

are offered to the bill and handled one way or another but end up getting added to the legislation. This year we have not even been able to have a managers' package, which would include many of these noncontroversial amendments.

I support Senator INHOFE, who is the ranking Republican on the Armed Services Committee and my Republican colleagues here in the Senate, in the approach they have taken while this bill has been on the floor. Considering this bill, there needs to be an open amendment process. We are not talking, as I said, about the hundreds of amendments that have been filed, but a reasonable number should be considered on the Senate floor.

Everyone here is aware of the time constraints we are under, but that is not an excuse for bypassing an open amendment process on this important piece of legislation.

As the Senate debates the annual Defense authorization bill, our military continues to face increasing budget constraints. These budget constraints have forced our military to prioritize and develop ways to increase efficiency and reduce spending. As we look ahead, the Department of Defense must continue to focus on ways to best prepare for the threats our country will face in the future.

On all fronts, these future threats will require an increasingly mobile force that relies on speed and technology to reach conflict points around the world. With regard to the Air Force, this means a modernization of our current fleet. According to General Welsh, the Chief of Staff for the Air Force, the next generation long-range bomber is one of the top three procurement programs our Air Force must pursue to modernize our fleet and to meet future challenges. The other two, the F-35 joint strike fighter and the KC-46 aerial refueling tanker, are currently underway.

The next generation bomber, which General Welsh has called a must-have capability, will ensure our ability to operate effectively in anti-access and area-denial environments. As potential adversaries continue to modernize their anti-aircraft systems, our ability to penetrate those systems must modernize as well.

The Department of Defense has already begun investing in the research and development phase for the next generation bomber. In the meantime, our current bomber fleets, B-2s, B-1s, and B-52s, continue to provide robust deterrent in long-range strike capabilities. The upgrades which are currently being made to these aircraft allow them to operate in the modern environment. However, as this fleet continues to age into the mid-2020s, the next generation bomber will need to come online.

My home State of South Dakota is home of the 28th Bomb Wing, which commands two of three combat squadrons operating the B-1B strategic

bomber. The men and women of the 28th Bomb Wing have bravely defended our country in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In 2011, the B-1 played a key role in Operation Odyssey Dawn, launching from Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota, dropping munitions in Libya, and returning home in one continuous flying mission. This operation marked the first time the B-1 launched combat sorties from the continental United States to strike targets overseas, and it exemplifies the B-1's crucial flexibility and capability to project conventional airpower on short notice anywhere in the world. Of the three aircraft in our bomber fleet, the B-1B has the highest payload, fastest maximum speed, and operates at the lowest cost per flying hour. As I have said before, the B-1 is the workhorse of our U.S. Air Force.

As the R&D continues for the next generation bomber, the Air Force has already identified many essential capabilities to this aircraft. According to the Air Force, the next generation bomber should be usable across the spectrum of conflict from isolated strikes to prolonged campaigns. It should provide the Commander in Chief the option to strike a target at any point on the globe, and it must be able to penetrate modern air defenses despite an adversary's anti-aircraft systems. In terms of payload, it must be capable of carrying a wide mix of standoff and direct attack munitions and have the option for either nuclear or conventional capability.

As part of the strategy for development, the next generation bomber should allow for the integration of mature technologies and existing systems, taking into account the capabilities of other weapon systems to reduce program complexity.

While developing the next generation bomber will not be easy, the Air Force has learned several important lessons from its most recent procurement efforts. The Department of Defense has already streamlined requirements and oversight to ensure a timely decision-making process for the next generation bomber.

This initiative has included efforts to reduce costs for the overall program with a goal of preventing cost overruns which have plagued previous acquisition programs.

The Department of Defense already knows the importance of this program. As outlined in the 2015 to 2019 Program Objective Memorandum, the Air Force intends to prioritize the development and acquisition of the long-range strike bomber over the next several years. As the Air Force continues to modernize, the long-range strike bomber remains a must-have capability for future combat operations.

This amendment is very straightforward. I hope we get back on the Defense authorization bill. I hope we have an open amendment process. I hope that amendments such as this, which are germane and noncontroversial, can

be included in a managers' package of amendments or at least considered on the floor by my colleagues in the Senate.

It is essential in light of the many challenges we face around the globe today with the potential adversaries out there and the threats that exist as we look out over the horizon that we make every preparation and take every necessary step to ensure our country can defend itself and our allies around the world. American interests and American national security interests are always at stake, and it is important for us to invest wisely in those types of weapon capabilities that can ensure that the United States is prepared for whatever contingency might develop around the world.

I hope we will get back on the Defense authorization bill, allow amendments to be considered, as they have been in the past. Whenever we have processed Defense bills in the past, we have had a process that has allowed for consideration of many amendments. As said before, we had 80 to 100 amendments in most cases and multiple roll-call votes—way more than we had on this bill so far.

This is important to the men and women who wear the uniform of the U.S. military. This should be a priority for us, and it should be a priority for our country. I hope we can get the bill on the floor, process amendments, pass it, and get it on the President's desk where it can be signed into law.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### NATIONAL HOMELESSNESS AND HUNGER AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, next week, Americans across the country will gather with family and friends to celebrate a national tradition, Thanksgiving. Some will give thanks for their good fortune or health over the past year, while others will simply be thankful to see their loved ones together in one place. What most of us will take for granted, however, is that we will have a meal to eat and have a home in which to gather. Far too many Americans will not have that luxury. During this time of reflection, and in