary, and build a resilient Joint Force and defense ecosystem.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of America's All-Volunteer Force. It also marks the 75th anniversaries of the military's desegregation and women's integration into the Armed Forces. Taking care of the health, safety, and economic security of

the Total Force—including the All-Volunteer Force, their families, and DoD civilian employees and contractors—is vital to ensuring a resilient military today and in the future. It is an Administration priority, and President Biden appreciates support for the 5.2 percent pay raise for military service members.

In a time of rapidly evolving military activities and capabilities by our competitors—accelerated by emerging technologies and intensified by the potential for new threats to strategic stability—America's network of allies and partners continues to act as a force multiplier in support of U.S. national defense. Investments authorized in the NDAA in support of the Pacific Deterrence Initiative and the European Deterrence Initiative will help address the changing global landscape and prepare the country for future challenges and threats.

The Administration looks forward to working with the Congress to address its concerns, a number of which are outlined below.

Repeal of Position of Director of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE). The Administration strongly opposes section 902, that would abolish CAPE, the backbone of DoD's analytical workforce. Its independent, unbiased analysis ensures that taxpayer dollars are spent effectively and responsibly, and its cost estimates have helped reduce acquisition program cost breaches from over 6 percent to just over 2 percent, and median cost growth plummeted from 27 percent to only 3 percent, since its creation in 2009. The dissolution of CAPE would lead to negative consequences as the Secretary would be left without the analysis necessary to build a strategy-driven budget across the Joint Force. CAPE provides independent, fact-based evaluation of competing resource requests from across the Department and executes critical cross-cutting, joint strategic analysis.

Enabling Future Capability Transition. The 2022 NDS requires the United States to optimize the Joint Force and invest in capabilities that ensure U.S. warfighters maintain enduring advantages. DoD is committed to investing in equipment that is survivable, lethal, and resilient, and that makes responsible use of taxpayer dollars. This requires DoD to transition from capabilities that would not be survivable, lethal, and resilient in a future fight.

Availability of Funds for Retirement or Inactivation of Landin Dock Ships and Guided Missile Cruisers. The Administration strongly opposes section 1017, which would limit the Navy's flexibility in exercising authority to decommission ships, including those that are not yet beyond the expected service life. Divesting ships on a case-by-case basis, as current law permits, allows the Navy to prioritize investments.

Nuclear-Armed Sea-Launched Cruise Missile. The Administration strongly opposes continued funding for the nuclear sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM-N) and its associated warhead. The President's 2022 Nuclear Posture Review concluded that SLCM-N, which would not be delivered before the 2030s, has marginal utility and would impede investment in other priorities. Further, deploying SLCM-N on Navy attack submarines or surface combatants would reduce capacity for conventional strike munitions, create additional burdens on Naval training, maintenance, and operations, and could create additional risks to the Navy's ability to operate in key regions in support of our deterrence and warfighting objectives. The U.S. has sufficient current and planned capabilities for deterring an adversary's limited nuclear use through conventional and nuclear armaments, including the W76-2 low-yield submarine-launched ballistic missile warhead,

the current Air-launched Cruise Missile, its successor (the Long-range Standoff weapon), and F-35A dual-capable aircraft that can be equipped with B61-12 nuclear gravity bombs. Further investment in SLCM-N would divert resources and focus from higher modernization priorities for the U.S. nuclear enterprise and infrastructure.

Next Generation Air Dominance (NGAD). The Administration strongly opposes the \$550.6 million reduction for NGAD which would delay the Engineering and Manufacturing Development contract award, reduce industry staffing on the current contracts, and require deferral of other related efforts planned in FY 2024. Additionally, given the intent to leverage NGAD software development for direct support to the Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) program, the proposed reductions to NGAD would increase the risk to and cost of the CCA program.

Limitation on Availability of Funds for Retirement of B83-1 Nuclear Gravity Bombs. The Administration opposes section 1639, which would limit availability of funds for retirement of B83-1 nuclear gravity bombs. This would constrain the Department's ability to adequately retire the program. It would also require additional funding to sustain and maintain the program, which would inhibit the Administration's ability to resource other modernization programs, including follow-on, modern capabilities that may be better suited for defeating an adversary's hard and deeply buried strategic targets.

Link Plumeria. The Administration strongly opposes the \$1.1 billion reduction to Project 2937 that supports the Navy's FIA-XX program. The language makes it impossible for the Navy to satisfy a critical element of the NDS in support of Joint Force priorities. The 70 percent reduction breaks the program and leaves the acquisition strategy unexecutable. Additional details can be provided at higher classification.

Space National Guard. The Administration continues to strongly oppose the creation of a Space National Guard. Instead, the Administration endorses the Space Force Personnel Management Act (SFPMA) to combine existing space forces efficiently and effectively, and allow part-time service within the Space Force, without the additional overhead and bureaucracy of a separate component. The SFPMA enables unity of command over all Department of the Air Force space forces, maximizes flexibility for organize, train, and equip and operational responsibilities, and ensures access to part-time forces for surge capacity. National security space missions are Federal in nature and global in impact. The existing National Guard space equipment was procured and is sustained with Federal funding. Further, Air National Guard space missions are overwhelmingly housed on Federal land, and are largely maintained by the regular Air and Space Forces. The Administration looks forward to working with the Congress to enact the SFPMA and urges the Congress not to create a new bureaucracy with far-reaching and enduring implications and expense.

Temporary Extension of Authority to Provide Security for Former Department of Defense Officials. The Administration thanks the committee for including section 1112, which extends current authority to provide security for former and retired DoD officials. However, the elevated risk against former and retired officials requires the additional flexibility over longer periods of time provided by the Administration's legislative proposal. We strongly encourage the Congress to adopt the Administration's requested amendments.

Shipbuilding. The Administration is disappointed that the committee failed to authorize the Administration's full request for shipbuilding, providing nearly \$600 million

less than the \$32.9 billion requested in the FY 2024 President's Budget. The Administration strongly opposes the \$1.5 billion reduction in authorized funding for the Submarine Tender Replacement (AS(X)). Further, the Administration opposes the \$750 million in unrequested incremental funding authorized to procure the next San Antonio-class amphibious warfare ship (LPD-33) in FY 2024, especially considering the shipbuilding plan would not require LPD-33 until FY 2025.

New START Treaty Notifications. The Administration strongly opposes section 1234, which would prohibit the use of certain Department funds from being used to provide the Russian Federation with "notifications as required by the New START Treaty." While the United States has, as of June 1, ceased transmitting New START Treaty notifications to the Russian Federation as a lawful countermeasure to Russia's ongoing violations of the treaty, section 1234 would unduly constrain the ability of the Executive Branch to reverse such countermeasures. The United States continues to send two types of notifications—on ballistic missile launches and on major strategic exercises—required separately under two older agreements (from 1988 and 1989, respectively) that remain in force.

Missile Defense. The Administration strongly opposes section 1662, which would expand U.S. homeland missile defense policy in a way that would signal intent to develop U.S. homeland missile defenses to counter large intercontinental-range, nuclear missiles threats such as those fielded by the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russia. Implementing the policy in section 1662 would be both cost prohibitive and not technically executable. Also, establishing such a policy would undermine U.S. strategic deterrence with the PRC and Russia and overturn two decades of well-established missile defense policy. The Administration also strongly opposes section 1663, which would require a program to achieve an initial operational capability for the Glide Phase Interceptor (GPI) by 2029 and full operational capability by 2032. The planned GPI program of the Missile Defense System has undergone multiple reviews by the Department and is currently funded sufficiently to keep pace with new threat-related technology developments. Finally, the Administration opposes section 1668, which would require the Secretary to rescind the memorandum on missile defense governance that serves to reduce risk in missile defense development and promote the effective transfer of programs to the Services.

Ukraine and Afghanistan Special Inspector Generals. The Administration opposes section 1222, which would establish another inspector general to oversee Ukraine assistance. DoD continues to partner with the DoD Inspector General (IG), the Government Accountability Office (GAO), and the relevant congressional committees to conduct the critical task of ensuring accountability for the assistance that the Congress authorized and appropriated for Ukraine. The DoD IG and GAO are currently undertaking multiple investigations regarding every aspect of this assistance—from assessing the DoD's processes for developing security assistance requirements to evaluating the end-use monitoring processes for delivered assistance—at the request of the Congress. Similarly, the Administration opposes section 1220, which would significantly expand the authority of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction to conduct oversight of amounts appropriated or otherwise made available for "assistance for the benefit of the Afghan people." This expansion is both unnecessary and unprecedented, as oversight of U.S. assistance for the benefit of a country's people is already provided by the Inspectors General for the Department of State

and United States Agency for International Development.

Reprioritization of Military Construction Funding to Unrequested Projects. The Administration opposes the bill's realignment of military construction funding from priority projects to other projects. Contrary to the Administration's fiscally responsible policy to fully fund executable projects, the bill proposes to fund 24 military construction projects incrementally. This would effectively create an unfunded obligation of almost \$2.5 billion needed to successfully execute these projects over time, would divert those funds to projects that either are not executable in FY 2024 or were not higher priorities than the requested projects, and would make that amount unavailable for other defense requirements by encumbering that amount in future fiscal year topline.

Adaptive Engine Transition Program (AETP). The Administration strongly opposes the authorization of \$588.4 million for the technological maturation and risk reduction of the AETP. There are currently no plans to transition AETP engines to a program of record. The F135 ECU and F-35 cooling enhancements are more affordable and a common solution across all three F-35 variants. Continued funding for AETP would defer the transition of a skilled workforce to the Next Generation Adaptive Propulsion (NGAP) program. This, in turn, would increase the risk that NGAP prototype test results would not be available in time for the NGAD programs and that future NGAD platform capability would be compromised by legacy propulsion constraints.

Modification of Vetting Procedures and Monitoring Requirements for Certain Military Training. The Administration strongly opposes section 1043 because it would limit the Secretary's ability to grant exemptions based on functional equivalence exclusively to the nationals of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member nations. The Department hosts many foreign nationals outside the NATO alliance and excluding key allies and partners places DoD in the undesirable situation of having lists of favored countries, which creates foreign policy challenges and concerns.

Provisions Related to the COVID-19 Vaccine. The Administration opposes an exemption from the requirement to repay tuition at military Service Academies for those who refused to receive a vaccination against COVID-19. Section 564 sets a dangerous precedent that not following lawful orders is an option for service members, which will be deleterious to good order and discipline as well as unit cohesion. This exemption also would have a negative budgetary impact. The Administration similarly objects to section 525, Protections for Members of Certain Armed Forces Who Refuse to Receive Vaccinations Against COVID-19, for the same reasons. Additionally, the proposed language would prevent the Secretary from taking appropriate action in the future should a new strain of COVID-19 again require vaccination for force health protection. Furthermore, the Administration objects to section 526, Reviews of Characterization of Administrative Discharges of Certain Members on the Basis of Failure to Receive COVID-19 Vaccine, because it would place the review of petitions concerning the characterization of discharge for persons who failed to receive the vaccine above the consideration of all other Boards of Correction of Military Records actions, which could include pressing issues related to military sexual trauma, PTSD related to military service, and matters related to pay and benefits.

Diversity Equity, Inclusion, Access (DEIA) and other Relevant Provisions. The Administration strongly opposes the House's sweep-

ing attempts (sections 364, 523, 566, 595, 596, 598, 904, and 1046) to eliminate the Department's longstanding DEIA efforts and related initiatives to promote a cohesive and inclusive force. As articulated in the 2022 NDS, one of the Department's top priorities is building a resilient Joint Force and defense enterprise. DoD's strategic advantage in a complex global security environment is the diverse and dynamic talent pool from which we draw. We rely on diverse perspectives, experiences, and skillsets to remain a global leader, deter war, and keep our nation secure. Moreover, DoD is committed to developing and maintaining a dignified, respectful, and safe workplace. Legislation that reduces DoD's ability to create a positive work environment and fully leverage the best our nation has to offer puts the Department at a strategic disadvantage.

Certain Disclosure Requirements for University Research Funded by the Department of Defense. The Administration strongly opposes Section 214 which would impose a significant increase in disclosure requirements for university research funded by DoD. Disclosure requests in this provision are duplicative of current law and require additional information from all research performers. Section 214 would make public detailed information on all Department research performers that could create an inadvertent national security risk. The Department employs rigorous security and data control standards to protect research security without harming the Department's access to top talent and innovations or introducing additional administrative burden on research institutions. Section 214 could jeopardize the Department's ability to fund universities in States with nondiscrimination laws that prohibit citizenship and nationality reporting. Section 214 could also deter the ability to attract the best and brightest foreign scientists from working with the Department.

Pilot Program on Cardiac Screenings for Military Accessions. The Administration strongly opposes section 528, which would increase the cost of and time needed for screening individuals entering military service by establishing a pilot program to provide mandatory electrocardiograms during the accessions process. The requirement may restrict the ability to effectively screen and process applicants at Military Entrance Processing Stations and establishes reporting and screening requirements that are unnecessary for the target age of the recruiting population.

Treatment of Certain Records of Criminal Investigation & Military Justice Matters. While the Administration welcomes section 532(c), which would give the military services' Offices of Special Trial Counsel the discretion to consider cases for certain covered offenses involving incidents alleged to have taken place before December 27, 2023, the Administration strongly opposes section 533 on two bases. First, its implementation would upend military criminal investigation practices and diverge sharply from civilian practice, harming information sharing with other Federal and State law enforcement agencies. The section's language is inconsistent with the distinction between "titling" and "indexing" as discrete investigative actions, complicating criminal record-keeping along with DoD contributions to Federal law enforcement databases, some of which are based on probable cause, not convictions. The resulting constraints on recording and sharing this information would endanger public safety. Second, the section would interfere with accountability efforts, including those recommended by the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, by imposing new, unwise, or incorrect restrictions on administrative separa-

tions. For example, the provision would prevent an offense addressed through non-judicial punishment under Article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice from being used to establish a pattern of behavior and subsequently to support involuntary separation, making it easier for repeat minor offenders to remain in the military.

Establishment of Major Force Program (MFP) for Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications Programs (NC3). The Administration opposes section 1631, which would require establishment of an MFP for NC3. This would be administratively burdensome and disruptive to the current programming and execution of NC3 modernization programs. Performing a complicated extraction of hundreds of embedded program elements and budget lines from across multiple MFPs would incur administrative burden, break existing processes, and most importantly delay ongoing modernization and improvement efforts.

Modification of Authority to Purchase Used Vessels Under the National Defense Sealift Fund. The Administration remains committed to immediate recapitalization of the sealift fleet to project power by delivering Army and Marine Corps equipment using the most cost-effective strategy of procuring used commercial ships. The Administration strongly urges support to provide the Secretary with the discretionary authority to purchase foreign-built, used vessels without limitation on the number of vessels in order to purchase vessels at the rate required to recapitalize the Ready Reserve Force.

Significant Foreign Assistance and Policy Provisions. The Administration is concerned that sections such as 1201, 1242, 1316, 1804, and 2808 do not include a requirement for Secretary of State concurrence and so would provide insufficient means for the Secretary of State to provide input to ensure foreign assistance or engagement is carried out in a manner consistent with foreign policy priorities.

Prohibition on Funding for the Global Engagement Center. The Administration opposes the provision in section 1243 which prohibits DoD from making funds available for the Global Engagement Center. DoD funding, including occasional transfers to GEC, has previously proven crucial at promoting government efforts to combat foreign propaganda and disinformation overseas.

Domestic Content Requirements. The Administration appreciates section 869, which supports the President's executive order signed in 2021 that directed the increase of domestic content thresholds for government procurement, including major defense acquisition programs, ramping up to a final target of 75 percent in 2029.

Guantanamo Bay Detention Facility (GTMO) Prohibitions. The Administration strongly opposes sections 1031, 1032, and 1033, which respectively would extend the prohibitions on the use of funds to: transfer GTMO detainees to the United States; construct or modify facilities in the United States to house transferred GTMO detainees; and transfer GTMO detainees to certain countries. These provisions would interfere with the President's ability to determine the appropriate disposition of GTMO detainees and to make important foreign policy and national security determinations regarding whether and under what circumstances to transfer detainees to the custody or effective control of foreign countries.

Afghanistan Special Immigrant Visas (SIV). The Administration remains steadfast in its commitment to resettle Afghans who have supported our mission in Afghanistan for the past two decades. Since the Congress passed the Afghan Allies Protection Act in 2009, the U.S. Government has used the Afghan SIV

Program to resettle over 100,000 Afghans and their family members in the U.S. In bipartisan support of this effort, the Congress has continued to increase the Afghan SIV cap annually. However, despite the Administration's request to further increase the SIV cap in FY 2024 by 20,000 and to extend the SIV program beyond December 31, 2024, the Committee-reported NDAA bill does not provide for such an increase or extension. The Administration strongly urges the Congress to continue to demonstrate our commitment to our Afghan partners by extending the program beyond 2024 and by increasing the Afghan SIV cap in the final FY 2024 NDAA to ensure a sufficient number of visas are available as processing throughput increases.

Prohibition On Computers or Printer Acquisitions Involving Entities Owned or Controlled by China. While the Administration appreciates the focus on acquisition security in section 832, this provision would put in place an undue burden on the Department. The Administration is confident in its ability to apply a whole-of-government risk-based approach to IT Federal purchases.

Federal Contractor Disclosure of Greenhouse Gas Emissions. The Administration opposes section 1822, which prohibits use of funds authorized to be appropriated to be used to recommend or require submission of certain emissions and climate data for Federal contract offers. The provision prevents DoD from exercising due diligence in assessing risks to potential contract awardees, counter to the interests of U.S. taxpayers.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, the administration supports this bill as it is written, but the statement also notes several concerns that the administration has with the bill, which they hope Congress will work with them to address.

House Democrats are going to do what we can to fight against any attempts to push the bill to the extreme MAGA fringes.

As I was saying earlier, we have no objection to making more amendments in order. Again, when I was chairman of the Rules Committee, we made a lot of amendments in order to the defense authorization bill.

Let me give you an example, Mr. Speaker, about some of the people who are not thinking in reality here.

Last night, we had a Republican Member come up and testify about an amendment to withdraw us totally from NATO, a critical alliance between Europe and North America created after World War II that provides massive social, economic, and political benefits to its members in the face of an aggressive adversary.

My Republican friends have their heads in the sand if this is the kind of thing that they think will make our country more safe, and this is exactly the kind of amendment that the fringe elements of the MAGA circus are supporting.

By the way, the author of this amendment isn't extreme enough for the Freedom Caucus. They want her out of the Freedom Caucus because she is not pure enough or not extreme enough.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to include in the RECORD an article from Foreign Policy titled: "Why Americans Still Need NATO."

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

There was no objection.

[From Foreign Policy, June 28, 2022]

WHY AMERICANS STILL NEED NATO

(By Kathleen J. McInnis)

As NATO meets in Madrid this week, the question inevitably arises: Why does the United States need the alliance in the first place? Why is it worth risking New York to save Vilnius or Warsaw, capitals of faraway countries separated from the United States by a wide ocean? The answer lies in the way NATO has worked, as amply demonstrated in practice, for the simultaneous advancement of both American and European interests.

Although the U.S. security guarantee for its NATO allies has been at the heart of the alliance's political-military framework, and the United States has spent considerable sums on the maintenance of defense capabilities as a result, this has never been a one-way bargain. These treaty relationships have afforded the United States a position of strategic leadership. As a result of America's central role in trans-Atlantic and international relations that NATO cemented, Americans have enjoyed enormous economic prosperity and freedom.

Put more bluntly: Successive American governments have been afforded privileged status when it has come to issues including trade partnerships and access to bases in large part because of the outsized role that the United States plays in the defense of its allies. Nor would the United States have been able to sustain its significant portfolio of foreign military sales and defense technology cooperation activities without the strategic foundation laid by its role as NATO's primary security guarantor for seven decades.

This position of leadership—manifested in its overseas presence—also allows the United States to set the international security agenda in both political and practical ways. America would not have been able to, for example, prosecute expeditionary and counterterrorism operations in the Middle East and Africa were it not for the bases and pre-positioned equipment that the United States has been able to maintain on allied soil in Europe.

Coalition operations to stabilize the Balkans or conduct anti-piracy missions off the Horn of Africa would not be as comparatively straightforward (or maybe even possible) without the decades of interoperability standardization agreements, multinational training exercises, or the International Military Staff through which allies can collectively plan for and integrate their military operations. NATO's structures also afford U.S. military leaders direct experience of the complexities of commanding multilateral military operations.

Another long-standing reason for U.S. engagement in the European theater is to enable U.S. strategic depth. Labeled "defense in depth" by security practitioners, military technological developments and adversary operations during the world wars demonstrated that the United States was no longer protected by the two oceans off of its shores. As a result, it was deemed strategically prudent to station U.S. forces overseas in order to be able to contend with adversary aggression—if not outright conflict—far away from the American homeland.

Not only did this make the American homeland less vulnerable to outright war, but forward presence was also viewed as relatively cost-effective—especially given the potentially enormous social, political, and economic costs of a war on the American

continent. The advent of the nuclear age changed that calculation somewhat—intercontinental ballistic missiles made the American homeland vulnerable—but given that even a nuclear war with the Soviet Union would also likely involve combined arms combat in the European theater, the logic of defense in depth held.

Over the decades, that rationale has endured even as the strategic context changed. For example, a primary reason for U.S. counterterrorism operations in the Middle East after the 9/11 attacks was to tackle the root sources of violent extremist groups before they could again build sufficient capability and capacity to conduct terrorist attacks against the U.S. homeland. The war in Ukraine, along with the attendant concerns about the security and defense on the European continent that are now heightened, once again underscore the importance—and relative cost effectiveness—of forward military presence. Moreover, the global political significance of the United States' track record when it comes to maintaining these alliances over the long haul can arguably give the United States another kind of depth: credibility.

While the United States' reliability as a security partner is frequently called into question in response to day-to-day events, taking a step back it is quite remarkable that U.S. commitments to its allies in Europe have weathered any number of geopolitical storms. The daily management of alliance relationships is a complicated business, of course. But in constructing and recalibrating security relationships with other states, including critical ties in Asia, the U.S. record of building and maintaining a long-standing alliance helps build credibility with others.

More broadly, NATO affords its members an extraordinary—and extraordinarily important—degree of strategic flexibility. NATO has proved capable of reinvention, as its post-Cold War experience showed. From the late 1990s until approximately 2014—and largely as a result of U.S. prompting—NATO was primarily focused on collective security and crisis management in Europe's near abroad and the Middle East. Security interests were framed in terms of promoting global stability and prosperity—including through countering and dismantling terrorist groups outside NATO allied borders. In other words, contrary to expectations in the early 1990s, NATO endured and evolved to contend with myriad security challenges absent an overwhelming threat. And, by the way, against this backdrop, U.S.-European trade remained strong.

In 2014, as Russia annexed Crimea and began waging a proxy war in Ukraine, old adversarial geopolitics came rushing back. NATO's role as a bulwark against an expansionist and revisionist power immediately gained renewed salience, although today the front line is considerably farther eastward than during the Cold War. Further complicating matters, despite any number of assurances by Brussels, Russia has made clear that it views NATO's eastward expansion as counter to its own interests, and it views the existence of the alliance itself as a threat. Yet NATO is managing to both address the challenge of a revanchist Russia and tackle a broader array of security challenges to the alliance, including China, climate change, and advanced disruptive technologies.

More broadly, the lines between foreign and domestic policy, war and peace, civilian and military, public and private are all being blurred, calling long-standing approaches to contending with security and defense challenges into question. Nontraditional security challenges including disinformation operations, pandemic response, migration, and terrorism have put significant stress on the

governments of allies on both sides of the Atlantic. None of these challenges can be tackled by one state alone, not even by the United States. And in these blurry spaces, NATO can—and has—played an important role in catalyzing solutions for these complex problems. For example, NATO played a key role in facilitating the international community's response to the rise of the Islamic State, plans formed in the margins of the 2014 summit in Wales.

Strategic leadership, strategic depth, and strategic flexibility are why NATO's value is difficult to overstate. It is a political-military arrangement that has proved remarkably resilient over decades and has consistently demonstrated its value to its members on both sides of the Atlantic. This is arguably why Vladimir Putin's Russia is so intent on undermining it.

The strategic conundrum for the United States—and for its NATO allies—is therefore how to keep intact the alliance system that serves as the bedrock for myriad social, economic, and political benefits to its members in the face of an aggressive adversary. But defend its old and new allies alike the United States must. Otherwise it risks losing a leadership position and benefits that have become a central, if overlooked, aspect of American prosperity. In a very real way, the security of NATO allies is inextricably linked with American interests.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, we are really worried about where this is headed. The amendments that are contained in this first rule—most of them, I think, if not all of them—will probably pass with bipartisan support. Many of them are not controversial at all. It is what is coming next that has us concerned.

What will the MAGA wing of the Republican Party extort from this leadership? What are the horrific policy items that they are going to demand to be put into this bill in order to get it through the House?

Those are the things we are worried about.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DOGGETT).

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, a strong military is certainly essential at a time when we face so many threats, from Russia's war crimes in Ukraine to threats from the People's Republic of China and North Korea to constant cyberattacks.

Paying for this security is very costly. It accounts for almost one-half of every dollar discretionarywise that we approve each year in the Congress. Of those dollars, almost one-half of the defense dollars goes to defense contractors—billions and billions of dollars.

While designed to ensure that we get more national security, this national defense authorization should also be doing more to provide taxpayer security—security from being ripped off by price gouging and by war profiteering.

As currently written, this bill provides insufficient protection for taxpayers regarding the private defense industry, which can too often extract monopoly prices and demand basically a blank check for weapons and military supplies that are essential to our servicemembers.

An industry that is basically self-policing itself without much competition

and without much of a watchdog inevitably leads to overcharging. Since the 1990s, there has been massive consolidation of defense contractors, and at the same time, the Pentagon has cut tens of thousands of contract negotiators and watchdogs, leading to less oversight, less transparency, and too little accountability.

Overpricing for our military can impact the readiness of our Armed Forces, the well-being of our servicemen and -women, and certainly the resources of American taxpayers.

Let me give you just a couple of examples, Mr. Speaker. A woodruff key, which is a one-half inch semicircular disk that is used to connect machine parts to rotating shafts, is available at Walmart or you can go online to Amazon and buy one for about 10 cents a key. The Department of Defense recently bought some of these for \$300 per key.

The Pentagon paid over \$10,000 for an oil switch when a commercial equivalent was available for about \$300. It has spent over \$32,000 for an oil pump kit when one was commercially available for about \$3,600.

These prices just keep soaring. Decades ago, the original price of a Stinger missile was \$25,000. Now it is up to over \$400,000.

I have submitted two modest amendments to try to rein in some of the waste and abuse and to, quite literally, provide our military more bang for the buck. Both of these have been endorsed by the Project On Government Oversight, by the R Street Institute, and by Taxpayers for Common Sense.

One would simply establish a panel to review major contracts to determine whether fair and reasonable prices were paid and make recommendations to better ensure that the Pentagon gets the best possible deal. The second would strengthen transparency and provide government contracting officers access to sales data that they need to make informed, reasonable decisions in negotiating fair prices.

Both result from the excellent report that "60 Minutes" did in May that highlighted price gouging by some of the giant corporations that just happen to be enjoying record profits.

For Republicans who are always telling us that we need to fight waste, fraud, and abuse, now is the time to do something about it in the biggest appropriations bill and authorization that we have before this Congress. Because they have thus far refused to approve these taxpayer protection amendments, I think that we are not getting at the waste in Pentagon procurement.

Mr. Speaker, I oppose this rule and remain hopeful that eventually these amendments to do something to protect taxpayers along with our military readiness will be approved.

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I consume.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for his thoughtful remarks and helpful

suggestions, and I will point out a couple of things quickly in response.

The House Armed Services Committee has actually done a good job on doing what my friend wants to do. They have repurposed over \$40 billion in the bill and redirected it more efficiently.

This has been a bipartisan, collaborative process between Chairman ROGERS and Ranking Member SMITH, who, frankly, have worked quite well together whether one was in the majority or the minority.

I think, as an alum of this distinguished committee that I once served on, it is actually doing a pretty good job of trying to find the savings that I know my friend sincerely wants to find and redirect.

I wouldn't say I disagree, but I would put some things in perspective when we talk about spending. I have been around this stuff for a long time. My dad was a career military guy at the height of the Cold War. At the height of the Cold War, the United States spent 50 percent of its entire budget on defense and spent almost 9 percent of its gross national product because it thought that was what the threat was.

Then, as the Cold War waned, we came down a little bit. We had the great Reagan defense buildup. At that point, defense was about one-third of the total Federal budget, not half. It had already come down, and it was about 6 percent of the gross national product. Currently, it is less than 4 percent, around 3.5, 3.7 percent. I would say that is probably too low. It is only 15 percent of the entire budget.

What has driven spending around here—and we all know it—is really not the discretionary budget. It is the entitlement budget. It is Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. That is about 60 percent of all Federal spending. Throw in interest on the debt and the Federal retirement system, and we are around 70, 71, 72 percent.

So, I am all for saving money, and there is certainly money to be saved in defense. If Congress wants to get serious about this, then let's talk about where the money is and sit down in a bipartisan way, maybe in the framework that our former colleague Mr. Delaney and I offered, and get serious about it. This is not where we spend most of the country's money, and frankly, this is an area where we are underspending.

Again, for my friends who are concerned—and efficiency suggestions are always welcomed—the number we have is the President's number. If we are overspending here, then it is probably good for my friends to have a conversation with the President of the United States because, honestly, our colleagues in the majority would prefer, for the most part, to be at a higher number. I know that is true for Chairman ROGERS, and I suspect it is true for the majority of the committee's Republican members.

Again, concerns about spending are always appropriate. There is waste in

every part of government, including defense, but I would tell you, Mr. Speaker, broadly speaking, the country certainly is not overspending on defense in this legislation.

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

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Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, "A Pentagon study released earlier this year found major defense contractors flush with, 'cash beyond their needs for operations or investment.' They have tens of billions of excess cash from Pentagon business to hand out to shareholders."

I think it is outrageous that Republicans will happily line the pockets of these ultra wealthy contractors but pinch pennies when it comes to the American people.

As I said earlier, we are talking about nearly a trillion-dollar Pentagon budget here. At the same time, appropriators led by Republicans are cutting programs like WIC and Meals on Wheels.

Mr. Speaker, I request unanimous consent to include in the RECORD an article from CBS News titled, "How the Pentagon falls victim to price gouging by military contractors."

THE SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

[From CBS News, May 21, 2023]

HOW THE PENTAGON FALLS VICTIM TO PRICE
GOUGING BY MILITARY CONTRACTORS
(By Aliza Chasan)

Military contractors overcharge the Pentagon on almost everything the Department of Defense buys each year, experts told 60 Minutes over the course of a six-month investigation into price gouging.

In March, Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks announced the largest Pentagon budget ever: \$842 billion. Almost half will go to defense contractors.

Retired Air Force Lieutenant General Chris Bogdan, who spent his career overseeing the purchase of some of the country's most critical weapons systems, said there's an inherent conflict between the Pentagon and defense contractors.

"They are companies that have to survive, make profit. The Department of Defense, on the other hand, wants the best weapon systems it can have as quickly as possible and as inexpensively as possible. Those are opposite ends of the spectrum."

Perhaps no one understands the problem better than Shay Assad, now retired after four decades negotiating weapons deals. In the 1990s, he was executive vice president and chief contract negotiator for defense giant Raytheon. Then he switched sides and rose to become the Defense Department's most senior and awarded contract negotiator. He put his former colleagues in the defense industry under intense scrutiny.

"They need to be held accountable," he said. "No matter who they are, no matter what company it is, they need to be held accountable. And right now that accountability system is broken in the Department of Defense."

It wasn't always like this, he said. The roots of the problem can be traced to 1993, when the Pentagon, looking to reduce costs, urged defense companies to merge and 51

major contractors consolidated to five giants.

"The landscape has totally changed," Assad said. "In the '80s, there was intense competition amongst a number of companies. And so the government had choices. They had leverage. We have limited leverage now."

The problem was compounded in the early 2000s when the Pentagon, in another cost-saving move, cut 130,000 employees whose jobs were to negotiate and oversee defense contracts.

"They were convinced that they could rely on the companies to do what was in the best interests of the war fighters and the taxpayers," Assad said.

The Pentagon granted companies unprecedented leeway to monitor themselves. Instead of saving money, Assad said the price of almost everything began to rise.

In the competitive environment before the companies consolidated, a shoulder-fired stinger missile cost \$25,000 in 1991. With Raytheon, Assad's former employer, now the sole supplier, it costs more than \$400,000 to replace each missile sent to Ukraine. Even accounting for inflation and some improvements, that's a seven-fold increase.

"For many of these weapons that are being sent over to Ukraine right now, there's only one supplier. And the companies know it," Assad said.

Army negotiators also caught Raytheon making what they called "unacceptable profits" from the Patriot missile defense system by dramatically exaggerating the cost and hours it took to build the radar and ground equipment.

The company told 60 Minutes it's working to "equitably resolve" the matter. In 2021, CEO Gregory Hayes informed investors that the company would set aside \$290 million for probable liability.

A Pentagon study released last month found major contractors flush with "cash beyond their needs for operations or investment." They have tens of billions of excess cash from Pentagon business to hand out to shareholders.

"We have to have a financially healthy defense industrial base. We all want that," Assad said. "But what we don't want to do is get taken advantage of and hoodwinked."

In 2015, Assad ordered a review and army negotiators discovered Lockheed Martin and its subcontractor, Boeing, were grossly overcharging the Pentagon and U.S. allies by hundreds of millions of dollars for the Patriot's PAC-3 missiles.

Pentagon analysts found the total profits approached 40 percent.

Boeing declined to comment, but Lockheed said: "We negotiate with the government in good faith on all our programs."

After the review, the Pentagon negotiated a new contract with Lockheed, saving American taxpayers \$550 million.

Bogdan pointed to another Lockheed Martin contract with problems. In 2012, he was tapped to take the reins of the troubled F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program; it was seven years behind schedule and \$90 billion over the original estimate. Bogdan said the biggest costs are yet to come for support and maintenance, which could end up costing taxpayers \$1.3 trillion.

The Pentagon had ceded control of the program to Lockheed Martin. The contractor is delivering the aircraft the Pentagon paid to design and build, but under the contract, Lockheed and its suppliers retained control of the design and repair data, the proprietary information needed to fix and upgrade the plane.

"The weapon system belongs to the department, but the data underlying the design of the airplane does not," Bogdan said.

When a part breaks, the Department of Defense can't fix or replace it itself. That's likely to come from a subcontractor, like TransDigm, a fast-growing company led by Nick Howley. He has made a fortune taking over companies that make spare parts for the military.

Last year, Howley was called before Congress a second time over accusations of price gouging. Assad's review team found the government will pay TransDigm \$119 million for parts that should cost \$28 million.

TransDigm told 60 Minutes that the company follows the law and charges market prices. While contract spending is going up, Pentagon oversight is going down because of cuts and attrition. Recently retired auditors Julie Smith and Mark Owen and contracting officer Kathryn Foresman were part of the oversight organizations that were victims of downsizing. They said with less oversight and with Assad gone, the Pentagon is losing the battle to hold down prices.

"We don't have another source for a lot of the spares that they provide right now," Smith said when asked about TransDigm. "They are literally the only game in town in order to make an aircraft fly. So we're at their mercy."

They said it's not a true capitalistic market, but more of a monopoly. It's very concerning for Foresman, who said military contractors are the ones holding the power.

The Department of Defense declined to have anyone speak on camera about price gouging.

"If you're happy with companies gouging you and just looking you right in the eye and say, 'I'm gonna keep gouging you because I know you don't have the guts to do anything about it,' then I guess we should just keep doing what we're doing," Assad said.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Alabama (Ms. SEWELL).

Ms. SEWELL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, as a proud member of the House Committee on Armed Services and the Representative for critical military installations in Alabama, I take very seriously my responsibility to ensure that our servicemen and -women get the tools and support that they need to keep our Nation safe.

This year's NDAA, as it is currently written, does just that. The bill will help modernize Alabama's Air National Guard facilities and support leadership training at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama.

It also includes record funding to support research at HBCUs and makes significant investments in the health and well-being of our servicemen and -women and their families.

While I voted to pass the NDAA out of committee last month, I remain very concerned that my Republican colleagues are trying to push poison pill amendments—amendments focused on culture wars; not unity, but division, and not Social Security or Medicaid or our national security.

For 61 years, Congress has passed the NDAA with bipartisan support. I implore my colleagues across the aisle to not break this tradition of national importance.

Mr. Speaker, every year since I came to Congress, I have been proud to vote for the NDAA. I am not sure that I can vote in favor of it this year if those poison pills are included.

Mr. Speaker, I implore my Republican colleagues to keep the NDAA intact as it was from the committee. I will vote against the rule, but I hope to be able to vote in favor of the bill.

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers, and I am prepared to close.

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, this is more ridiculous Republican infighting and wasting more time. That is what this is. They are bickering on everything, from spending levels to whose bill gets on the floor when. It distracts from the other very real work that Congress has the opportunity to do here.

We should also be working to protect our constituents from gun violence. There were more than 17 mass shootings this past Fourth of July weekend that killed dozens of Americans, but Republicans are too busy fighting with Republicans.

We should also pass bills to keep pollutants from clogging up our air and toxins from ruining our water, but Republicans are too busy fighting with Republicans.

We should also do more to stop the opioid crisis and provide support for those struggling with their mental health, but Republicans are too busy fighting with Republicans.

We should also make sure that every American has access to quality healthcare, the chance to receive a good education, or even the basic rights to housing and food, but Republicans are too busy fighting with Republicans.

There is so, so much we should be doing, including passing this bipartisan defense budget, but Republican leadership is busy trying to cater to every whim of the MAGA circus.

I will say it again, KEVIN MCCARTHY may be the ringleader, but the clowns have taken over. It is no way to govern, and it continues to set a deeply dangerous precedent for how this body conducts business moving forward, including with the appropriations process.

Mr. Speaker, let me explain why we are here right now, and why we are in this situation.

We have passed a defense bill by huge margins every year for the past 63 years. Yet here we are with this stalling of moving the full bill forward because a small group of people who call themselves the Freedom Caucus have basically said that they will block passage of this bill if the Republican leadership doesn't cave to every one of their demands.

They call themselves the Freedom Caucus. That seems like a strange name. I mean, are they for the freedom for people to read whatever books they want in the library? No.

Are they for the freedom of women to be able to control their own bodies? No.

Are they for the freedom for people to love who they want in this country? No.

Are they for the freedom to protect people from gun violence in this country as we see the number of incidents involving guns in this country rise at this alarming rate? No.

I think the only thing they are pro-freedom about is the freedom to harass the Republican leadership, the freedom to extort the leadership to cave to their ideas that, by the way, are deeply unpopular not only in this Chamber, that is sadly controlled by the Republicans, but views and ideas that are deeply unpopular throughout this country.

Mr. Speaker, and I get it. They threaten the Speaker by saying that we will move to vacate the Chair. We will move to oust you as Speaker if you don't do everything we say. When they say jump, they want the Speaker to respond by saying, how high. This is a bad way to run this Congress. This is not what the American people expect from the House of Representatives. They certainly don't want ideas that are so extreme, so to the fringe, being shoved down their throats.

At some point, the Speaker has to stand up to these people. At some point, he has to say no. At some point, he has to make it clear that what they are asking is beyond the pale. It is not only not good policy, but it is bad for this institution, and it is bad for this country. That is why we are here.

We don't know when the Rules Committee will meet again. We don't know whether we are going to meet again this afternoon, tonight, tomorrow. We had one member of the Freedom Caucus say: Well, we can meet in August—or after August.

So this notion of everything being held hostage because of a small group of rightwing extremists just has to stop.

Mr. Speaker, we are about to approach appropriations season. I don't know how the hell you are going to get appropriation bills through here with some of the stuff that is being forced onto those bills and some of the cuts that are being forced.

As I said earlier, cuts in programs like WIC, Women, Infants and Children's program; Meals on Wheels. I mean, really? Those are the priorities of this Republican majority? This has to stop. This has to stop.

So stay tuned, everybody, for how this all plays out. We don't know whether we are going to finish this bill this week or next week or sometime into the future, but this is not the way Congress should be run.

Certainly, I would urge the Speaker to stand up to this small group of fringe lawmakers who are trying to extort unreasonable demands from him that are not in the interest of the people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a "no" vote on the previous question because I believe it is important that we make it clear we don't want cuts in Social Security and Medicare. I urge a "no" vote on the rule.

Again, I hope and pray that my friends can get their act together in the very near future so we can actually move forward with a debate and a final determination on where people stand on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would thank my friend, as always, for a thoughtful and robust debate. We covered a lot of ground. A lot of it didn't have a lot to do with defense. We talked about Social Security for a while, and I am delighted to see my friends are worried about the state of the Republican majority. I think it will do fine.

While the process as always in Congress can look from the outside as chaotic or sometimes contradictory, the rally is we tend to work towards things, and we have gotten this bill done for 62 years in a row for a reason. It didn't matter who was the majority and who was the minority or what the administration was. I suspect the same thing is going to happen again this time.

Along the course of that, we will have a robust debate. Today, we will mostly be talking about things we agree on, as we know, and that is a good thing.

There will be things that we disagree on, and that is fine, too. I will remind my friends on my side of the aisle that winning here isn't necessarily winning. It just gets you to the next stage of the contest.

The Senate will be moving on its version of the NDAA. We will sit down in conference, and then we will see what the real final product is. Some of the things that we are watching today, to me, again, are just the normal process and policy working out.

Mr. Speaker, I would also in closing, urge my colleagues to support this resolution. H.R. 2670, the NDAA for fiscal year 2024 is a strong, strong bill. It fulfills Congress' constitutional responsibility to provide for the common defense while also ensuring that we are carefully and wisely spending the American people's hard-earned tax dollars.

It will set appropriate policies for the Armed Services to ensure our warfighters have the equipment, the training, and the resources they need to confront aggression anywhere around the world at any time.

It requires the Pentagon to maintain a laser focus on readiness, and it ensures appropriate oversight of our investments both at home and abroad.

Mr. Speaker, this is unfortunately a dangerous time in the world. American adversaries are on the march, threatening global stability and territorial integrity of our friends and our allies.

These threats range from Russia's invasion of Ukraine to communist China's continued pressure on Taiwan and our Pacific allies to Iran's quest for nuclear weapons and to North Korea's

Cherfilus-McCormick	Espallat Evans
Chu	Fletcher
Clark (MA)	Foster
Clarke (NY)	Foushee
Cleaver	Frankel, Lois
Clyburn	Frost
Cohen	Garamendi
Connolly	Garcia (TX)
Correa	Garcia, Robert
Costa	Golden (ME)
Courtney	Goldman (NY)
Crockett	Gomez
Crow	Gonzalez, Vicente
Cuellar	Gotthelmer
Davids (KS)	Green, Al (TX)
Davis (IL)	Grijalva
Davis (NC)	Harder (CA)
Dean (PA)	Hayes
DeGette	Higgins (NY)
DeLauro	Himes
DelBene	Horsford
Deluzio	Houlahan
DeSaulnier	Hoyer
Dingell	Hoyle (OR)
Doggett	Huffman
Escobar	Ivee