

I wish to highlight a couple of specific examples from the inspector general's audits.

One audit examined HUD's Government National Mortgage Administration, commonly known as Ginnie Mae. Ginnie Mae buys mortgages from banks and institutions, bundles those mortgages together, and then sells portions of those bundles to investors. These mortgage-backed securities are fully backed by U.S. Government guarantees.

The IG's audit bluntly noted that HUD's financial records are so bad that it was not even possible to audit the entirety of Ginnie Mae's \$25.2 billion portfolio. In other words, the record-keeping for the transactions that took place under HUD was in such disarray, so bad, they couldn't even provide an audit that correctly addressed the problem. From what the IG could review, it found Ginnie Mae's finances contained nine material weaknesses, eight significant deficiencies in internal controls, and six instances of non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations. After reviewing Ginnie Mae's 2015 finances, the inspector general found over \$1 billion in abuse and inefficiencies.

If this had happened to any business in America other than the Federal Government, either the business would be bankrupt, the stockholders would have depleted its value, or the board of trustees would have fired its manager. They would have had to reorganize the entire—no way can you run a business this way. No way would it be possible to run it. This would happen only in the Federal Government because we can print money and we can keep it flowing into HUD and these other agencies. And for the 10 years since it was disclosed, they have continued the same practices that have gone on before that don't even allow us the ability to fully understand what they are even doing. They have been warned about it, and they have been talked to about it. They said they are going to clean it up, but it continues.

Let me give another example. The IG also found waste and fraud and mismanagement involving HUD's taxpayer-subsidized housing benefits. The low-income housing program provides affordable housing for households with incomes less than 80 percent of the median income for the area. This program has helped many families put a roof over their head through the years. Unfortunately, because of a loophole in HUD's review policies, households that have too high an income and thus are not qualified to receive Federal support have been able to remain in the taxpayer-subsidized Federal housing program.

The inspector general of HUD found that more than 25,000 over-income families were living in HUD taxpayer-subsidized housing in 2014 alone. So over 25,000 people who don't qualify for the program any longer because their income has improved are still living

under the subsidized housing program, which is providing subsidies to them that they are no longer qualified to receive.

One doesn't actually have to have a low income to participate in this taxpayer-subsidized low-income housing; they simply had to have a low income when they applied. But hopefully this helped them as they were having income problems and financial problems—those who are able to come out of the system and who receive a larger income and therefore no longer qualify retained the subsidies, and HUD never took action to basically determine that they no longer qualify for this. There were over 25,000 specific incidents.

In a specific example in New York City, the program's income ceiling for a four-person household is just a little over \$67,000. Yet a New York family was legally able to remain in public housing when their annual income was nearly \$500,000. In fact, they owned real estate that produced over \$790,000 in rental income within only 4 years. So people who had qualified for this had achieved tremendous financial success—from what source, I am not exactly sure. They have moved from a program that said you have to have income below \$67,000 to qualify. Their income was over \$500,000, and yet they still retained their qualification.

Let's look at a small town. In Oxford, NE, a single-person household earned over \$65,000 annually and had assets of nearly \$1.6 million—far higher than the city's income cap of \$33,500. In other words, to be in the program you could not earn over \$33,500. This individual was earning obviously extraordinarily more than that with a \$1.6 million value of assets and yet still received subsidized housing.

If this was a one-off, if this was a few people here and there taking advantage of the system and so forth—but we are talking tens of thousands of people on just this single program. Remember, the audit of HUD looked at a whole range of discrepancies. I am talking only about a couple of specific programs.

It is not hard to agree that this waste of taxpayer dollars is something that can be addressed. I am encouraged that my colleagues are looking at this in a number of ways—and the more the better. We do this in respect and honor for what Senator Coburn started, and I am happy to be a part of that. I know the Presiding Officer is also.

I will conclude by saying for just this one agency, I can give a lot more examples of reckless disregard for use of taxpayer money that have been documented by the inspector general and that have been provided to that agency, which has not been able to clean up its act since 2005. They have had 10 years to do it, and it still continues. The inspector general says it is such a mess, it is so disassembled, it is so poorly administered that it can't even come to a conclusion of how bad it is. It is impossible to fully audit the De-

partment of Housing and Urban Development because of their financial ineptness and their financial incapability of keeping records on their very own programs.

Today we are going to add a modest amount. This could be tens of billions. We took only a couple of examples here, and those examples total \$1,174,000,000. That is not small change. Think about being about to send this back to the taxpayers who are working their hearts out and having taxes levied on them or think about how we can send this money to higher priorities—maybe to some things related to national security where we are scraping for funds to be able to provide the security this country needs. Whatever the reason, the waste continues to pile up. No one coming down to this floor can say “We can't cut a penny more of spending” without addressing this first.

It appears that we will be down here for the 30th “Waste of the Week” next week, which I regret. But we have plenty of waste lined up to be talking about.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, it is December 10, and Congress is working its way through some final items of business, including a giant spending bill called an omnibus—some might call it an “ominous”—bill because it is so big it takes all of the discretionary spending that Congress makes for the entire year and wraps it up into one big package. I have to say it did not have to be that way. It shouldn't have been that way.

In the 114th Congress, under new leadership, we actually did something that hadn't been done in 6 years. We actually passed a budget. The purpose of the budget in part is to set caps on spending levels for the Appropriations Committee and for the 12 appropriations bills that should come out—and in fact did come out—of the Appropriations Committee. But the reason we find ourselves here at the end of the year with this ominous Omnibus appropriations process is that our Democratic colleagues filibustered all of those individual appropriations bills.

It would have been so much better to take those up one at a time so the American people and Members of the Senate could read them and understand them. We could debate them, we could offer amendments to try to improve them, and then we could finally pass them and send them on to the President. But because of the desire to force the majority to agree to higher spending levels, our colleagues across the aisle filibustered those appropriations bills. So here we are, at the end of the year, with a few huge pieces of legislation left to consider.

I think most people looking at Washington, DC, these days are tempted to

want to look the other way because so much that happens here seems to be so contentious and, frankly, a reflection of our polarized politics in America. But despite all of the challenges we have—and I know the Democratic leader the other day actually claimed this was one of the most unproductive Senates in recent memory, only to be given three Pinocchios by the Fact Checker at The Washington Post. So I would like to remind the Democratic leader about some of the things we have actually done, working in a bipartisan fashion, to get legislation through the Senate, through the House, and to the President's desk.

Sometimes I think we need a bit of a refresher course on what the Constitution provides in terms of the division of responsibilities in government. The Founders of our great Nation made it hard—not easy. They made it hard to pass laws, and appropriately so, because they viewed the concentration of power and the ability to push through legislation as a potential threat to their individual liberties. So not only did they divide the legislative power between the House and the Senate, but they also created a Presidency that has the ability to veto that legislation.

Sometimes in their enthusiasm for certain policies, some of our own constituents get frustrated and they say: Why couldn't you pass this bill or that bill? Well, the truth is the only way this happens is when there is, first of all, some leadership on the part of the majority party because it is the majority leader and the Speaker, the majority leader in the House, who actually set the agenda. So that is pretty important. A lot of the legislation we considered this year would not have even come up if our Democratic friends had been in charge. But once we have the bill on the floor, it literally takes bipartisan consensus building in order to actually get something done.

I would like to talk about a few of those things that we have been able to get done this year because I don't want them to get lost amidst all of the contentiousness that people read about and watch on their television. It is important that the people we work for understand we have actually been trying very hard to get some important things done.

After the House of Representatives passed the Every Student Succeeds Act with a strong bipartisan vote last week, yesterday the Senate followed suit by passing that legislation with 85 votes. It obviously wasn't perfect because 15 of our colleagues did not vote for it, but that was about as strong a bipartisan vote as you get in the Senate these days.

I think it is important to highlight the time and effort it took many Members of this body to create and ultimately pass this bill. Of course, it took the leadership of Chairman ALEXANDER of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. But the fact is—and I know he would say this if he were

standing here on the floor—he could not have done it if it weren't for the partnership of the senior Senator from Washington, Mrs. MURRAY, a member of the other political party. What they showed us is how working together in a bipartisan way can achieve real reform and positive change for the American people. That is the way the process is supposed to work.

Sometimes, though, policies are so bad that the best response is simply to stop it. I don't think we should diminish or deprecate the merits of stopping bad legislation, but where there is an area of common interest, where consensus can be built on what the appropriate legislative response is, that is how it is done—the way Senator ALEXANDER and Senator MURRAY did.

Of course, we are in a political environment where people like to focus on the partisan bickering and gridlock. But passage of this bill serves as just one example of a Senate that has been back to work under new leadership since the last election about a year ago, and we appreciate the willingness of our friends on the other side of the aisle to work with us on a number of areas to try to make those accomplishments a reality.

Another example is in the area of transportation funding. Last week, for the first time in more than a decade, Congress passed a multiyear transportation bill. I think it was more than 30 different times before that Congress had passed short-term patches to those spending bills for transportation, and you can imagine how difficult it was for States to actually plan and then to implement some of their construction projects to improve their transportation infrastructure. In that case, it was the hard work of the senior Senator from Oklahoma, Mr. INHOFE, who chairs the Environment and Public Works Committee, as well as the junior Senator from California, Mrs. BOXER, working together as a team; then, of course, Senator HATCH, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and Senator WYDEN, the ranking member, a Democrat, working together to try to come up with some of the funding mechanisms. But as the majority leader said last week, it would not have been possible to pass this multiyear highway bill for the first time in a decade if it weren't for the bipartisan cooperation we saw and, particularly on the Democratic side, the leadership of Senator BOXER.

Now, with this legislation, States like mine, Texas—growing States can plan and build projects that strengthen our Nation's infrastructure and make our transportation system safer. They can avoid some of that churning, uncertainty, and inefficiency that comes from temporary patches. President Obama signed that legislation last week, and now it is the law of the land.

Like the education bill I mentioned a moment ago, the transportation funding bill, which was called the Fixing America's Surface Transportation, or

FAST, Act, passed this Chamber with more than 80 votes—80 votes. With 54 Republicans and 46 affiliated with the Democrats, the minority, the Transportation bill got 80 votes. Obviously this was a strong bipartisan vote and a testament to the bipartisan spirit this year in a Senate that has allowed us to make some progress on long neglected and long overdue goals like transportation funding.

Then I think about other topics we have worked together on, such as trade. When the President said he wanted us to pass the Trade Promotion Authority legislation, only 13 Democrats voted for it. So it was up to the majority—the Republicans, the other party—to provide the votes to pass Trade Promotion Authority.

Not everybody thought it was a good idea, sure. But in my State, one reason our economy continues to do better than most of the rest of the country is that we are the No. 1 exporting State in the Nation. We believe it is good for our economy and for job creation to be able to sell things that we make, agricultural goods we grow, and livestock we raise to markets around the world. That is what Trade Promotion Authority will allow. It will help Texas farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers get the best deal possible out of pending trade agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which is focused on 40 percent of the world's gross domestic product in Asia. It is very important that we stay engaged in Asia because the default is for China to fill that void and set the rules.

The Trade Promotion Authority, which was an important priority for the President, happened to be something that Republicans by and large agreed with and his own party disagreed with. As I said, only 13 Democrats voted for it.

The trade promotion authority legislation is really the first step to opening up the doors of opportunity to our country's businesses worldwide, but particularly in Asia. Like the other bills I mentioned, trade promotion authority was the result of the tireless effort of a bipartisan partnership. In this case, the senior Senator from Utah, Mr. HATCH, chairman of the Finance Committee, and the ranking member of the Finance Committee, RON WYDEN, the Senator from Oregon, spent countless hours negotiating and renegotiating the legislation to bring it to the floor and ultimately to be signed into law by the President.

Another example happened to be the way we pay physicians under the Medicare program that our seniors rely upon. Year after year, we would come up with short-term patches to the so-called doc fix. But this year we passed a permanent fix in a negotiation between Speaker Boehner and the Democratic leader in the House, Congresswoman PELOSI, that actually preserves seniors' access to care under the Medicare program—a noteworthy accomplishment.

Another subject I am particularly proud of is that we passed the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, a bill this Chamber passed with 99 votes. This law will help victims of modern-day slavery recover and rebuild their lives and will make sure these survivors—some of whom are children—are not treated like criminals but given the help they need to heal and to get on with their lives.

We have also passed critical bills to protect our country from cyber attacks—something we saw happen at the IRS, where 100,000 records of taxpayers was hacked in a cyber attack and stolen and compromised. We also saw millions of people's records compromised at the Office of Management and Budget.

Congress has passed legislation, which is now being reconciled with a different House bill to be able to get that to the President, to provide that security that we all need when we are online. And as I said, we passed the first budget that has been passed in 6 years. The point I am trying to convey is that not everything up here is fighting like cats and dogs. It is not the shirts versus the skins. It is not like the Democrats and Republicans can never find anything that we agree on. Sure, there is there is a lot that we disagree on, and that is fine. It is fine to have policy differences. This is the forum where those policy differences are debated and where, if possible, if common ground can be found, we can find that common ground.

I have told this story, and I am going to conclude here since I see our colleague from Georgia waiting to speak. When I came to the Senate, Ted Kennedy, from Massachusetts, the “liberal lion of the Senate,” who had been here for so long, was working with one of the most conservative Members of the Senate, the Senator from Wyoming, on the HELP Committee—the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. I asked Mr. ENZI, the Senator from Wyoming: How is it that you and Senator Kennedy, who are polar opposites, can find common ground and actually work productively on the HELP Committee? I have never forgotten it. Senator ENZI told me: It is simple; it is the 80-20 rule. We look for the 80 percent, if possible, that we can find common ground and agree on, and the 20 percent we can't agree on, we leave for another fight another day.

That always stuck with me as a very constructive way to work in a highly polarized environment where many of us share completely different views about public policy. But we owe it to our constituents, to this institution, and to the American people to try to find common ground where we can and offer them constructive solutions, as we have done time and again this Congress.

While there are some who want to distract or misconstrue or deny the fact, the fact is there has been bipartisan accomplishment this year. But it

takes leadership, and it appeared to take a new majority and a new majority leader after this last election to get the Senate back on track.

Even many of our Democratic friends who served in the majority previously couldn't even get votes on amendments, on legislation they wanted to offer, because the Senate was basically shut down. But now we are back to work, and the Senate is functioning the way it should.

I wanted to say a few words to note these accomplishments but also to say thank you to those who have worked together to make it possible, who put the American people ahead of party to deliver real results in the Senate this year.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

JOINT SURVEILLANCE TARGET ATTACK RADAR SYSTEM

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I have spoken at length about how our debt crisis and our global crisis are interconnected. Before I speak today, though, I want to thank the Senator from Texas for his leadership this year, as we did get the Senate back to regular order. I know we have much to do, but I appreciate his leadership as whip and as a fellow colleague. Thank you.

Today I rise to speak about how this overlap between our debt crisis and our global security crisis impacts the future of a vital Air Force asset: the Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System, or JSTARS, as they call it. I visited with Team JSTARS to hear about their critical role. We made a visit. We talked about how their role affects our national security and our national defense and countering the global security crisis we face. I have also seen in Iraq and Afghanistan firsthand how this platform is absolutely vital to protect our forces on the ground in harm's way.

The global security crisis facing our Nation continues to grow. First, we face our traditional rivals—China and Russia—as they become ever more aggressive. The persistent threat of nuclear proliferation is now exaggerated and increasing every day with Iran's efforts and, of course, we see what is going on in North Korea as well. Finally, we face threats from radical jihadist terror groups, not just in the Middle East but here at home, unfortunately—and not just from ISIS. AQAP, Boko Haram, and al-Shabaab, to mention a few, are all thinking about how to do harm here in our homeland.

As a result, we know that the need for American leadership in the world isn't going to go away any time soon. Team JSTARS plays a critical role in our response to these threats. JSTARS is an Air Force platform that provides critical intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, or ISR, and ground targeting capabilities in service to all branches of our military. Over the past

25 years, they have flown over 125,000 combat hours in 5 different combatant commands. As a matter of fact, they have flown every day since 9/11.

The “J” in JSTARS stands for “joint.” Team JSTARS is a blended unit. The Air Force, Army, and National Guardsmen who work on the team, eat, sleep, and deploy together. These men and women leave for days, weeks, and sometimes they deploy for months to protect our men in uniform around the world. Not only are they a joint mission with the Army, but JSTARS also does several mission sets. JSTARS does command and control as well as providing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. From stake-out to shoot-out, JSTARS is capable of supporting all missions in all phases, with full spectrum capability from low to high intensity conflict.

In the words of General Kelly, SOUTHCOM's commander, JSTARS is quite unique, “a true force-multiplier, working seamlessly with both the DOD and interagency assets, generating impressive results in our asset-austere environment.” What makes JSTARS unique from other intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance platforms is that on each JSTARS plane, we have unique manpower at the tactical edge to talk to our servicemembers on the ground with 22 radios, 7 data links, 3 Internets, and a secure telephone system. These are things we cannot take for granted. Our men and women on the ground talk about this incessantly.

As I saw it in Iraq and Afghanistan, we could not fulfill our mission without this type of capability in the air, overseeing our men and women every day. As we see threats around us from an increasingly aggressive Russia and China, the threat of electronic warfare is also a growing concern. If satellite communication radios are targeted—if these systems are degraded by the enemy in any way—JSTARS can in turn provide the same critical capability in theater. This is a redundant capability we cannot do without. This platform has proven itself to be invaluable and indispensable to our Armed Forces—not just in the Air Force and Army but in every service—the Marines, the Navy, the Coast Guard, and even in some counter-drug missions.

In the Pacific, JSTARS has been a key part of the Asia rebalance, helping to maintain stability and assure allies by providing vital insight to maritime forces as they push back against an expansive China. In fact, as China continues to challenge freedom of navigation and asserts itself in the Asia-Pacific region, PACOM is asking for more and more JSTARS presence at a very time when their capability is declining.

Also in Asia, U.S. Forces Korea commander General Scaparrotti calls JSTARS “very important to us” as he deters an unpredictable North Korea. Here in this atmosphere, JSTARS has flown in support of homeland defense, doing drug interdiction missions.