

Sen. Biden takes a courageous stance

Sen. Joe Biden deserves credit for being among the few presidential candidates who talks about what America could accomplish if we loosened the stranglehold the Pentagon has on our federal budget ("Biden: How's free college sound?" Monitor, May 12).

The Pentagon absorbs 27 cents of every income tax dollar a Concord resident pays - 36 cents if you include the military share of the federal debt. And those figures don't include veterans' disability payments, health care and other benefits.

We can all agree that Americans want and need a strong national defense. We can all agree that our taxes that arm, train and support the military should be spent wisely and strategically.

But that's not happening now. Military experts say we could cut \$60 billion out of the annual peacetime Pentagon budget without weakening our defense or military deterrence. Most of that \$60 billion goes to develop and build obsolete Cold War weapons and maintain a stockpile of 10,000 nuclear weapons, enough to destroy every city on Earth 10 times over.

These weapons systems have little utility against the threats we face today. One real world consequence is that while we pump billions into futuristic weapons, our men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan lack the equipment they need. Another, as Biden points out, is that the Pentagon's insatiable appetite for tax dollars has left other important priorities like our education system underfunded.

Hats off to Biden for having the political courage to address this issue. I look forward to the day when our U.S. representatives and senators from New Hampshire, Democrat and Republican, have the fortitude to do the same.

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