

gerous practice in terms of what we can count on for our national security.

I would like to pause for just a moment and reflect on what the Appropriations Committee is doing, what the U.S. Senate is doing and doing properly—not because we deserve an award or a merit badge for doing our most basic responsibility but because it is worth noting when we do it because it hasn't been done for so long.

The following are the seven appropriations bills that have already passed the Senate. One is the Energy and Water Development legislation. I am chairman of that committee and of the conference that is working on that. I am working with Chairman MIKE SIMPSON in the House, Senator FEINSTEIN, and Representative KAPTUR. We are working together. We hope to have that bill—which has already passed the Senate and has already passed the House—we hope to come together and have a conference immediately after Labor Day so we can complete the bill and send it to the President for his signature. That is one of the appropriations bills. Others are Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies—we passed that one; the Legislative Branch—we passed that one; and Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies, and that passed.

In past years, Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies has been very difficult to pass. There are some controversial issues there, but Senator SHELBY and Senator LEAHY have led us, along with Senator SCHUMER and Senator MCCONNELL, to say: We are not going to try to solve every controversial issue that we can think of on the appropriations bills, because we have learned in the past that practice will sink them. So we have tabled a few bills—a few amendments that have come before us because they would have kept the appropriations bills from proceeding. We can deal with those more controversial ideas and amendments at another time.

Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies has been passed. Financial Services and General Government has also been passed.

So there are seven. That is the largest number of appropriations bills the Senate has passed before August since the year 2000—18 years ago. This week, we are debating the third package of appropriations bills, which includes Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies and the Defense appropriations bill. That means that if we are successful in completing our work this week on those two, we will have considered all nine of those appropriations bills under what we call in the Senate the regular order. That means we have an opportunity to offer other amendments when they come to the floor, we debate them, we vote on those amendments, we pass the bills, and then we go to conference with the House. In other words, not

just the 31 members of the Appropriations Committee get to work on this; all Members of the Senate get to have their say.

This week, we have already voted on some amendments, and we may get to consider more. After we finish these two bills—as I said earlier, hopefully tomorrow—the Senate will have passed the annual appropriations bills that account for nearly 90 percent of the discretionary Federal Government spending.

Senator SHELBY, the chairman, and the vice chairman, Senator LEAHY, as well as the majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, and Senator SCHUMER, all deserve credit and our thanks for creating the environment that makes this possible. I appreciate their commitment. I want to especially commend Senator BLUNT, Senator MURRAY, Senator SHELBY, and Senator DURBIN for their work on the bills that are before us this week.

A few weeks ago, one of my friends in Nashville, one of the major contributors to Vanderbilt University Medical Center, came up to me. He said: It is a real shame that you guys in Congress aren't funding biomedical research.

So I said to my friend: Well, let me tell you what has happened the last 3 or 4 years, and see if you still believe that. The U.S. Senate is on track for the fourth straight year to provide record funding for biomedical research at the National Institutes of Health in a regular appropriations bill.

This year's bill includes \$39.1 billion for the National Institutes of Health—a \$2 billion increase over last year.

Over the last 3 years, Congress has increased NIH funding by about \$7 billion. First, Congress increased National Institutes of Health funding by \$2 billion in 2015. Then, in 2016, we increased it another \$2 billion. Then, in 2017, Congress increased funding at the NIH by \$3 billion, including \$500 million to work on a non-addictive pain killer, which, in my view, is the Holy Grail of the fight against the opioid crisis—finding some form of painkiller that is not addictive for the 100 million Americans who hurt and the 25 million who have chronic pain.

This year's increased funding for biomedical research will mean more medical miracles—new treatments and cures. The reason Congress has given this such a priority was very well described by Dr. Francis Collins, the head of the National Institutes of Health. He calls it the “National Institutes of Hope.”

When he testified before our Appropriations Committee, he talked about what we might expect to see during the next 10 years if we properly fund the National Institutes of Health. Some of those predictions by Dr. Collins were these: Being able to identify Alzheimer's disease before symptoms appear; the possibility that we could rebuild a patient's heart with the patient's own cells—in other words, put

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, Boy Scouts shouldn't get a merit badge for telling the truth, and U.S. Senators shouldn't get an award for passing appropriations bills. That is what we are expected to do. That is what we are here for. That is our most basic responsibility. But I think it is worth noticing, especially since the distinguished vice chairman of the Appropriations Committee is still on the floor, that this is the largest number of appropriations bills passed before August since the year 2000. We have already done that with seven bills, and if we are successful this week, as I expect we will be, in passing the third package of appropriations bills, we will have passed in the Senate annual appropriations bills that account for nearly 90 percent of the discretionary Federal Government spending. That is the part of the government spending that is not automatic—we call that the mandatory spending. It is the part of the government spending that is under control.

For the last 10 years, this basically 30 percent of the Federal budget that we call discretionary spending that we appropriate every year—that has been going up at about the rate of inflation, and over the next 10 years, according to the Congressional Budget Office, it will go up at just a little more than the rate of inflation. So this money we are spending on behalf of our taxpayers, we are spending in a budgeted, responsible way, and we are spending it on time—if we continue the progress we are making—which makes it easier for our military, our National Laboratories, and our agencies to plan and spend money more wisely.

Nothing is more wasteful—almost nothing is more wasteful—than the failure of the U.S. Congress to appropriate or decide the amount of money that is to be spent every year before the year begins. Too often over the last several years, it has been the middle of the year before agency managers knew what they could spend that year, and that is a wasteful practice. In a military sense, our leaders in the Department of Defense tell us it is a dan-

the transplant surgeons out of business; the creation of a safe and effective artificial pancreas, making life easier and healthier for the millions of Americans with diabetes; development of new vaccines, Dr. Collins said, including for Zika, for HIV/AIDS, and a universal flu vaccine; development of a new, non-addictive painkiller, which I mentioned; significant progress on the Precision Medicine Initiative, which President Obama championed, which aim to map the genomes of 1 million volunteers so that we can better tailor treatments to patients; and new treatment for cancer patients. Those are just some of the new treatments, cures, and miracles we might expect, Dr. Collins said, in the next 10 years.

This bill we are talking about also provides \$3.7 billion to help those on the frontlines of the opioid crisis and help bring an end to opioid abuse. Senator MURRAY and I, as well as about 60 Members of this body, have put together a comprehensive opioids authorization bill, which we hope to be able to present to the full Senate at the end of next week, or shortly after Labor Day, that can be put together with the House to address this crisis. But this is the money for the opioids initiative; it is in this bill: \$1.5 billion for State Opioid Response Grants, state grants originally authorized by the 21st Century Cures Act; \$500 million to develop non-addictive painkillers; funding for more substance abuse and mental health treatment services at Community Health Centers.

The other funding bill included in this minibus appropriations bill is the Defense Appropriations bill. The Senator from Illinois is on the floor. He is the ranking Democrat on that committee. He has also been one of the foremost leaders of the effort to increase the biomedical research I just mentioned.

Chairman SHELBY and Senator DURBIN worked together to produce a bill that provides a total of \$675 billion to make sure our troops have the resources they need to maintain our national defense. The funding included in this bill will provide the largest pay increase since 2010 for the men and women serving in the military, including those who serve at Fort Campbell in Tennessee and Kentucky.

Also, \$2.8 billion is provided for basic research at the Department of Defense. This is the largest Defense Department research and development budget in history.

It is hard to think of a major technological development since World War II in this country that wasn't supported in some way by federally sponsored research. Funding basic research at the Department of Defense will give the United States an advantage over our adversaries and allow us to maintain the strongest military in the world.

I have suggested to President Trump that he make science and research a part of his "America First" agenda. We need to do that. Since 2007, over the

last 10 years, China has increased its spending on basic science by a factor of four and may surpass the United States in total spending on research and development this year, according to Norm Augustine, who, during the George W. Bush administration, chaired the bipartisan committee that wrote a report called "Rising Above the Gathering Storm," which made recommendations to the Congress on how to retain America's competitive advantage.

Our country needs to continue to be first in the world in basic research. The President has already signed into law two consecutive appropriations bills that provide record funding for science, technology, energy, and biomedical research, and the two appropriations bills we are debating this week will provide even more funding for basic research.

I urge my colleagues to support these bills because passing these bills means more biomedical research at National Institutes of Health for treatments and cures; more Federal help for States and communities struggling to combat the opioid crisis; the largest Department of Defense research budget in history; and pay raises for the men and women who serve in our military.

Let me say again what I said a little earlier. This funding that we are talking about—this record funding for science, technology, basic research, supercomputing in another bill, the need for our national defense—all of this is within the part of the Federal budget that is under control. Over the last 10 years, this discretionary part of the budget—roughly one-third or a little less than one-third of the budget—has grown at about the rate of inflation, and over the next 10 years, according to the Congressional Budget Office, it is expected to grow at just a little more than the rate of inflation.

So this is not the Federal spending that is causing the big Federal deficit. This is spending for national defense, national parks, the National Institutes of Health, and national laboratories. This is the core of what we need to do in the United States of America.

We need resolve and courage in a bipartisan way, and the President needs to join us, in dealing with the part of the budget that is running up a big deficit; that is, Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and other entitlements. Nobody wants to touch that. That is a separate question. But it is important for people to know that there is no need to beat your chest and pat yourself on the back when you cut funding for the military, when you cut funding for the National Institutes of Health, when you make our national laboratories work less, or when the National Parks can't maintain themselves.

We go the opposite direction here: record funding for national laboratories; we are considering more maintenance for National Parks; record funding for supercomputing; record funding for biomedical research, all

within the budget limits, all within our priorities. That is what we need to do.

As I said when I started, Senators don't deserve a merit badge for passing appropriations bills any more than Boy Scouts deserve a merit badge for telling the truth. That is what we are supposed to do. But when we do it and do it properly, as we are doing this year, it deserves to be noticed.

I congratulate Senator DURBIN, Senator LEAHY, Senator MCCONNELL, and Senator SHELBY for their roles and their leadership in this.

I thank the President.

I yield the floor.