

I started reading a book last night called "Red Platoon." It is a brand-new book written by a man who won a Medal of Honor. It talks about a remote outpost in Afghanistan. We know what sacrifices the Red Platoon and the men and women who fought in the new wars in Iraq and Afghanistan made. So we know they deserve better than just rushing through this bill. Hard-working American taxpayers deserve better.

The one thing we can all agree on is that Americans must have a strong, strong military with the capability to defend America's national security interests around the world and to protect us here at home. There is no dispute about that.

Democrats believe that we must take care of our middle class also. We must know that the security of all Americans depends not only on the Pentagon—on bombs and bullets—but also on other national security interests—the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the help that comes through this legislation to local police departments and first responders. That is why we fought so hard as Democrats last year to stop the devastating cuts from sequestration, which was generated by the Republicans and which would have been a disaster for the military, our national security, and millions of middle-class Americans.

We need a bipartisan budget agreement. We reached that, and it is commendable that the Republican leader said we want to stick with that. Well, we need to stick with it because that bipartisan budget agreement was based on the principle that we need to treat the middle class as fairly as the Pentagon. That agreement was intended to avoid another budget fight this year, but it doesn't appear that is possible.

I was pleased that my Republican friends stuck to this budget agreement in the committee with both authorization and appropriations. But we have been told—and told publicly—that they intend to break the bipartisan budget agreement and propose \$18 billion increases only for the Pentagon. This money is going to come from a strange source. It is going to come from the military itself.

I had the good fortune of meeting with the Secretary of Defense last Thursday. To use the so-called OCO moneys—they are used for warfighting, and that is why they are put in there—to take this and use it for some other source or some other purpose is wrong.

My friend talks about how the military supports this legislation. Of course they do. But they don't support what Chairman MCCAIN is going to try to do. In the process, we need only to look at what else is going on with the Republican Senate. They refuse to provide money to fight the Zika virus, to stop the terrible situation regarding opioid drugs. The people of Flint, MI, are still waiting for help. We need funding for local law enforcement, which

has not been forthcoming, and for the intelligence agencies and our first responders. It is wrong not to take care of these folks.

We reached an agreement last year. Now both sides need to keep our promises and the agreement for the American people. We must treat the middle class fairly. Make no mistake, as the appropriations process moves forward, we are going to insist on that.

I will support cloture on the motion to proceed to the Defense authorization bill today, even though in 2010 my friend, the chairman of the committee, voted with other Republicans to stop moving forward on the Defense bill. But Democrats are willing to proceed deliberately. We are going to hold Republicans to their word on the budget agreement. We are going to do our jobs, as we want them to do theirs. Our Armed Forces and middle-class Americans deserve nothing less.

#### TRIBUTE TO RUBY PAONE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, my friend the Republican leader talked about Ruby Paone. I have so much admiration and respect for her that it is hard to put it into words.

In 1975, a young woman from North Carolina came to the U.S. Capitol. She was overwhelmed by everything, especially overwhelmed by this huge building she was going to work in. Ruby was excited for her first day of work at the Senate reception desk. But as she approached the Capitol, realizing what her new job was all about and the new city, she recalls: "Walking into this building, I was overwhelmed."

It is understandable that she felt that way. Many of us have and do feel the same way. The Capitol was a big change for Ruby. She was raised in the small town of Bladenboro, NC. She was a farm girl who spent her summers pulling peanuts—I didn't know you pulled peanuts, but that is what they do—and harvesting tobacco. Ruby graduated from a small Presbyterian school, St. Andrews University. She is the only one in her family to leave their small town in North Carolina. But as Ruby got situated in her new job that day, another feeling set in. She said: "It just felt right to be here."

Now, 41 years, 2 months, and 9 days after she walked through the Capitol doors to start a new job, she is leaving. It is hard to imagine her not being here. To borrow from her own words, "it just feels right" to have Ruby here.

Tomorrow is going to be her last day in the Senate. After more than four decades of service to the greatest deliberative body, Ruby is retiring to spend more time with her family. Her family's gain is our loss. She is an institution, a fixture in the Senate. She is the longest serving woman who works with the doorkeepers. She has been here for 7 different Presidential administrations, 10 consecutive inaugurations, 16 different Sergeants at Arms, and 383 different Senators.

She recognizes every one of those 383 Senators, and there is a reason that she does that. When she was first hired, we didn't have the names and faces in these books we give to the pages and to new Senators. It wasn't done that way then. She had to do it by memorizing their names and learning to recognize them when they came into the Capitol Rotunda and on the Senate floor. She would walk around and look for these Senators to get to know who they were. She grew close to many of these Senators, including Blanche Lincoln, TOM CARPER, and THAD COCHRAN.

I know Ruby. I know her family quite well. Her husband worked on the Senate floor for many years. He was instrumental to Majority Leader George Mitchell, Tom Daschle, and me. No one knows the rules of the Senate better than Marty Paone. He now works for President Obama in the Office of Legislative Affairs. He is a very special person, and I have such admiration for him.

When their children were in high school, we would often talk about their children—how they played ball, how they did well, how they didn't do so well the night before. That is what our conversations were about. We didn't talk a lot of Senate business, unless we had to. I am sorry to say that we had to many times. Marty helped me so many times through very difficult situations on the floor.

To say that I will miss Ruby is an understatement. I want to be able to come to Ruby and say: How is Marty? How is he doing?

Throughout my entire time in the Senate, she has always been here with a smile and a kind word. She is as much a part of this place as anyone who has ever served in the Senate. So I, along with the entire Senate—Senators, staff—wish her the best as she embarks on her well-deserved retirement.

Ruby, thank you very much for your 41 years, 2 months, and 9 days of service.

I yield the floor.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

#### PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL OF A RULE SUBMITTED BY THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S.J. Res. 28, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 28) providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Secretary of Agriculture relating to inspection of fish of the order Siluriformes.