

## House Votes to Override Trump's Veto of Military Bill

Republicans joined with Democrats to hand President Trump a rare legislative rebuke in the final days of his presidency. The bill will next be taken up by the Senate, where it is expected to pass.



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WASHINGTON — The House voted on Monday to override President Trump's veto of the annual military policy bill, mustering bipartisan support to enact the legislation over the president's objections and handing him a rare legislative rebuke in the final days of his presidency.

The 322-to-87 vote is the first time a chamber of Congress has agreed to override one of Mr. Trump's vetoes, underscoring the sweeping popularity of the military legislation, which authorizes a pay raise for the nation's troops. It also amounted to a remarkable reprimand over the president's decision to flout one of his party's key orthodoxies — projecting military strength — from Republicans who have been reluctant to challenge Mr. Trump during his four years in office.

The margin surpassed the two-thirds majority needed to force enactment of the bill over Mr. Trump's objections. The Senate, which must also get approval from two-thirds of its chamber, will take up the legislation later in the week.

But attempts to quickly pass it in the Senate could be complicated by Senator Bernie Sanders, independent of Vermont, who said on Monday that he would delay consideration of the military bill unless lawmakers voted on a separate bill — one that would increase the size of individual stimulus checks to \$2,000.

The House on Monday passed its own bill that would raise direct stimulus payments to \$2,000 from the \$600 included in the coronavirus relief package that Mr. Trump signed into law on Sunday. That prompted several senators, including Mr. Sanders and Chuck Schumer, Democrat of New York, to call for a similar vote in the Senate.

In an interview on Monday evening, Mr. Sanders said that he planned to block an attempt on Tuesday by Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the majority leader, to expedite consideration of the military policy bill, unless Mr. McConnell committed to putting the bigger relief checks on the floor for a vote. That could force lawmakers to stay in Washington through New Year's Day to advance the veto override.

"Millions of families in America today are desperate, and the Senate has got to do its job by having a vote," Mr. Sanders said.

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Congress has succeeded in passing the military bill each year for 60 years, with lawmakers relishing the opportunity to assert their support for national security and bring home wins to their constituents.

But Mr. Trump, making good on a monthslong series of threats, vetoed the bipartisan legislation on Wednesday, citing a shifting list of reasons including his objection to a provision directing the military to strip the names of Confederate leaders from bases. He also demanded that the bill include the repeal of a legal shield for social media companies that he has tangled with, a significant legislative change that Republicans and Democrats alike have said is irrelevant to a bill that dictates military policy.

Senior lawmakers shepherding the legislation had hoped that mustering a veto-proof majority in favor of it would cow Mr. Trump into signing the bill. Their willingness to mow over Mr. Trump's objections to advance the measure was a stark departure from the deference the president has normally received on Capitol Hill.

The last time Congress overrode a presidential veto was in 2016, the final year of Barack Obama's presidency, after he vetoed legislation allowing families of the victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks to sue the government of Saudi Arabia. Lawmakers have tried — but failed — to override Mr. Trump's vetoes of legislation cutting off arms sales to Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf

nations, and a doomed attempt to overturn his emergency declaration at the southwestern border.

On no other issue have Republicans been more willing to break from the president than on matters of national security, but those expressions of defiance have rarely amounted to anything more than symbolic declarations. It surely did not help the president that the override vote came days after he scathingly criticized the \$900 billion coronavirus relief deal that Republican lawmakers voted for, leaving some in his own party to complain that he had thrown them under the bus.

“Today the House reiterated — in a resounding, bipartisan way — that our service members and national security are more important than politics,” said Representative Adam Smith, Democrat of Washington and the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. “By overriding the president’s veto, the House prioritized compromise and sound policy over legislative nihilism and blind political loyalty.”

Included in the military policy bill are a number of bipartisan measures, including new benefits for tens of thousands of Vietnam-era veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange, a 3 percent increase in pay for service members and a boost in hazardous duty incentive pay.

It would also take steps to slow or block Mr. Trump’s planned drawdown of American troops from Germany and Afghanistan, and would make it more difficult for the president to deploy military personnel to the southern border.

The legislation also directly addresses the protests for racial justice spurred over the summer by the killing of Black Americans, including George Floyd, at the hands of the police. It would require all federal officers enforcing crowd control at protests and demonstrations to identify themselves and their agencies. And it contains the bipartisan measure that directs the Pentagon to begin the process of renaming military bases named after Confederate leaders, a provision that Democrats fought to keep in the bill.