

are doing their jobs. Our job is to give them the resources they require.

Funding our Armed Forces is not the only area that is ripe for productive, bipartisan negotiation. Last December, the Senate made progress moving toward a long-term reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program. Unfortunately, though Senate Republicans were prepared and eager to move forward, we were not able to put that in the continuing resolution. Approximately 9 million children, including thousands in my home State of Kentucky, depend on CHIP for healthcare coverage. Their parents depend on it for financial security and for peace of mind. Instead of giving them a 5-year reauthorization in time for the holidays, partisan objections forced Congress to settle for a short-term patch.

This month we can set this right. I know colleagues on both sides of the aisle are eager to find a long-term solution—5 years, full reauthorization. Let's get this done for working families.

Furthermore, as Senators from both parties have stated, Congress should act now to provide relief for communities across the country that were devastated by disasters in 2017. Last year's hurricanes crippled Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and dealt blows to communities from Florida to Texas. Wildfires caused serious damage across the Western United States. For many Americans in these areas, life is nowhere near back to normal. It is time to complete our work on the supplemental disaster relief legislation.

It is imperative that none of these urgent priorities be held hostage to our ongoing discussions around immigration policy. Senators with diverse viewpoints have been discussing how to address the unlawfully established DACA Program while also improving border security, interior enforcement, and addressing other important parts of our broken immigration system. As I have stated, if a compromise solution emerges that meets the President's conditions, it will be brought up for a vote in the Senate. In the meantime, let's continue productive negotiations and secure a bipartisan funding agreement.

#### MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 4667

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand that there is a bill at the desk due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4667) making further supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2018, for disaster assistance for Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, and calendar year 2017 wildfires, and for other purposes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the pro-

visions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The bill will be placed on the calendar.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

#### FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, yesterday the four congressional leaders had a positive and productive meeting with Budget Director Mulvaney and representatives from the White House, including Mr. Short. It was a good first step, but there is a lot of work to do. Ultimately, the budget agreement must lift the spending caps with parity between defense and urgent domestic priorities, it must include disaster aid, a healthcare package, and an agreement to enshrine DACA protections alongside additional border security.

Like our Republican colleagues, Democrats want to make sure our men and women in uniform have the resources they need to do their jobs. There is not an argument about that, but we also want to make sure there are crucial investments in economic development and job creation here at home—programs that support the middle class and help it grow.

That includes a number of things, including funding needed for the opioid crisis. Life expectancy has gone down in America for the first time in years because of deaths from the opioid abuse by young people and middle-aged people. Are we just going to shrug our shoulders at that? There is a lot more to do. It affects rural areas, urban areas, and suburban areas. There have been 63,000 Americans who have died from drug overdoses. Those are deaths on the battlefield, in a sense, as well—often the flower of our youth, the prime of America, so many in rural areas. These are kids who were full of potential. Many were veterans dealing with the wounds of war. They served our country and didn't get what they needed when they came home.

I had a father cry in my arms. His son had been grappling with opioids. Finally, they had persuaded the son to sign up for a treatment program, but the treatment program didn't have the funding it needed so there was a long waiting list, and the son died of an overdose while waiting on that list. We can't have that anymore.

What about veterans' healthcare? These are people who risked their lives for us. We need to do it.

What about millions of hard-working Americans who need pensions? One of the issues Americans are most worried about is pensions and retirement. For years, they paid into these plans. They were told: You know, when you retire,

you are not going to be rich, you are not going to be able to buy luxuries, but at least you will have a life of dignity. Now those pensions have been robbed from so many people throughout the country. Are we going to shrug our shoulders?

I hear the majority leader say he is not for parity. "Parity" is not just a word, it is veterans, people who need opioid relief, and middle-class folks and working people who need pensions. Are our Republican colleagues going to do what they just did in the tax bill and abandon the middle class? Are our Republican colleagues going to do what they tried to do in the healthcare bill and take away healthcare from millions of working people, people in the middle class? "Parity" is the term we use around here. I would rather call it defending middle-class America. Just as it is important to defend America from foreign enemies, which our military does so bravely and proudly, we have to defend America here.

I plead with Leader MCCONNELL not to abandon the middle class in this bill. Funding the military is a worthy goal and so is helping the middle class. For the past year, unfortunately, our Republican colleagues have been doing what the very wealthy people want and ignoring the middle class and working people. That is one of the reasons right now so many Americans say they would rather have a Democratic Senate than a Republican Senate. I would rather have a Senate that helps the middle class, whatever the political outcome, but our colleagues don't seem to be going for that.

I say to Leader MCCONNELL, my friend, you cannot let the hard right dictate what you want because the hard right and their wealthy benefactors are not where America is. It is not even where the Republican Party has always been.

Now, in addition to parity helping the middle class, we need to do other things. We should pass a disaster package that treats all States and territories fairly given the necessity of relief in Texas, California, Louisiana, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. By the way, we need to make sure we straighten out things in the West so the Forest Service isn't robbed of the funding they need to prevent future forest fires as they take the money out to handle present forest fires. We need to do that.

I know a lot of Congressmen from the House want aid. Even though many of them opposed aid when New York and New Jersey had a crisis, we are not going to play tit for tat, but we want a fair bill, and we want our priorities recognized as well.

Finally, there are the Dreamers. This must be done now. Leader MCCONNELL seems to think there is no urgency. We disagree strongly—respectfully but strongly. There is an urgent need. We have hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of Americans who want America to be their country—who were

brought here through no fault of their own, who are working in our factories and offices, who are going to our schools, and who are serving in our military. Right now, every morning they wake up with a pit of fear in their heart that they will be deported and separated from their families. There is a very strong urgency there, and we have to get the Dreamers taken care of as well as these other needs.

So our language, our proposal on this budget deal is to take care of the middle class in terms of pensions and opioids and veterans, take care of disaster relief, take care of the healthcare problems we face—we all know about CHIP, community health centers, and healthcare extenders—and take care of both the border and the Dreamers. We can do it all. We should do it all.

It is no secret that in each of these areas right now there are sticking points, but there are potential points of agreement. All five parties continue to have discussion groups on these four circles of areas—and to do them concurrently and come up with solutions quickly so we can meet that January 19 deadline because nobody wants sequestration to go into effect for the military or nonmilitary side of the budget. Our goal should be a global agreement on all these issues by January 19. That is the best way to resolve the issues we face.

I see my dear friend from Georgia waiting, and I yield the floor to him.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Walter David Counts III, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

#### CONGRATULATING THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA BULLDOGS FOOTBALL TEAM

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I rise to talk about the tradition of New Year's Day, the beginning of a new year, our great country, and many of its great traditions.

I am sorry the minority leader left so quickly because I wanted to brag about how great the New York City Police and law enforcement were on New Year's Eve. Millions of Americans gathered to watch the ball drop in New York City and the new year to start. We all enjoy doing that in the warmth

of our homes, particularly on days like today, but there is also the warmth of America.

There is a second great tradition that takes place on New Year's Day as well. It is called the college football season, which is capped off by the Rose Bowl, which is played in Pasadena, CA. This year, the Rose Bowl was played between the University of Georgia, my home State, and the University of Oklahoma. It was one of the greatest football games, I think anybody would admit, that has ever been played in that game before, and I am proud of both universities.

I am equally proud of the University of Alabama and Clemson University—the other two teams that played for the right to play in Atlanta, GA, on Monday night of next week, on January 8, to decide the collegiate national championship. My Bulldogs of Georgia will be one of those two teams. They defeated Oklahoma 54 to 48 in a great football game in California. Alabama made a decisive victory over Clemson in New Orleans, LA, in the Sugar Bowl. The two will meet this coming Monday night in the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, GA.

I don't know which is going to win. I know which one I am pulling for. I know which one I am on the floor bragging about tonight, but I am equally bragging about all of our collegiate athletics in this country and the great men and women who make it work—the coaches, athletic directors, and people who make it go.

In particular, with Georgia's victory, it prompts me to come to the floor and talk about Kirby Smart. Kirby is the head coach of the University of Georgia. For 9 years preceding his coming to Georgia, he was assistant to Nick Saban, coach for the University of Alabama. They will play against each other on Monday night for this year's national championship. It is ironic that the coach and his pupil will be the two coaches in that great game.

Kirby is a University of Georgia graduate. He was a great University of Georgia football player in his own right. He came to the University of Georgia with high hopes as an alumnus, hoping that he could be the person to take Georgia to new heights.

It took him only a year. The first season was 8 and 5. The second season was this year, 12 and 1—now 13 and 1—winning the Rose Bowl and playing for the national championship on Monday night.

Kirby Smart is not just smart because he knows football; he is smart because he knows how to be a leader. You saw an example of a man in the Rose Bowl who never took credit himself. He always gave it to his other coaches and to his other players. He never tried to be the winner. He always tried to be in the background. He put others ahead of himself, but deep down inside—and behind the great victory that was won that night—it was his spirit, his encouragement, his living

the dream that all the Georgia players followed.

I want to talk about a couple of them. Sony Michel was the offensive player of the game, one of the greatest running backs ever to come out of the University of Georgia, and we had some good ones—Frankie Sinkwich, Charlie Trippy, and Herschel Walker. On defense, Roquan Smith, the Dick Butkus Award winner, played a great defensive game. Then, with the combination of leadership they brought to the team on the field and the quiet leadership and confidence Kirby Smart brought to the team as its coach, they won that game 54 to 48 in a double-overtime elimination of the University of Oklahoma.

My congratulations go to Oklahoma and their quarterback Baker Mayfield, who was the Heisman Trophy winner, on playing a great game.

I wish Alabama a lot of luck on Monday night, but not enough to beat my Bulldogs. This is going to be our chance to win a national championship for the first time in 38 years of football. We are going to be in my home State of Georgia in our newest athletic facility, the Mercedes-Benz Stadium. I think it is an appropriate place for us to win, so I am going to say "Go Dawgs" from the floor of the Senate.

On Monday night, I hope Kirby Smart remembers the reason I am bragging about him today on the floor is that he is going to be our leader Monday night. He is going to carry us to victory one more time. I am counting on him, just like all the Georgia graduates all over the country who watched with joy on January 1, and we will be looking on Monday night with anticipation and, hopefully, satisfaction.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Thank you, Mr. President.

I have to add, coming from Arkansas, that I wish to congratulate the Southeast Conference for being the championship teams. It is going to be a great game.

#### FORT SMITH, ARKANSAS, BICENTENNIAL

Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the bicentennial of Fort Smith, AR.

On Christmas Day in 1817, Army troops established a western frontier military post on the confluence of the Arkansas and Poteau Rivers. MAJ Stephen Long named it Fort Smith, after GEN Thomas Smith, commander of the U.S. Army rifle regiment.

To recognize the significant milestone, the community is organizing a year-long celebration that highlights its rich history, its citizens, and its future. While Fort Smith was abandoned by 1824, the community that sprung up around it continued to grow and played a unique role in westward expansion and the preservation of law and order in our developing Nation.

Judge Isaac Parker paved the way for bringing order to Indian Territory, and