

get anything done. They know that is a really tough sell. They know the only chance to make it work is by slow-walking bills they actually support.

Democrats don't actually want to be on record opposing our troops before Memorial Day, so they support the bill in public then bog it down in private and cover with one embarrassing excuse after the next: We haven't read it. It was written in secret. The dog ate it. It is just embarrassing.

As the chairman of the Armed Services Committee said, "We need to move forward with this legislation. We need to move forward with it now, for the sake of our men and women who are serving and defending this Nation and putting their lives on the line." He is right.

So here is an idea. How about Democrats skip talking about doing their jobs at a press conference and actually do their jobs instead? They can follow the lead of this Republican majority—a majority that continues to do its job—and show how important things can be accomplished for the American people as a result. So no more needless delays, no more embarrassing excuses, and no more blocking benefits for the men and women of our military. Let's work together to get this done. We have already seen what is possible in the Republican-led Senate when we do.

#### THE REPUBLICAN-LED SENATE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, so much has changed since the American people elected a new Republican majority to get the Senate back to work. Americans have told us to break through the gridlock and get the Senate focused on real solutions again. We have, and we are.

This doesn't mean our colleagues across the aisle will always cooperate; we have certainly seen an unfortunate example of that this particular week. But what is clear is how the underlying fundamentals have changed: Committees are now functioning; legislative processes are now working; we now continue to get important things done for the people who sent us here.

It all started with a simple philosophy: Give Senators and the people they represent more of a say in the legislative process, and they will take more of a stake in the legislative outcome, regardless of party. So we did, and the results have been encouraging. This is how we have been able to transform gridlock into progress and dysfunction into solutions.

To give an example of what I mean, we recently took as many rollcall votes on one bill, the Energy Policy Modernization Act, as the Senate took in all—all—of 2014 under the previous majority. It is remarkable how far we have come in such a short time.

Consider what we were able to achieve for our constituents in 2015 alone. Some said Congress could never break old traditions of short-term fixes and patches and punts, but we repeat-

edly proved them wrong with meaningful and substantial reforms instead.

That is certainly true of the new education reform law we passed. It replaced No Child Left Behind with "the largest devolution of federal control to the states in a quarter-century." It is a hugely important reform that empowers parents and prevents Washington from imposing Common Core. That is a notable conservative achievement.

The same could be said of the decisive action we took to enact permanent tax relief for families and small businesses or to bring an end to a job-killing energy embargo from the 1970s or to place on President Obama's desk a bill that would finally end ObamaCare's cycle of broken promises and pain for the middle class.

We secured pay raises for our troops, help for our veterans, and hope for the victims of human trafficking. We passed a landmark cyber security law that will help safeguard America's personal information. We achieved the most significant transportation solution in years, one that will finally allow us to rebuild roads, bridges, and crumbling infrastructure without raising taxes by a penny.

We got a lot done for the American people in 2015. We are continuing to get a lot done for the American people in 2016.

In just a few months, the Republican-led Senate has passed legislation providing real solutions on a range of issues: Addressing the prescription opioid and heroin epidemic that is ravaging our country with critical, comprehensive legislation; modernizing American energy with the first broad energy bill since the Bush administration; improving airport security and consumer protections with the most pro-passenger, pro-security FAA reauthorization in years; deterring North Korea's growing aggression with comprehensive sanctions; keeping the Internet open and accessible by permanently banning government from taxing your access to the Internet; supporting American manufacturing by reducing tariffs that make it harder for American businesses to compete and to grow; defending American innovation and entrepreneurship protections against the theft of intellectual property; and just this week, combating sexual assault and human trafficking with new protections for victims and enhanced tools for law enforcement.

These are just some of the things we have been able to accomplish the past few months alone. But we are not finished. None of this would have been possible without functioning committees and capable leaders to guide them. Those chairs often choose to focus on ideas where Republicans and Democrats can agree, not just where the two parties disagree, and we have gotten some really important legislation passed as a result.

We have seen some truly notable anecdotes, too, like the fact that the Finance Committee has approved more

bills to date in the 114th Congress "than any single Congress since 1980"; like the fact that we got the appropriations process started this year at the earliest point in the modern budgeting era—in other words, in about 40 years; like the fact that we passed the first of these three appropriations bills at the earliest point in the modern budgeting era as well.

It is good to see the appropriations process finally getting back on track after so many years of dysfunction. It is incredibly important for the Senate, it is definitely healthy for the democratic process, and it will certainly allow us to address a variety of funding issues in a more thoughtful and deliberative way.

Take Zika, for instance. Combating the spread of the Zika virus has been a priority for both parties, so Republicans and Democrats deliberated and forged a compromise in committee. Senators debated that compromise out here on the floor and voted to pass it. Now Members of the Senate and the House are preparing the process of going to conference so we can get this measure down to the President. That is how you get good legislation to the President. That is what is known as doing your job around here.

Of course, it will not be easy to get the appropriations process back on track completely after so many years of dysfunction, but we are committed to doing all we can. We have clearly demonstrated strong and steady progress already, and that is something that benefits both parties. It means more Members get a say. It means more scrutiny is brought to bear on the funds that are spent. It means more regular order and more of a Senate that functions even better for everyone.

I am proud of all we have accomplished in such a short time. We have put the Senate back to work, we have continued to get our jobs done, and that has allowed us to pass important legislation for the American people who, after all, sent us all here.

I thank Senators from both sides who have worked with us to restore this Chamber to a place of higher purpose. I know there is more we can accomplish together, so let's keep working to ensure that we do.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

#### ISSUES BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is not necessary to go into great detail about the past, but it is important to talk about the past so we understand what is going on now and what the future holds.

The biggest change coming from the Republican majority is what the Democratic minority has done. We have cooperated. We are not in the business of