

# Statement on Defense Amendments

Mr. President, if there was ever a moment in American history when we needed to fundamentally alter our national priorities, now is that time.

Whether it is fighting against systemic racism and police brutality, transforming our energy system away from fossil fuel, ending a cruel and dysfunctional healthcare system or addressing the grotesque level of income and wealth inequality in our country – now is the time for change, real change.

And when we talk about real change it is incredible to me the degree to which Congress continues to ignore our bloated \$740 billion defense budget – which has gone up by over \$100 billion since Trump has been in office.

Year after year Democrats and Republicans, who disagree on almost everything, come together with minimal debate to support an exploding Pentagon budget which is now higher than the next 11 nations combined, and represents more than half of our discretionary spending.

Incredibly, after adjusting for inflation, we are now spending more on the military than we did during the height of the Cold War or during the wars in Vietnam and Korea.

This extraordinary level of military spending comes at a time when the Department of Defense is the only agency of our federal government

that has not been able to pass an independent audit, when defense contractors are making enormous profits while paying their CEOs exorbitant compensation packages, and when the so-called “War on Terror” will end up costing us some \$6 trillion.

I believe this is a moment in history when it would be a good idea for all of my colleagues, and the American people, to remember what former Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower said in 1953. And, as we all recall, Eisenhower was a four star general who led the allied forces to victory in Europe during World War II. Eisenhower said: “Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children.”

What Eisenhower said was true 67 years ago, and it is true today.

If the horrific pandemic we are now experiencing has taught us anything it is that national security means a lot more than building bombs, missiles, jet fighters, tanks, submarines, nuclear warheads and other weapons of mass destruction. National security also means doing everything we can to improve the lives of our people, many of whom have been abandoned by our government decade after decade.

In order to begin the process of transforming our national priorities I have filed three amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act.

Let me very briefly explain to my colleagues what those amendments would do.

The first amendment would reduce the military budget by 10 percent and use the \$74 billion in savings to invest in distressed communities around the country that have been ravaged by extreme poverty, mass incarceration, deindustrialization and decades of neglect.

Mr. President, this amendment is being co-sponsored by Senators Ed Markey and Elizabeth Warren.

It also has the support of more than 60 organizations throughout this country representing millions of workers, environmentalists, and religious leaders including Public Citizen, Union of Concerned Scientists, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Greenpeace and the United Methodist Church.

At a time when more Americans have died from the coronavirus than were killed fighting in World War I, when over 30 million Americans have lost their jobs in recent months, when tens of millions of Americans are in danger of being evicted from their homes, when education in America from childcare to graduate school is in desperate need of reform, when over half a million Americans are homeless, and when close to 100 million people are either uninsured or under-insured - now is the time to invest in our people - in jobs, education, housing and healthcare here at home.

Under this amendment, distressed cities and towns in every state in the country would be able to use these funds to create jobs by building affordable housing, schools, childcare facilities, community health centers, public hospitals, libraries, sustainable energy projects, and clean drinking water facilities.

These communities would also receive federal funding to hire more public school teachers, provide nutritious meals to children and parents and offer free tuition at public colleges, universities or trade schools.

Mr. President, at this pivotal moment in American history, we have to make a fundamental decision. Do we want to spend billions more on endless wars in the Middle East, or do we provide decent jobs to millions of unemployed Americans here at home? Do we spend more money on nuclear weapons or do we invest in childcare, education, affordable housing and healthcare for the American people most in need?

Mr. President, when we analyze the Defense Department budget it is interesting to note that Congress has appropriated so much money for the Defense Department that the Pentagon literally does not know what to do with it. According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), between 2013 and 2018 the Pentagon returned more than \$80 billion in funding back to the Treasury.

In my view, the time is long overdue for us to take a hard look not only at the size of the Pentagon budget, but at the enormous amount of waste, cost overruns, fraud, and at the financial mismanagement that has plagued the Department of Defense for decades.

Mr. President, let's be clear. About half of the Pentagon's budget goes directly into the hands of private contractors, not our troops.

And, over the past two decades, virtually every major defense contractor in the United States has paid millions of dollars in fines and settlements for misconduct and fraud – all while making huge profits on those government contracts.

Since 1995, Boeing, Lockheed Martin and United Technologies have paid over \$3 billion in fines or related settlements for fraud or misconduct. Yet, those three companies received around \$1 trillion in defense contracts over the past two decades alone.

Further, Mr. President, I find it interesting that the very same defense contractors that have been found guilty or reached settlements for fraud are also paying their CEOs excessive compensation packages.

Last year, the CEOs of Lockheed Martin and Northrup Grumman both made over \$20 million in total compensation while around 90% of the companies' revenue came from defense contracts. In other words, these companies for all intents and purposes are governmental agencies where the CEOs make over a hundred times more than the Secretary of Defense. It's not too surprising, therefore, that we have a revolving door where our military people end up on the boards of directors of these major defense companies.

Moreover, Mr. President, as the GAO has told us, there are massive cost overruns in the Defense Department's acquisition budget that we have got to address.

According to GAO, the Pentagon's \$1.8 trillion acquisition portfolio currently suffers from more than \$628 billion in cost overruns with much of the cost growth taking place after production.

GAO tells us that "many DoD programs fall short of cost, schedule, and performance expectations, meaning DoD pays more than anticipated, can buy less than expected, and, in some cases, delivers less capability to the warfighter."

Mr. President, a major reason why there is so much waste, fraud and abuse at the Pentagon is the fact that the Defense Department remains the only federal agency in America that hasn't been able to pass an independent audit. That is why I have filed an amendment with Senators Grassley, Wyden and Lee that would require the Defense Department to pass a clean audit no later than Fiscal Year 2025.

Many of us will recall, Mr. President, what then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld told the American people on the day before 9-11 about the serious financial mismanagement at the DoD. And here is what he said:

"Our financial systems are decades old. According to some estimates, we cannot track \$2.3 trillion in transactions. We cannot share

information from floor to floor in this building because it's stored on dozens of technological systems that are inaccessible or incompatible.”

And yet, nearly 20 years after Mr. Rumsfeld’s statement, the Defense Department has still not passed a clean audit despite the fact that the Pentagon controls assets in excess of \$2.2 trillion, or roughly 70 percent of what the entire federal government owns.

Mr. President, the Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan concluded in 2011 that \$31-\$60 billion spent in Iraq and Afghanistan had been lost to fraud and waste.

Separately, in 2015, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction reported that the Pentagon could not account for \$45 billion in funding for reconstruction projects.

And more recently, an audit conducted by Ernst & Young for the Defense Logistics Agency found that it could not properly account for some \$800 million in construction projects.

Mr. President, it is time to hold the Defense Department to the same level of accountability as the rest of the government – and that is what the Sanders-Grassley-Wyden-Lee audit the Pentagon amendment is all about.

I believe in a strong military. But we cannot keep giving more money to the Pentagon than it needs when millions of children in this country are

food insecure and 140 million Americans can't afford the basic necessities of life without going into debt.

Further, Mr. President, let us be very clear. When we are talking about the need to protect the American people, we are talking about the need to defeat our most immediate adversary right now and that is the coronavirus.

And what virtually every scientist who has studied this issue will tell you is that the most effective way to prevent the transmission of this deadly virus and to stop unnecessary deaths from COVID-19 is for everyone in this country to wear a mask.

That is why I have filed an amendment to require the Trump Administration to manufacture hundreds of millions of high-quality masks and deliver them to every person in America on a monthly basis.

Mr. President, this is not a radical idea. In fact, it is exactly what South Korea, France, Turkey, Austria and many other countries already do: distribute high-quality facemasks to all for free or at virtually no cost.

Let me be as clear as I can be: As we see yet another horrific rise in COVID-19 cases, this amendment will save countless lives.

As everyone knows, over the past three months, the coronavirus has infected more than 2.5 million Americans and caused nearly 130,000 deaths. More Americans have died from the coronavirus than were killed fighting in the wars in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq – combined.

And sadly, Mr. President, there is new evidence that this pandemic is far from over, and may kill tens of thousands more.

In the past days, new COVID-19 cases in the United States have increased dramatically, jumping to their highest level in two months and returning to where they were at the peak of the outbreak.

Mr. President, if we take bold action now, we could prevent tens of thousands of deaths. Recently, the University of Washington predicted that the death toll in the U.S. will continue to rise, estimating nearly 180,000 dead by October first.

However, that same study found that if 95% of people wore masks, that death toll could drop dramatically, saving over 30,000 lives.

Yet incredibly, the Trump administration continues to endanger millions of Americans by ignoring the most basic recommendation of medical professionals, and recklessly downplaying the most effective tool we have to contain the pandemic: wearing a mask.

This amendment is about listening to the science and saving lives. Here is what my amendment will do:

It would require the Trump administration to use the Defense Production Act to make hundreds of millions of high-quality masks and deliver five

of them, per person, directly to every household in America on a monthly basis, until the pandemic has ended.

Mr. President, there are so many things we don't know about COVID-19. But on this issue, the science is absolutely clear: masks save lives.

We must act now to save tens of thousands of lives by forcing the Trump administration to follow basic science and protect the American people – and that's what this amendment is all about.

So, Mr. President, having said all of that:

I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up the following amendments en bloc: Senate Amendment Number 1788, Number 1920, and Number 1789, that they be reported by number, and further that there be one hour of debate on the amendments, equally divided and controlled by me or my designee and Senator Inhofe or his designee, and that following the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate vote on adoption of the amendments in the order listed without intervening action or debate.