

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