



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 166

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2020

No. 222

House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Thursday, December 31, 2020, at 10 a.m.

Senate

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2020

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our gracious King, You are the one clear power of love in the midst of lesser powers. Thank You for giving us the confidence that You hear and answer prayers.

Lord, use the Members of this body as ambassadors of reconciliation. Help them to bring wholeness, healing, and unity to a fragmented nation and world. Inspire them to discover Your love in each other and to see Your image in all creation.

Lord, settle our Senators down into a contemplative stillness that will make them yearn for righteousness, justice, and peace. May they speak wise words from a reservoir of wisdom that will transform discord into harmony.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore, led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). The majority leader is recognized.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today, the Senate was supposed to finish legislation securing critical tools, training, and support for America's Armed Forces, but the junior Senator from Vermont had other ideas.

Remember, Senator SANDERS spent last summer, literally, trying to defund our military. Not my words, but the title of a piece he published: "Defund the Pentagon: The Liberal Case." Our colleague offered an amendment to strip 10 percent of funding from our servicemembers and decimate our defense budget. The Russians aren't cutting military funding. China isn't cutting funding. But last summer, Senator SANDERS and fellow Democrats, including the Democratic leader, voted to make America unilaterally disarm and cut ours.

The left took a break from trying to defund the police to try to defund our Armed Forces. Their amendment went down in a landslide, but now our colleague from Vermont is again putting political stunts before the needs of our men and women in uniform.

Our colleague says he will slow down this vital bill unless he gets to muscle through another stand-alone proposal from Speaker PELOSI that would add roughly half a trillion dollars to the national debt, which does not align with what President Trump has suggested and which has no realistic path to quickly pass the Senate.

Well, as I have said, the Senate will not let our national security be shoved off course, certainly not by Senators who have spent years—literally years—

trying to gut America's capabilities while our adversaries continue ramping up. The Senate will stay on this important bill until we complete it one way or another.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Now let's talk about COVID-19 relief. Four days ago, President Trump signed the second largest rescue package in American history. The largest one was the CARES Act back in March. Due to this pandemic and our massive response, we now have a national debt far larger than our entire economy for the first time since World War II, but we knew our people needed more help, so Congress just passed another nearly \$900 billion in emergency relief targeted to those who need it most, a second round of payroll support to save small business jobs, more unemployment aid, vaccine distribution money, funding for safe schools, and much more.

In addition to historic amounts of targeted help at the request of President Trump and his team, the package also included another round of direct checks to households, whether or not each household needs the help, whether or not their finances have changed dramatically this past year.

Yesterday, Secretary Mnuchin announced households should begin receiving these payments as early as today and this week. That is more good news to a lot of people.

After Congress and the administration finalized the bipartisan bill, the President expressed interest in further

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

S7971

expanding nontargeted direct payments. So to ensure the President was comfortable signing the bill into law, the Senate committed to beginning one process that would combine three of the President's priorities: larger direct checks, a repeal of section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, and further efforts to review the integrity of our democracy—three of the President's priorities in one Senate process. That was the commitment, and that is what happened yesterday when I introduced text reflecting just what the President had, in fact, requested.

Now House and Senate Democrats want something very different. As they tried to do countless times in the past 4 years, Speaker PELOSI and Leader SCHUMER are trying to pull a fast one on the President and the American people.

First of all, they are hoping everyone just forgets about election integrity and Big Tech. They are desperate to ignore those two parts of President Trump's requests, and you can draw your own conclusions. Even on the question of larger checks, the Democrats have tried to warp what President Trump actually laid out.

Look, it is no secret that Republicans have a diversity of views about the wisdom of borrowing hundreds of billions more to send out more nontargeted money, including to many households that have suffered no loss of income during the crisis. COVID-19 has not affected all households equally—not even close.

It is hardly clear that the Federal Government's top priority should be sending thousands of dollars to, for example, a childless couple making well into six figures who have been comfortably teleworking all year. Our duty is to help get help to the people who actually need help, like we did, to a historic degree, just 4 days ago.

But above and beyond that discussion, the Democratic leaders have broken from what President Trump proposed. They quietly changed this proposal in an attempt to let wealthy households suck up even more money. Speaker PELOSI structured her bill so that a family of four would have to earn more than \$300,000 in order not—not to qualify for more cash. A family of three could pull in \$250,000 per year—a quarter of a million dollars—and still qualify for some money.

Democratic leaders want to call this scheme “survival checks.” Only my friends Speaker PELOSI and the Democratic leader could look at households in New York and California who make \$300,000, in households where nobody has been laid off, where earnings have not even dropped during the past year, and conclude these rich constituents of theirs need “survival checks” financed by taxpayer dollars and borrowed money.

Everyone sees the game here. These are the same Democrats who proudly blocked the entire aid package for months because they tried to hold out

their special tax cuts for rich people in rich States. Now they say it is a matter of survival to send another boatload of cash to people making \$300,000, regardless of whether they have experienced any disruption at all this past year.

Even the liberal Washington Post today is laughing at the political left for demanding more huge giveaways with no relationship to actual need. Here is what the Washington Post wrote: “Especially wrongheaded . . . is the progressive left, spearheaded by Sen. BERNIE SANDERS . . . who depicts the \$2,000 as aid to ‘desperate’ Americans despite the huge amounts destined for perfectly comfortable families.”

That is from the editors of the Washington Post.

The Wall Street Journal, usually their opposite number, actually agrees. These nontargeted “checks are unnecessary,” and struggling households can access targeted support like “expanded jobless benefits, food stamps, child-care subsidies and much more.”

The liberal economist Larry Summers, President Clinton's Treasury Secretary and President Obama's NEC Director, says: “There is no good economic argument” for universal \$2,000 checks at this moment. He points out the CARES Act and the brandnew law will already have boosted overall household income, relative to the economy, back to its prepandemic levels, if not higher.

If specific struggling households need still more help after the huge, historic package that was just signed into law 4 days ago has taken effect, then what they will need is smart, targeted aid, not another firehose of borrowed money that encompasses other people who are doing just fine.

So, in my view, colleagues like Senator CORNYN and Senator TOOMEY have pointed this out persuasively. But, more broadly, here is the deal. The Senate is not going to split apart the three issues that President Trump linked together just because Democrats are afraid to address two of them. The Senate is not going to be bullied into rushing out more borrowed money into the hands of the Democrats' rich friends who don't need the help.

We just approved almost a trillion dollars in aid a few days ago. It struck a balance between broad support for all kinds of households and a lot more targeted relief for those who need help the most.

We are going to stay smart; we are going to stay focused; and we are going to continue delivering on the needs for our Nation.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

JUST AND UNIFYING SOLUTIONS TO INVIGORATE COMMUNITIES EVERYWHERE ACT OF 2020—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 480, S. 3985.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows: Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 480, S. 3985, a bill to improve and reform policing practices, accountability and transparency.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 5085 AND H.R. 9051

Mr. MCCONNELL. I understand there are two bills at the desk due a second reading en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bills by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 5085) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to increase the additional 2020 recovery rebates, to repeal section 230 of the Communications Act of 1934, and for other purposes;

A bill (H.R. 9051), to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to increase recovery rebate amounts to \$2,000 for individuals, and for other purposes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. In order to place the bills on the calendar under provision of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

ELECTORAL COLLEGE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I was prepared this afternoon to speak about the business the Senate must address, and I will do that, but, first, I must respond to the recent announcement by the junior Senator of Missouri that he intends to contest the certified votes of the electoral college when Congress meets to count those votes next week. The process for electing American Presidents is provided in our Constitution and laws.

The process has been followed fully, fairly. The results have been duly certified by the Governors of the States, and they have been reviewed and confirmed by the courts many times over. The result is that Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS won the election by overwhelming margins in both the popular vote and the electoral vote.

The Biden-Harris ticket received more than 81 million votes, more than any ticket in American history. That was over 7 million more votes than Trump-Pence. The Biden-Harris ticket won the electoral college 306 to 232, the very same total that President Trump called a landslide for himself then just 4 years ago.

Since the election process, President Trump and his acolytes have lost more than 50 lawsuits, falsely claiming fraud or other irregularities in the conduct of the 2020 election, including the unanimous decision by the Supreme Court to dismiss a lawsuit brought by the attorney general of Texas and more than half the Republican Members of the House.

Today, we heard from the junior Senator from Missouri that he intends to object to the election results, particularly in Pennsylvania—a State where

the Trump campaign and its allies have brought no fewer than 13 lawsuits and lost every single one, many with Republican judges ruling. There have been only three individuals—three—charged with voter fraud in Pennsylvania, and in each case, the person voted for Trump.

The effort by the sitting President of the United States to overturn the results is patently undemocratic. The effort by others to amplify and burnish his ludicrous claims of fraud is equally revolting. This is America. We have elections. We have results. We make arguments based on fact and reason, not conspiracy and fantasy.

On January 6, Congress will meet to formally recognize the electoral college result. There is a very clear process to handle and dispense with the objections of Members of Congress to the counting of the result, and that is just what we will do—dispense with them. On January 6, Congress will ratify the electoral college's decision that Joe Biden will be President and KAMALA HARRIS will be Vice President. Make no mistake about it—Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS will be sworn in as President and Vice President on January 20.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now let me return to the matters at hand.

Today, the Senate will begin the process of overriding the President's veto on the annual Defense bill. The House has already overridden the veto by a comfortable margin. I expect the Senate to follow suit and enact the NDAA into law over President Trump's evolving and ridiculous objections. Congress has passed the annual Defense bill for 59 years in a row. It is an important opportunity to ensure our defense and security policies reflect the evolving challenges of our world and provide our servicemembers and their families, as well as Defense Department civilians, the support, resources, and training they need. The particular legislation includes a pay raise for troops and provisions that will allow the executive branch to be better postured to identify and deter breaches to America's cyber security. In the wake of the SolarWinds hack, that might be a good policy to enact.

Nonetheless, President Trump vetoed this legislation because it provides for renaming military installations that honor Confederate military leaders or, maybe, because it doesn't address an unrelated social media issue. Think about it for a moment. The President vetoed a pay raise to living American soldiers in order to defend the honor of dead Confederate traitors. Well, the Senate will soon have an opportunity to override the President's objection and do right by those brave Americans who wear the uniform.

As I said yesterday, there are two major issues before the Senate right now—the annual Defense bill and the vital and important effort to send \$2,000 stimulus checks to American

families. There are only a few days left in this session, and the Senate should consider both issues before adjourning.

There is a very simple solution to this dilemma: Leader MCCONNELL should bring both measures up for a vote and let the chips fall where they may. I believe both measures—the defense override and the \$2,000 checks to American families—will pass, but at the very least, the Senate deserves the opportunity for an up-or-down vote on increasing the individual payments to the American people.

At the end of my remarks, I will ask the Senate to set a time tonight for a vote on the House bill to provide \$2,000 checks. The Republican leader objected to a similar request I made yesterday, and it appears he may be considering a different bill that packages stimulus checks with other unrelated and partisan policies.

I want to be very clear about one thing: There is no other game in town besides the House bill. The only way to get the American people the \$2,000 checks they deserve and need is to pass the House bill and pass it now. The House has recessed for the year. Any modification or addition to the House bill cannot become law before the end of this Congress. It is a way to kill the bill. Make no mistake about it: Either the Senate takes up and passes the House bill or struggling American families will not get \$2,000 checks during the worst economic crisis in 75 years.

Over the past few days, the idea of increasing direct payments to the American people has united folks from all points of the political spectrum. I salute the Senator from Vermont for the good job he has done in bringing this forward to the American people's attention. An overwhelming bipartisan majority in the House supports the \$2,000 checks. Senate Democrats strongly support these \$2,000 checks, and our unlikely ally, President Trump, this morning, tweeted: "\$2000 ASAP!" For once, the Democrats agree with something on President Trump's Twitter feed. Let's send \$2,000 ASAP to working Americans who are facing the hardest and darkest days of the pandemic.

After all of the insanity that the Senate Republicans have tolerated from President Trump—his attacks on the rule of law, an independent judiciary, the conduct that led to his impeachment—is this where the Senate Republicans are going to draw the line—with \$2,000 checks to the American people? That is a bridge too far? Please.

For the awareness of my colleagues, we can have this vote tonight and send the bill directly to the President's desk for his signature. We can vote on the NDAA bill tonight and finish the Senate's business before the end of the year. All it takes is our Republican colleagues to consent to a simple vote on the House bill to provide \$2,000 checks to the American people. Yes or no, up or down, do you support sending \$2,000

to the American people or not? Let's have the vote.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 9051

I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 9051, a bill received from the House, to increase recovery rebate amounts to \$2,000 for individuals; that the bill be read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Vermont.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS—H.R. 9051 AND H.R. 6395

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I want to concur with what Senator SCHUMER said. What he said goes beyond economics. It goes beyond the desperation that tens of millions of working families are facing. It goes beyond the struggles of the people of Vermont or Kentucky.

Let me just make it clear for the majority leader that 10 out of the poorest 25 counties in the United States of America are located in Kentucky. So my colleague the majority leader might want to get on the phone and start talking to working families in Kentucky and find out how they feel about the need for immediate help in terms of a \$2,000 check per adult. I have the strong feeling that the people of Kentucky will respond no differently than the people of Vermont or New York. The last poll that I saw had 78 percent of the American people saying they wanted and needed that type of help.

This discussion, frankly, is not just about the economic struggling of working families in this country. It is not just about the massive levels of income and wealth inequality. It is about basic democracy.

Now, what we have to do here on the floor, whether it is Senator SCHUMER or Senator MCCONNELL or I, is to talk in legalese. That is the language of the U.S. Senate. The stuff sounds pretty complicated to the average person, but all that Senator SCHUMER and I are asking of the majority leader is very simple: Allow the Members of the U.S. Senate to cast a vote. If you want to

vote against \$2,000 checks for people in your State, vote against it. I see Senator TOOMEY here. He has been clear about it. I suspect he will vote against it. I respect his opinion, but all that we are asking for is a vote. What is the problem? In the House, over two-thirds of the Members of that body, including 44 Republicans, voted to say, in this time of economic desperation, working families deserve help, and they deserve a \$2,000 check.

As Senator SCHUMER just indicated, we have a very unlikely ally in President Trump. Nobody here has disagreed with Trump more times than I have; yet here is what the leader of the Republican Party writes: “\$2000 ASAP!” So, even on this issue, amazingly enough, the President of the United States is right.

What all of this comes down to, my fellow Americans, is not even whether you agree with Senator SCHUMER and myself and 78 percent of the American people or whether you agree with Senator MCCONNELL and, I suspect, Senator TOOMEY. That is fine. It is called democracy. We have differences of opinion. All that I am asking is to give us a vote. What is the problem? Allow the U.S. Senators to cast a vote as to whether they are for the \$2,000 check or whether they are against it.

We will need, as I understand it, 60 votes to win. That is a big hurdle. I don't know that we are going to win. There are a number of Republicans, to their credit, who have said they are ready to vote for it. I suspect there may be more, when given the opportunity, who will vote for it. Maybe I am wrong. Maybe we will lose. I think that would be unfortunate. All that I am asking for right now is to give us the opportunity to vote. What is the problem with that?

I will now go to Senate legalese.

I ask unanimous consent that at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, December 31, the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 9051, a bill to provide a \$2,000 direct payment to the working class; that the bill be considered read a third time; and that the Senate vote on the passage of the bill, without intervening action or debate; further, that if passed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; further, that immediately following the vote on H.R. 9051, the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the veto message on H.R. 6395 and that the Senate immediately vote on the passage of the bill, the objections of the President to the contrary notwithstanding, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, in reserving the right to object, let me start by pointing out that we are not in the same place that we were back in March. Our economy is in nothing like the situation we faced during a moment in March when this body came

together and voted unanimously, I believe, for the most extraordinary aid package—financial stimulus bill, however you care to characterize it—in the history of the world by far. Remember where we were. We had closed down the economy. To a very large degree, the American economy had stopped functioning because State governments around the country decided they had to close it down. We can discuss and we can argue about whether that was a good decision or not, but given the limited knowledge we had about the nature of the COVID-19 threat, it was deemed to be the right thing to do.

So we were on the verge of having no economy. That has never happened before in our history.

So what did we do? We decided this calls for extraordinary measures, and we would try to use Federal dollars as a substitute for the economy—just replace lost income on a massive, unprecedented scale—and we did. We approved almost \$3 trillion in that legislation.

At the time, we included \$1,200 per person. You could make an argument that that was an extremely inefficient use of that \$1,200 per person, but at the time, given the circumstances, I understood why we didn't have many good options, and that was something we decided to do.

So where are we now? We are in a very different place. Our economy is not in a free fall. Our economy is in a recovery mode. We are not back to where we want to end up. We are not back to where we were before March, but we have taken big steps in that direction.

The economy grew at 33 percent last quarter—33 percent. That is a tremendous recovery that is underway. More than half of all the people who lost their jobs earlier this year have regained their jobs. So we are not finished yet, but that is a huge step along the way.

And now we are being told, after passing another extraordinary bill—this one almost \$1 trillion and including \$600 per person—that that is not enough; we need to do \$2,000 per person, despite the fact that we know for sure, we know for a fact, that the large majority of those checks are going to go to people who had no lost income.

How does that make any sense at all? We know for sure that the majority of these people had no lost income. They didn't lose their jobs, and yet we are going to send them not \$600, not the \$1,200, but \$2,000.

So think about this. A married couple, who both are working and have 2 kids, maybe they work for the Federal Government, like 2 million-odd people do. Maybe they work for a large company, the vast majority of which did not have large numbers of layoffs. So this two-child, two-income couple that makes six figures had no interruption, no diminishment of their income whatsoever. They are going to get \$8,000 of money we don't have that is going to be either borrowed or printed. That is what it is all going to come down to.

There are people who are still suffering from the economic fallout of this terrible COVID crisis. There is no question about it. We know there are people who are concentrated in a handful of industries, for the most part—not exclusively—but people who have worked in the restaurant industry, people who work for hotels, travel, entertainment. So many of those people are still out of work and their prospects of getting their old jobs back are not good in the short run. I sure hope they will be good in the medium-term run, if not sooner.

And our bill addressed that. It addressed that problem. How did we do that? With a new round of PPP loans, which are really grants to small businesses, if they will keep their workforce intact; expansion of unemployment insurance benefits, so that people who have historically been ineligible remain eligible so they can continue to collect unemployment benefits; an increase in the amount of unemployment benefits, a \$300-a-week overlay of Federal money on top of whatever their State program is; \$600 per person, regardless of whether they lost income.

All of that was passed just a few days ago, and now we are told we need to come back immediately, right now, and make sure that we are sending \$2,000 checks to people who had no lost income.

So for that reason, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Massachusetts.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— H.R. 9051 AND H.R. 6395

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I rise to echo the sentiments of the Senator from Vermont. He is right. The Republicans are wrong on this issue. On every single part of this debate, Senator SANDERS is right; the Republicans are wrong.

We are in the middle of an unprecedented crisis in our country. We have a healthcare crisis, we have an unemployment crisis, we have a hunger crisis, we have a housing crisis, we have an addiction crisis, and we have a moral crisis in this country.

The U.S. Government should be responding to the needs, to the desperation of families in our country at this time. There is a crisis of faith that the American people have in its government's ability to respond to human suffering. Well, this institution has been created to respond to human suffering. That is our job.

Tony Fauci has made it very clear that the worst of the pandemic is ahead of us, not behind us. We know what is coming, and yet we are not responding. We know this is not going away soon, and yet we are not responding.

A program, Operation Warp Speed, was created to create a vaccine, but because for 7 months the Republicans have refused to fund the public health

system of our country at the State and local level, we have “Operation Snail Speed” to put the vaccinations in the arms of the American people.

It was anticipatable. Tony Fauci and others were warning us back in May and June and July that there would be a second wave and the second wave could be bigger. We got the warning. The Republicans refused to heed that warning.

And here we are now, without the public health infrastructure to deal with the overflow capacity in emergency rooms, in ICUs all across the country, while simultaneously asking those same medical institutions to put vaccinations in the arms of healthy people, without the resources provided by the Federal Government to help those States and local communities to deal with that crisis.

Sometimes Daniel Patrick Moynihan would say that when you deal with an issue you deal with it with benign neglect if you don't want to help or you don't want to hurt—deal with benign neglect.

What has happened with the Republicans this year is that they created a program which is designed neglect. It is an actual plan not to provide the funding, not to provide the help for those families, for those communities, for those institutions that are now being overwhelmed, and asked, on top of that, to put this extra burden of putting vaccinations in people's arms, but without the extra resources.

And what do they do on the Republican side? They throw out these red herrings—so many red herrings that you would need to build an aquarium in the well here of the Senate in order to deal with all of them—that gets away from the central issue: Yes or no, up or down, will you provide \$2,000 to Americans who are going to need it through what Tony Fauci is saying will be the worst part of this pandemic? Yes or no, up or down, where do they stand on this issue?

Here is what we do know. Republicans seem more focused on funding the Defense Department than they do on funding the defenseless in our country, and Americans are becoming more defenseless as each day goes by. The headlines are screaming that this panic, which is absolutely understandable and based upon fact, is sweeping our country.

There is protection that the Federal Government should be providing to these families. We hear it. They are hungry. They could be without their homes. The addiction crisis is rising. They need help in their families.

So from my perspective, we have a moment in time, and Donald Trump happens to agree with us—even though a broken clock is right twice a day. And we do agree with him. He is right. We do need this help, which we should be providing to these families.

As we watch more and more of our American loved ones fall sick and die, families are facing a new and unprece-

dent hardship. They are having to make impossible decisions as to whether to put food on the table or keep the heat on through the cold winter months, and the U.S. Government has an obligation to help working people who, through no fault of their own, are seeing all of the things that they care about, all of the success that they have worked for, and all the financial security they have earned be washed away.

And yet the Republicans want to put another “Operation Snail Speed” in place.

The damage to these families is anticipatable. We can see what is unfolding. Dr. Fauci is telling us that we are at the worst part of the pandemic and it is going to continue. So let us act in anticipation.

Louis Pasteur used to say that “chance favors the prepared mind.” That is what Dr. Tony Fauci is telling us. Let us prepare. Let us help families prepare for what is about to arrive.

Just in Massachusetts alone, 21,000 new people applied for unemployment insurance in the week before Christmas. Food banks across Massachusetts and across the country are seeing double-digit increases in demand with families who never faced food insecurity before. People are literally starving, cold, and without homes.

Meanwhile, the majority leader and Republican leadership would rather head home for the New Year and ignore the financial and health crises that are taking a toll on our families. For millions of Americans, this will be a New Year holiday where they won't know if they can put food on the table that night. Republicans are claiming that giving \$2,000 in direct cash payments to working Americans would be too expensive, that it would inflate our national deficit, that our budgets are already bloated.

I have to ask, though, where was this outrage when Republicans blew up our national deficit to give a \$1.5 trillion tax cut to billionaires and corporations? These are the crocodile tears from the right, as Americans are shedding real tears thinking about where their next meal will come from, the eviction notice on the front door, or losing healthcare in the midst of this crisis.

Americans are actually tired of being told that \$600 is “sufficient” as an amount of money as relief, as billionaires receive their tax breaks and grow their wealth by the trillions of dollars during this crisis. The rich get richer, and the rest are there left suffering. They have had enough of being told that there just isn't the money for support for the well-being of their communities when they can see tax breaks going to those companies that are actually laying off workers.

Americans are tired of being let down by their government time and time again, as Donald Trump and his Republican allies have abandoned them during this response to the pandemic.

Americans need support. They need to be able to trust their government,

and they need \$2,000 now. So that is the issue: Yes or no, up or down, on providing \$2,000 to Americans to help them make it through the worst part of this crisis.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 12:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 31, the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 9051, a bill to provide a \$2,000 direct payment to the working class; that the bill be considered read a third time and the Senate vote on passage of that bill without intervening action or debate; further, that if passed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; and that immediately following the vote on H.R. 9051, the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the veto message on H.R. 6395; that the Senate immediately vote on passage of the bill, the objections of the President to the contrary notwithstanding, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator for Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Reserving the right to object, Mr. President, Speaker PELOSI's second bite at the apple, just after we voted on a \$900 billion bill that has now been signed into law by the President of the United States, is not the way to send relief to the hardest hit Americans. Under this legislation, a family of five with an annual income of \$350,000 would receive a stimulus check. This is reminiscent of the Heroes Act that the House passed, which cut taxes for millionaires and billionaires. This isn't about helping the people that need it the most. This is about helping millionaires and billionaires and people who frankly have not suffered the hardships economically that others have during this pandemic. The median household in my State is \$60,000, and the Speaker wants to send taxpayer-funded assistance to folks earning nearly six times that much. Even the Washington Post editorial board agrees this is bad policy.

It doesn't differentiate between people who have been receiving a paycheck during this pandemic, such as government employees, and people who, simply by virtue of their job, have been put out of work and are not receiving any income or maybe at best unemployment compensation. The Speaker's bill isn't about targeting folks who have lost their jobs or have seen their income reduced. It is a far cry from the additional assistance President Trump requested for the hardest hit Americans. The reality is, this bill would spend roughly \$300 billion more on folks who aren't even experiencing a financial strain from the pandemic.

We need to focus on the people who have been hurt. That is what our COVID-19 relief bill, which was just recently signed into law, is designed to do, and I dare say this is not going to be the last time we visit this topic. If there is more we need to do, I am confident we will do it. But today, in this

way, is not the right way to do it. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Illinois.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I listened carefully and watched three occasions on the floor this afternoon where Senators SCHUMER, SANDERS, and MARKEY have tried to create an opportunity where the Senate would actually come together and vote, where the Senate might make a decision based on the merits of this issue, rather than to keep talking around the issue.

What is at stake is a substantial sum of money for families who are in the midst of the struggle of their lives—\$2,000—characterized a few moments ago by my friend from Texas as “Speaker PELOSI’s idea.” Well, I might remind him that it is also Donald Trump’s idea and still is. The President has told us this morning that we should move on this as quickly as possible, and although I don’t often come to the floor to agree with the President, he is right. In this instance he is clearly right.

What are we doing now? We are calling Senators back to Washington from the far reaches across the United States. This morning, I received some email and text messages from some of my colleagues hopping on airplanes at 6 a.m. on the west coast to face a vote. What is this vote all about? Well, first, it is to override the veto of the President when it comes to the Defense authorization bill. This was certainly something that was occasioned by one Senator, the junior Senator from Kentucky, who forced us into a position where that vote needed to be taken here. It could have been handled much more efficiently and to the benefit of all Members if it was scheduled for the weekend when we were assuming a new session of Congress. But he insisted, and we are returning and, frankly, putting in peril again, in the midst of a pandemic, Members of the Senate who are traveling from all the far reaches of this country to be part of this action in Washington.

But it isn’t just the junior Senator from Kentucky who is having us sit here in Washington and wait for things that could be taken care of with dispatch. It is the senior Senator from Kentucky as well. He has decided that we will not get a vote on the House measure to increase the payments to \$2,000. Make no mistake, there is only one way to bring this relief to the families of America. It is to pass the bill already enacted by the House of Representatives—a bill which received 44 Republican votes in addition to a substantial number of Democrats, with only 2 voting no. Forty-four Republican votes joined with the Democrats to call for this measure which many have been decrying on the floor here as

a class struggle or whatever their argument might be. There is no other measure, including Senator MCCONNELL’s alternative, which has any ghost of a chance to help the families in this country with this \$2,000 benefit. The only thing that will do it—the only one thing that will do it—is this bill that has already passed the House of Representatives.

The House has recessed. When they are going to return is uncertain. They certainly don’t have the time to work through the regular order of business to consider any new legislation even if we could send it in time, which I believe is very doubtful. So it is up to Senator MCCONNELL to decide right here and now, are we going to come together as a Senate this afternoon at 5 o’clock, when we are supposed to be back and voting, and get this matter done?

Bring it to the Senate for a vote. Let’s have this vote up or down, and let the Democrats and Republicans express their will on behalf of the families in this country.

I couldn’t agree more with the Senator from Massachusetts and his characterization of what families face across this country and, certainly, in my home State of Illinois.

I just wonder if any of the Republican Senators who are downplaying this economic crisis facing these families have really looked into the issue. This morning, in the Senator’s home State of Texas, they showed an early morning television show and the cars that were lining up for food banks—long lines of people waiting for food banks. They interviewed some of them in Texas who told heartbreaking stories of how they once were volunteers at this same food bank and are now dependent for a helping hand if they were going to be able to feed their families.

These are people who are not lazy at all. Misfortune has come their way, and the question is, Will we help? This is our opportunity—today. It is a measure that has passed the House of Representatives, not some theory of some legislation that might be considered tomorrow—today. Let’s have this vote today, this evening. When the Senators have returned, let’s determine whether or not this House-passed measure of \$2,000 is going to be enacted into law, since the President is clearly anxious to sign it.

That to me is the reasonable thing to do. In fact, it might even sound like the U.S. Senate is taking a vote on a timely issue after a debate. We do it so seldom around here that I think we have lost our muscle memory when it comes to this activity in the Senate. It is time to return to it.

I thank the Senator from Vermont, the Senator from Massachusetts, and, of course, the Democratic leader for bringing this issue before us this afternoon. But it shouldn’t end with our great speeches. It ought to end with an important vote for the people of this country.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, would the Senator from Illinois yield for a question?

Mr. DURBIN. I am happy to yield.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I wonder if the Senator from Illinois would consider pairing their request for a \$2,000 direct payment with a liability shield provision that would guard businesses that have been operating in good faith and following the guidelines put out by public health and government institutions, and preserve a right to sue for reckless and willful disregard of the rights for others? Would the Senator consider pairing those two together?

Mr. DURBIN. I would say in response to my colleague, I know his passionate defense of the notion for immunity from liability for corporations in America. He has introduced a lengthy bill on the subject. I don’t believe that is consistent with keeping this Nation safe during a pandemic, and it certainly is not responsive to any onslaught of lawsuits.

The Senator might be interested to know that the number of medical malpractice cases filed in the name of COVID-19 since the onset of this current pandemic is slightly higher than the total number of lawsuits filed by Donald Trump in protesting the results of the November 3 election. This is not a tsunami of lawsuits.

I believe we can take reasonable measures to support and defend those corporations and companies that are making a good-faith effort to comply with public health standards and protect their employees and customers. His bill, I am afraid, goes way too far.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, let me concur with my friend from Illinois on the issue.

I have a question for my colleague from Texas. It is a very simple question. You have concerns about the issue of corporate liability. I get that. I happen not to agree with you. You are entitled to your opinion. You may or may not be concerned about section 230 of the 1996 Federal telecommunications bill. That is fine too. We might have a discussion about how we protect American democracy. It is a good discussion as well. But I have a strong feeling, Senator CORNYN, that in Texas, as in Vermont—you know what—people are not really talking about corporate liability. It is a good issue. It is an important issue. I don’t believe they are talking about section 230. What I think they are talking about, as the Senator from Illinois just said, is how they are going to feed their kids today. That is the issue. And what I would ask my friend from Texas is, What is your problem with allowing the Senate to vote on whether or not we are going to allow Americans, working-class people to get a \$2,000 check?

Now I gather that when that vote comes to the floor—and I hope it comes

immediately—you will vote no, and you will explain to the people of Texas why you voted that way. That is called democracy. I respect that. But what is your problem with allowing the Senate to have a free standing vote?

There are a number of people on your side, Republicans, who have already come forward and said yes, they want to vote for this \$2,000 check.

Now, if you want to deal with corporate liability, that is fine. Let's deal with it at some point. Bring forward a bill, and we can vote on it up or down. All that we are asking for is a simple, up-or-down vote on the issue that tens of millions of people are talking about right now: Will they survive economically in the midst of this terrible pandemic?

I ask my colleague from Texas: What is the problem with allowing the U.S. Senate to vote on the bill passed by the House?

I yield to my colleague from Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I would say to our colleague from Vermont, I have no problem with providing assistance, whether it is to public health officials who are trying to struggle with this pandemic or to provide money for research for the therapeutics or vaccines which, fortunately, are now being distributed around the country. I have no objection to direct payments to individuals. I voted for the \$1,200 direct payments contained in the CARES Act. I voted for the additional money that is provided for in the most recent COVID-19 legislation. But this legislation that the Senator from Vermont is advocating would benefit households with annual incomes of over \$350,000. They would get this money.

I would say that one way to deal with this—because, of course, we negotiated back and forth on the last COVID-19 bill, and nobody got everything they wanted—but if our colleagues on the other side of the aisle want an additional financial benefit for people making up to \$350,000, why not couple it with liability protection for people who are acting in good faith?

This isn't just about corporations, and our colleagues across the aisle know it. This is about schools. This is about churches, synagogues, and mosques. This is about every business that is worried that a game of "gotcha" is going to take place and they are going to end up paying the price. Even if they win the lawsuit, they will still have to pay for the cost of defense, potentially losing their businesses outright.

Clearly, our colleagues across the aisle care more about trial lawyers and being able to bring litigation against businesses that have tried to do their best and have struggled with the evolving public health guidance provided by the CDC and other authorities. Clearly, if they are not interested in engaging in a negotiation where people, who through no fault of their own, find

themselves victimized by frivolous litigation, then, we have no alternative but to continue to object to this request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, if you listened carefully, you understood that my friend from Texas did not answer my question. He has a concern about corporate liability. It is a legitimate debate. Do you know what? Bring it to the floor. Let's vote it up or down. I will vote against it. You will vote for it. But I asked you a very simple question, not about linking things together—nobody in the real world understands that stuff. That is inside-the-beltway stuff.

What people in the real world know—and I want to take a moment to read some of these statements. We have a lot of people on our social media, and we asked the American people, just the other day: Tell me; what would a \$2,000 check mean to you? What is going on in your life?

And in just over 24 hours, I would say to my friend from Texas, nearly 6,000 people responded. Here is just what a few of them had to say. This is Twitter stuff. So I don't have their names here, and I wouldn't use them publicly, anyhow. But this is what they say.

One person writes: "\$2,000 is the difference between keeping our apartment and being evicted." Here is another one: "\$2,000 means I can afford to feed my three kids." Another response: "It would mean not having to choose between rent and groceries and not having to ration my partner's meds." Another response: "I am raising my grandson with medical needs. I am \$4,000 behind on utilities. We need electricity to run his medical equipment." Here is another response: "\$2,000 would mean I wouldn't have to worry about making my mortgage payment this month, and I could get my medication." Another response: "\$2,000 would mean paying my rent and getting life-saving treatment because I can't afford the \$50 copay through my work insurance just to see my neurologist right now"—and on and on and on. Thousands of people responded.

So, I want to get back to the point. I want to again say to my friend from Texas: If you have a concern about corporate liability—good issue—bring it to the floor. Let's vote on corporate liability.

I would yield for a question from my friend from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I yield for a question through the Chair.

I have listened to the figures used on the floor about families who would qualify for the \$2,000. It is my understanding that an individual with an income of \$75,000 or less could qualify for the \$2,000 payment, and for a joint return—husband and wife—\$2,000 could be given to them if their income is under \$150,000. Is that your understanding?

Mr. SANDERS. That is my understanding. And I think, you know, as

Republicans do, they are going to let it be.

But I get back to my friend—my friend from Texas, Senator CORNYN. We are asking a simple question. If you want to bring up corporate liability, bring it up. If you want to bring up section 230, bring it up. If you want to bring up the man in the Moon, bring it up. But what the American people want now is an up-or-down vote.

Look, you are going to vote against it if it comes to the floor. That is fine. It is your right. Explain it to the people of Texas. I will vote for it. But all that I am asking for is the right, as a U.S. Senator, to have the vote.

Again I ask you: What is your problem with Members of the U.S. Senate, including a number of Republicans, who have already indicated they would like to vote for this? What is your problem with bringing that up as a single stand-alone bill, not merged with corporate liability or anything else? What is your problem with that?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I would say to our colleague from Vermont: This money is not targeted to people who have suffered financially.

Mr. SANDERS. Then vote against it.

Mr. CORNYN. It is not targeted to people who have suffered financial losses. This money would go to members of your own staff if they meet the financial requirements and to other government employees who have suffered no financial loss during this pandemic.

We have all suffered in different ways during the pandemic, to be sure, but, financially, this money is designed to help the people who need it the most. Why would you send money to government employees who have been receiving their full paycheck during this pandemic?

Mr. SANDERS. That is a good question. And then I will have to explain that to the people of the State of Vermont.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas has the floor.

Mr. SANDERS. He asked me a question, as I understood it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. SANDERS. Did the Senator from Texas ask me a question?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. It was more of a rhetorical question.

Mr. SANDERS. I took you literally.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I wanted to come to the floor and talk about what strikes me as something akin to Groundhog Day. Groundhog Day is only the day I was born. It is something I feel like we are living through here as we debate the same points over

and over and over again, forgetting what it is we have already done—the good things we have done together on a bipartisan basis.

We have already appropriated roughly \$4 trillion in response to this pandemic, and it is appropriate that we have done so because this was a true public health crisis. But now this is—we are seeing politics creep back in in an attempt to send money in an untargeted and wasteful sort of way to people who have suffered no financial loss.

These relief packages that we passed together have provided hundreds of billions of dollars to support our hospitals and healthcare workers who are on the frontlines. I voted for it, and I think we were right to do so.

We have thrown small businesses and their employees a lifeline through the Paycheck Protection Program, and we were right to do so. We have invested in research, development, and manufacturing of therapeutics and vaccines that are currently being administered—thank goodness—throughout the country and, indeed, around the world. And we have sent unprecedented assistance to workers, families, and individuals whose livelihoods have been upended by this crisis.

Thanks to President Trump's leadership, Congress has stepped up and met this unprecedented challenge to deliver relief bill after relief bill for the American people. If you had told me a year ago I would have voted this year alone for roughly \$4 trillion worth of spending in this pandemic, I would not have believed you. But I do believe this is a domestic equivalent to World War II, where we have to do everything humanly possible to try to help our fellow man, woman, and child during this pandemic.

The latest round of relief came, of course, just this week, when President Trump signed the \$900 billion rescue package into law. While I am glad Congress was able to send more relief out the door at the end of the year, I am disappointed that it took so long to do so. It is amazing the sense of urgency our Democratic colleagues have today, since at least three times—maybe four times—they blocked our attempts to pass half-trillion-dollar relief bills during the course of the summer.

In July, our colleagues introduced the HEALS Act, which would have provided just under a trillion dollars in relief, covering the same types of policies included in the most recent relief bill—direct payments, unemployment benefits, funding for schools, vaccines, and a host of other priorities.

Our Democratic colleagues not only complained about the bill, but they called it weak, little, pathetic, and unserious. They refused to engage in the sorts of negotiations that are customary around here when you actually want to solve a problem or consider anything short of the House's multi-trillion-dollar bill, which they knew had no chance of passing in the Senate

because of things like tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires, which had nothing to do with COVID.

So our Democratic colleagues dragged their feet—July, August, September, October, November. Months went by, and the cases soared, and the economic squeeze tightened, and our Democratic colleagues refused to accept any sort of compromise.

That was until a few weeks ago, when they finally changed their tune right after the election. I am sure it comes as no surprise that once the holdout agrees to negotiate, things can move pretty quickly, and that is what happened here after the election. Democrats, Republicans, and the administration agreed to a \$900 billion package, which looks very similar to the one they dubbed pathetic just a few months ago.

In recent days, the President has expressed an interest in doing more, and I have no doubt that we will do more in this area, but Speaker PELOSI's bill goes far beyond what the President is talking about. For one, it would dramatically widen the pool of recipients, enabling wealthy households to qualify for relief checks. This is unacceptable and wasteful.

When Congress provided the first round of direct payments through the CARES Act, we did so in a way that sent relief to the hardest hit Americans. Individuals who made up to \$75,000 received the full \$1,200, and the amount gradually declined as income increased and completely phased out at \$99,000. We kept the same formula for the \$600 payments provided for under the omnibus and further targeted the relief. Once again, those who made up to \$75,000 will receive the full amount, and the amount phases out completely at \$87,000.

Under the CARES Act, a family of four earning up to \$150,000 received \$3,400, and in the most recent rescue bill, the same family would receive an additional \$2,400. This was the most effective and targeted way to ensure that assistance goes to those who actually need it while avoiding sending taxpayer dollars—borrowed, I might add—to those who don't.

The House-passed legislation would provide \$2,000 payments, but it doesn't have a similar structure to keep these payments targeted. Let me give you an example.

If this bill were to become law, a person making \$100,000 a year would receive a \$750 check from the Federal Government, whether or not they lost income during the pandemic. This isn't someone who used to make that much but was laid off or had a reduction in their income. Someone who is currently earning a six-figure salary would receive an additional \$750 from American taxpayers.

For families, the income barrier goes higher. As I mentioned a moment ago, if you have a family of five with an annual household income of \$350,000 a year, that family would receive a stim-

ulus check under the House-passed bill. Now, that is not being smart with taxpayer dollars, and that is not targeted at the people who actually need it. That is a giveaway to people who have not suffered any financial losses during this pandemic and clearly not targeted at those who need the most help.

I mentioned a moment ago that the median income for households in Texas is \$60,000 a year, so this family of five is earning nearly six times as much and would still receive a check from taxpayers. That defies all common sense. Even the Washington Post editorial board dubbed this policy as wasteful because of the huge amounts destined for what they call "perfectly comfortable families."

Even though Congress has already provided roughly \$4 trillion in relief to the American people, our Democratic colleagues are acting as though this is the first and only way to help our country.

Like I said, for them, every day is Groundhog Day. They ignore everything we have done in the past and act like this is the only thing we have or could do. It is just not true.

This debate isn't about whether or not Congress should help families who are struggling. We have. And there is no question we will continue to do so where needed. That is why we provided \$1,200 in direct payments to the hardest hit Americans through the CARES Act and an additional \$600 through the most recent relief bill. That is why these bills also bolstered State unemployment benefits and expanded them to include independent contractors and the self-employed. That is why Congress passed legislation to provide food assistance to families, keep more hard-working Americans on payroll, and ensure our economy is on track for a strong recovery.

Again, we did this thanks to the leadership of President Trump and by working together in a bipartisan way.

Countless Texans have told me about the impact of this relief on their businesses and their families, and we can't lose sight of the progress that has already been made. But future relief must be targeted. We need to support those who need it and avoid sending hundreds of billions of dollars, as this proposal would, to those who don't need it.

Throughout the year, I have been an advocate for an incremental approach to these relief bills because I think it is hard to spend \$3 trillion and know exactly how that bill is going to work. And, indeed, we found out through the CARES Act that the mainstream lending facility, which we funded at roughly half a trillion dollars, wasn't as useful as we would have hoped.

Conversely, the Paycheck Protection Program was more successful than our wildest dreams. So I think by seeing what works and what doesn't work, we can be better stewards of taxpayer dollars by spending the money more efficiently and in a more targeted way.

This isn't like highway bills or farm bills or defense spending bills where we have an idea about what is needed for individual programs. There was no precedent for this pandemic, no handbook, and no clear way to gauge how long this crisis would go on or what would be needed to sustain our response.

After the CARES Act passed, we knew it made the most sense to hit the pause button and see what worked well, what didn't, and where more help was needed. As I said, there were certain programs like the Paycheck Protection Program that almost immediately dried up. If I am not mistaken, in 2 weeks, roughly \$350 billion was obligated under the Paycheck Protection Program—a strong indication that we really hit the sweet spot when it came to helping those small businesses. That is why we added more funding in April, another \$320 billion, and we extended the program in July and reinvested in the Paycheck Protection Program again in the omnibus.

As I said, there were other places where the money went unspent. But, fortunately, in the most recent bill we were able to repurpose hundreds of billions of dollars in unspent funds, again, to target it to where the need was greatest and where it could help the most.

There is no question that tens of millions of workers and their families have been hurt by this virus. We all know that. And I think we have all acted together, by and large, responsibly, in trying to respond to that. No one will be left out if we have a means and method of targeting this to those people—whether it is direct payments, enhanced unemployment benefits, incentives to their employers to maintain them on payroll. And now that we have the beginning of the distribution of the vaccine, my hope is that in the coming months we will get back to, if not the new normal, whatever the next normal will be.

But we are just a few days from kicking off the new Congress, and I have no reason to believe that our coronavirus relief work is finished here today. As a matter of fact, Vice President Biden said that he expects to send us an additional request for help once he assumes office.

Once the legislation we have passed has a chance to benefit the American people, we will see if more relief is needed, and then, if it is needed, we should absolutely do more.

I still believe in the wisdom of the incremental approach, and I believe our Democratic friends will join us in responding to the true needs of this crisis without monthlong delays or irresponsible spending.

Countless Texans have told me about the importance of the relief we have provided through direct payments, unemployment benefits, food assistance, and other forms of support by the laws we passed throughout this year. I was proud to support each of those policies,

which have eased the financial strains on millions of Texans and other Americans. I will continue to work with our colleagues to provide assistance as our war on COVID-19 rages on.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, we have heard a lot of revisionist history this afternoon.

Look back in March, when Congress did the right thing and the Senate voted unanimously. Because of our efforts, 13 million people were kept out of poverty—we know that—because we provided relatively generous unemployment insurance. We did the direct payments. We helped with small business loans. But then this Senate thought its work was done for the year. We begged Senator MCCONNELL month after month after month to come back and help.

As I said, 13 million people were kept out of poverty because of the work this Congress did in March of this year, but now, since—many of those benefits, especially the unemployment benefit and the direct payments, were not continued, of course. Those benefits expired in August, and we have seen 8 million people drop into poverty in this country since. Yet Senator MCCONNELL refuses and refuses and refuses.

I hear this revisionist history that Democrats just want to help people who are already affluent and give them more money. Well, remember back in March, the only amendment that we considered, the only amendment that Senator MCCONNELL allowed on the floor of the Senate to the CARES Act, the only amendment was to take away the \$600-a-week unemployment insurance. The only place Republicans fought was the \$600-a-week unemployment insurance. That more than any single thing we did is why people were kept out of poverty. Now the best we could do was \$300-a-week unemployment insurance—the best we could do. In spite of Senator CORNYN's and others' comments, Senator MCCONNELL waited, waited, waited, and waited. Finally, we were able to do that.

The President of the United States threatened to veto it, causing millions of Americans to fall off their unemployment insurance. We know all that. It is just important to remember all that.

But there is one simple question before the Senate this week: Are we going to put more money into people's pockets? The American people made it clear on election day that they want a government that is on their side. This is our chance to deliver for them, to show people whom we serve that we can make a real difference in their lives, which we did back in March.

It is pretty simple. The best way to help Ohio workers and families is to put more money in their pockets, not

in the bank accounts of the largest corporations and biggest banks, hoping it will trickle down. We know it never does. The CEOs just pay themselves instead.

We know that just recently there was more good news for American CEOs who are able again to do stock buybacks, more dividend distributions. A lot of corporations have made a lot of money—more power to them—during this pandemic, but those are the corporations that continue to get the big tax breaks.

We need, instead, to directly invest in people who make this country work. It helps people pay the bills and stay in their homes and get through this downturn. It injects money into local economies that really need it. The more money people have, the more they spend in small businesses that are hurting.

We know this works. It did in the spring. We came together. We crossed the aisle, passed the CARES Act, expanded unemployment, and provided direct stimulus checks, keeping 13 million people out of poverty. The bill we passed last week was a good step in that direction, but we should make it stronger.

Back in March, my original plan that I tried to negotiate as I sat with Secretary Mnuchin and a handful of other Senators was \$2,000 per person, adults and children. We called for it to be sent automatically throughout the year, every quarter, as long as we remained in a public health emergency.

It is clear now what we could have done and should have done. No one could predict how long this crisis would last. Today, we still aren't sure when everybody will be vaccinated and when the economy will return to full strength. We don't want to sit idly by. We don't want to wonder how bad it could get. We are the strongest, richest country on Earth. We have the resources to do something about it; we just need leadership willing to use every tool we have.

If they refuse to support this \$2,000 per person, if they refuse to support these direct payments, Leader MCCONNELL and Senate Republicans will again make it perfectly clear to the American people whose side they are on.

Every time there is a fork in the road and Senator MCCONNELL and Senate Republicans have to make a decision—either go with corporate interests or go with working families—every single time, they choose corporate interests. They had no problem pouring money into corporate coffers with their tax cut and blowing up the deficit.

Just down the hall here in Senator MCCONNELL's office, I remember lobbyists lining up, looking for those tax cuts back 3 years ago, and they got those tax cuts. They didn't say anything about government deficits back then—\$1.5 trillion added to the deficit. They didn't mind that because that was money going into their contributors' pockets, into big corporate coffers

for the wealthiest people in this country. They were all too happy to let the government shovel loans to the biggest banks and companies. But in the middle of the worst crisis of our lifetime, faced with the chance to give money directly to ordinary Americans, my colleagues claim we can't afford it. That is just simply a lie. We are the richest country on Earth.

I remember Bill Spriggs—an economist at Howard University—told the Banking and Housing Committee in September: We didn't win World War II by worrying about whether or not we could afford it. We were in a global crisis. We marshalled all our vast resources and talents to rise to meet it. We grew the economy from the middle class out. We paid down the debt with rising wages.

If we have learned anything from the crisis, it should be that we can do the same again. Americans are tired of being told we can't. It is the only answer that Senator McCONNELL and Senate Republicans ever have for most people's problems: We can't help you. We can't solve your problem. You are on your own.

Let's aim higher. Let's deliver for the people we serve. Let's put \$2,000 into their pockets—money that will make such a difference for so many families. It will help a mother worried about how she will pay back rent. It will keep a laid off restaurant worker from turning to a payday lender. It will allow a father to buy a new computer so his kids are better able to learn online. These are millions of real people—people we swore an oath to serve who would breathe a little easier this new year if we pass this.

So let's be clear about the decision today and this week before the Senate. Are we going to give the people we serve \$2,000, or are you going to stand in the way? It is that simple. Let's come together. Let's pass this. Let's make a real difference in people's lives.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, this is what I have considered to be—and I have heard my friend from the Democratic side, the minority side, say the same thing, that this is the most significant bill that we pass every year.

It is the NDAA, the National Defense Authorization Act. This will be the 60th year—is it the 60th or 61st year?

Mr. REED. The 60th.

Mr. INHOFE. OK. It is the 60th year that we have passed this, and it has passed every year. There were a few

moments there where I thought maybe it wasn't going to pass this year and we would set a record. Senator REED and I don't want to set that kind of record. We want to make sure we get this done.

The reason this is important is this is the blueprint. This tells us what we are going to be doing with our troops. I could make an argument that it is really—we are in the most dangerous situation, I think, that we have been in before. I have often talked about the good old days when we had the Cold War with two superpowers. We knew what the Soviet Union had; they knew what we had. Mutually assured destruction meant something at that time.

But now it is different in a lot of respects because you have rogue countries out there that have weapons and have abilities to wipe out nations. That is why it is so significant.

So, anyway, we suffered through a little bit of a problem back during the Obama administration, during the last 5 years, which would have been from 2010 to 2015. In his budget, he downgraded the military by 25 percent, and that is the same time, during that timeframe, that China increased theirs by 83 percent.

So it is a scary world out there, and it is one that, to me, I have no doubt that this is the most important bill that we will pass all year because we have got our kids, and they are out there right now. They are in the trenches, and we have to support them. That is what it is all about.

I do want to mention how many people are involved in this thing. We are actually starting this right now. We are starting next year's NDAA. So this started a year ago. The ones working on this—you have Liz King and John Bonsell heading up the minority and majority part of the committee, doing a great job and working every weekend—almost every weekend—with a very large staff, all specialists in certain areas. And they have got the bill.

So I am very proud of the bill that we have this year. I think that it passed, when it passed in the Senate, it was 84 to—I think it was 84 to 14, I think it was. I think there were a couple of people not here. But that is the largest—that doesn't happen very often, to pass a bill with those margins, and we did.

So this is a long tradition. We have got to support our troops. They are in there doing the right thing. It has been a joy, personally, for me to be working with Senator REED, and we have, together, kind of provided the leadership on this thing. We didn't work as hard as the staff did. I admit that. But we were there, and I am very proud of this bill.

So right now we have kids that are overseas, and they deserve the pay that was increased—that would be increased when this bill is passed. Right now, we have critical areas like pilots and engineers, doctors, that are in short supply because of the fact that we have had,

up until the pandemic, a good and probably, I would argue, the best economy we have had in my lifetime.

Well, that is good news, of course, but it is bad news in one way because it is hard to keep the people in those critical fields—pilots, for example. They have an opportunity to get out and do things that are—there are jobs out there that are paying a lot more. So we have to have them on the flight hours if something happens. And they are out—there are a lot of jobs on the outside that are paying more. So we just have to make sure that we keep the resources in the right place to do the right job.

So I think this is the—I know this procedural vote today is going to bring us, in the next couple of days, to pass the Defense authorization bill.

It is all about the guys and gals in the field. We owe it to them. This is going to be the 60th year. I anticipate that this is going to pass with very large numbers.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I would like to rise and discuss the Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act.

First, I would like to salute the chairman. He has done an extraordinary job. We have both served on the committee for many years, and this is probably the most challenging year we have had due to many different factors: the pandemic, the virtual hearings, all those things.

And this has been particularly challenging, and the chairman, at every point, stood up to the challenge and led us. I want to thank him for that. It was a pleasure working with him.

We all recognize that this legislation passed both Chambers, the House and the Senate, by overwhelming bipartisan majorities. And it is very important legislation. That is why it earned this bipartisan support.

It enhances our national security. It strengthens our military readiness and defense capabilities. It protects our forces and their families and supports the defense industrial base.

Despite all that it does for our troops and their families, President Trump waited until the 10th day after he received it and vetoed it the last day he could exercise his veto. That was December 23, which made quite a Christmas for our military personnel and for all of my colleagues who are here today to start the process of responding to that veto.

The House already took the first step. They returned on Monday. Once again, by an overwhelming vote, over 300 Members of the House overrode the President's veto. Now we face the same task in the Senate. It is my hope we can quickly and resoundingly override

the President's veto and provide our troops with what they need.

I will echo what the chairman said. You can go through all the thousands of pages, literally, but what is the most significant aspect of this legislation is keeping faith with the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States. So if anyone has any thoughts about their vote, just think about those men and women who are all across the world putting their lives at risk while their families share that risk and that sense of danger and sacrifice. That is what I think has motivated the chairman and myself and all of our colleagues on the committee and throughout this Senate to work hard to get this bill passed.

There are several reasons being advanced by the President for suggesting that this bill should be vetoed—the veto should be upheld. One reason is that he claims the bill fails to include critical national security measures. Yet this legislation provides critical tools and authorities for the Department of Homeland Security to perform network hunting for threats and vulnerabilities on Federal networks. These tools and authorities would help to counter breaches like the SolarWinds hack, which is possibly the largest intrusion into our system we have ever seen by a foreign nation state adversary. We do not yet know the extent and the degree of intrusion that we have suffered. In fact, we weren't aware of this intrusion for many, many months.

One of the disconcerting aspects is that it was discovered by a private company that is one of the most, if not the most sophisticated cyber intrusion expert in the world. Yet they were penetrated.

So we have a serious, serious situation on our hands. This legislation would start giving basic tools, which would allow our cyber security experts to go into other Departments to look at their procedures, their policies, all of their cyber activities, and recommend corrections.

In fact, this bill has done more, I think, for cyber based on the work of the Cyber Solarium Commission, which was chaired by Senator ANGUS KING and Congressman MIKE GALLAGHER of Wisconsin and also aided significantly by my colleague Congressman JIM LANGEVIN of Rhode Island. They put the work together. We took a lot of the Solarium's work and put it into this bill. So there is absolutely no credence to the issue that we have not dealt with national security and cyber intrusions in particular.

Then again, the President, in his veto message, wrote that one of the reasons is the failure to essentially repeal section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. But this issue has nothing to do with the military—nothing at all. It was designed years ago to provide legal protections to social media companies so that they could expand and grow. Frankly, I think it has worked

beyond our wildest imaginations. Everyone recognizes it should be reformed, but reform requires thoughtful, responsible analysis of the legislation. The effects of the legislation should offer both sides the opportunity to explain positions. None of that was done, and none of that can be done before we conclude this legislative session.

It is more, I think, a personal feud of the President, the section 230 repeal, than it is one of careful, deliberate, thoughtful legislation by the Senate.

There is another reason the President has used, and that is we have established a commission to make recommendations for the renaming and removal of symbols, displays, monuments, and paraphernalia that honor or commemorate Confederates who served voluntarily with the Confederacy. There is a clear exemption, by the way, for gravestones that we would absolutely respect. But these individuals—many of them who were on Active service with our Army or Navy at the time—decided to consciously fight against the United States of America. It is that simple. Yet we have bases that are named after them.

The President said this is part of the American heritage of victory and freedom, but, again, these are named after men who took up arms against the United States. In some cases—in most cases, they weren't particularly exemplary generals, with some exceptions. And it was done in a way that I think was not to honor the service of these individuals but to advance other forces.

I think it is time that this history be changed, that this chapter be closed, and the senior Defense Department officials have indicated they are open to these changes. There is bipartisan support for cooperation on this issue. It passed the committee. It passed the floor. It passed the House. Now, it is in this legislation.

When the President vetoed the bill, he also said it is a "gift to China and Russia." I would strenuously disagree. This is one of the strongest bills yet on countering the threat China poses to the United States and our partners, including allies such as India, Taiwan, and other countries and regions.

Among the provisions of this legislation is the Pacific Deterrence Initiative. That is a new authority for the Department of Defense, modeled after the European Deterrence Initiative and authorizes an additional \$150 million in funding.

This was the work—I was proud to collaborate, but the lead was the chairman, Chairman INHOFE, and I was his copilot on that one. This is the first time we really stepped back and said: We have a new threat—significant threat—rising in the Pacific. We have to take a holistic review of strategy, capabilities, equipment, and we have to make this a top priority.

So rather than doing nothing about China, as the President alleges, I think we have made one of the most signifi-

cant steps forward in consciously recognizing the relationship that has developed between China and the United States.

With regard to Russia and Europe, the conference report enhances our ability to deter Russian aggression, maintains strong support for Ukraine, and reaffirms our commitment to the transatlantic partnership, including by calling for a strong U.S. force posture in Germany.

Now, President Trump also vetoed this legislation because he wants the ability to remove our military from "far away and very unappreciative lands." Those are his words. Particularly, I have concern about the situation in Afghanistan. First—and I have been to Afghanistan somewhere close to 20 times—since the beginning.

In fact, I was on the first congressional delegation to go in January after the invasion. I have tried to pay attention to what is going on there. And one point is that the Afghan people have struggled and fought with us side by side. They have suffered greatly. I don't think it is right to say they are unappreciative. I think every day they have been suffering casualties. They have been fighting with our soldiers—in fact, in some cases, saving and helping our soldiers survive on the field.

Second, essentially, the provision allows the President to make the decision. In fact, he can waive all the provisions we built in by simply declaring that it is in the national security interests of the United States and communicating that to the respective leaders in the House and the Senate. That is something that is almost pro forma. So the notion that this seriously hampers his ability is misplaced.

What it does, though, is signal that we have to be very careful in recognizing all of the equities that are involved in Afghanistan. The fact is that there are numerous terrorist groups there, and we have to maintain a counterterrorism presence; the fact that, as I indicated before, the Government of Afghanistan, the Afghan people, in many cases, have suffered more than we have considering the onslaught of the Taliban and other forces. So, again, I don't think that reason measures up to the demands.

The National Defense Authorization Act has passed for 59 years. We need to ensure it will pass for 60 years by overriding the President's veto. The House, as I said, has already done that—322 to 87. I encourage my colleagues to show similar support for our military personnel and their families and override this veto.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, let me elaborate a little bit on something that my good friend from Rhode Island said about China.

I think it is very, very significant that we realize that this is the toughest bill on China that has ever been

passed. That didn't come just from me; that came from the American Enterprise Institute, which has all the credibility in the world. They talk about the serious things that are going on, and they actually said this bill has the most substantial and consequential China-related provisions since—in, probably, history.

That is significant because all of us remember—I know that Senator REED and I have both spent time in the South China Sea, the seven islands that they are doing right now. China—it is illegal, but they have taken over—no, they have created seven islands in the South China Sea. When you go down there, it looks as if, on those islands, they are preparing for World War III. A lot of our allies in that area are very much concerned because they are making a lot more noise than we are, and they are demonstrating very clearly some of the things that they do that we haven't done. Hypersonics is an example. That is a state-of-the-art thing that we do in modernizing our military equipment and abilities. It has been very successful, but they are still ahead of us, so we are in catchup mode.

I would say this: When you go and you look and you see the buildups that they have—I can remember—it wasn't long ago that every time China got involved in any kind of an effort, they did it from their own city limits there. Now they are all over Djibouti, Tanzania, and all around the world.

We made this bill to establish the Pacific Deterrence Initiative. That is \$2.2 billion for foreign posture to put ourselves in the position where we are going to pass, with this bill—we will pass China, and then we will be shifting the supply chains away from China—semiconductors and printed circuit boards, the pharmaceuticals—stimulating the U.S. economy, protecting weapons systems and our troops, and bringing China's malign national security activities into light to make sure everybody knows what they are doing there.

We have a new report in this bill on the true China defense security spending, new assessments of China's industrial base, new list of Chinese companies operating in the United States and making it more difficult for them to do that. It is all in this bill. There is a new report on the fishing fleets they have out there. It extends the successful China Military Power Report, supports Taiwan and a new plan against—that is better than anything we have ever done before.

Yesterday, I put this into the record—all the things that we are doing just concentrating on the threat that is posed to the United States from the country of China. It is all in this bill. So this is something we have taken great pride in because we recognize the threat that is posed to our country from the Chinese.

This is a good bill. It is one that deserves overwhelming support. I will say

one more time that a lot of work went into this from both sides of the aisle. We were in agreement on it with huge margins of support in both Chambers of the House and the Senate. We will have a chance to move procedurally toward that and make that a reality before the end of the week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

QUORUM CALL

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll, and the following Senators entered the Chamber and answered to their names:

[Quorum No. 5 Leg.]

Alexander	Grassley	Portman
Barrasso	Hassan	Reed
Bennet	Heinrich	Risch
Blumenthal	Hoeven	Roberts
Blunt	Hyde-Smith	Romney
Boozman	Inhofe	Rounds
Braun	Johnson	Sasse
Burr	Kelly	Schatz
Capito	Kennedy	Schumer
Cardin	Leahy	Scott (FL)
Collins	Lee	Shaheen
Cornyn	Manchin	Shelby
Duckworth	Markey	Sullivan
Durbin	McConnell	Tillis
Enzi	Moran	Toomey
Ernst	Murkowski	Wicker
Feinstein	Paul	Young
Fischer	Peters	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). A quorum is present. The majority leader.

WILLIAM M. (MAC) THORNBERRY NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021—VETO—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask that the Chair lay before the Senate the veto message on H.R. 6395, and I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON), the Senator from Colorado (Mr. GARDNER), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Georgia (Mrs. LOEFFLER), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE), and the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Alabama (Mr. JONES) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 80, nays 12, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 290 Leg.]

YEAS—80

Alexander	Feinstein	Reed
Baldwin	Fischer	Risch
Barrasso	Gillibrand	Roberts
Bennet	Grassley	Romney
Blumenthal	Harris	Rosen
Blunt	Hassan	Rounds
Booker	Heinrich	Sasse
Boozman	Hirono	Schatz
Brown	Hoeven	Schumer
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Scott (FL)
Cantwell	Inhofe	Scott (SC)
Capito	Johnson	Shaheen
Cardin	Kaine	Shelby
Carper	Kelly	Sinema
Casey	King	Smith
Cassidy	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Collins	Lankford	Sullivan
Coons	Leahy	Tester
Cornyn	Manchin	Thune
Cortez Masto	McConnell	Tillis
Cramer	Menendez	Toomey
Crapo	Moran	Udall
Daines	Murkowski	Warner
Duckworth	Murphy	Whitehouse
Durbin	Murray	Wicker
Enzi	Peters	Young
Ernst	Portman	

NAYS—12

Braun	Lee	Sanders
Cruz	Markey	Van Hollen
Hawley	Merkley	Warren
Kennedy	Paul	Wyden

NOT VOTING—8

Blackburn	Graham	Perdue
Cotton	Jones	Rubio
Gardner	Loeffler	

The motion was agreed to.

WILLIAM M. (MAC) THORNBERRY NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021—VETO

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Veto message to H.R. 6395, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2021 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Shall the bill pass, the objections of the President of the United States to the contrary notwithstanding? The question is debatable.

The majority leader is recognized.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the veto message on H.R. 6395, a bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2021 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, James M. Inhofe, Todd Young, John Cornyn, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Mike Braun, Deb Fischer, John Barrasso, Roger F. Wicker, Richard

Burr, Pat Roberts, Shelley Moore Capito, Mitt Romney, Susan M. Collins, Richard C. Shelby, Thom Tillis, Lamar Alexander.

GUN VIOLENCE IN ILLINOIS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, as we work to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, we must not forget our Nation's epidemic of gun violence that kills over 100 Americans every day.

Even during the holiday season, the deadly toll of shootings has continued.

On the day after Christmas, a gunman opened fire at a bowling alley restaurant in Rockford, IL, killing three and wounding three more. Mayor Tom McNamara has shown real leadership in this crisis. I ask unanimous consent that his statement be printed in the RECORD following my remarks.

Thomas Furseeth, Dennis Steinhoff, and Jerome Woodfork were murdered in that shooting. Among the wounded victims were a 14-year-old boy and a 16-year-old girl.

We mourn the lives we lost and pray for all the victims and their families.

We also give thanks to the first responders who so often rush toward the sound of gunfire so they can save as many lives as they can.

In this case, officers from the Rockford Police Department arrived at the scene within 1 minute of the 911 calls and took the shooter into custody. Their conduct may sound routine to some, but make no mistake, their lives were at risk, and their courage was exceptional. We should never take the valor of so many in law enforcement for granted.

In the city of Chicago, at least 30 people were shot, 8 fatally, during the Christmas weekend.

The victims included a 57-year-old man who was killed while driving in his car, a young man killed while standing in a park at 9 in the morning, and a 24-year-old woman killed while sitting in a parked car.

We mourn these victims and pray for their families and for the wounded. But we must also dedicate ourselves to reducing these deadly shootings and to making our streets, our schools, and our neighborhoods safer.

This is a national problem. According to the Gun Violence Archive, on Christmas Day and the day after, there were six mass shootings across the country, defined as an incident where at least four people were shot. There have been 23 such shootings so far in December. Has this wanton, deadly violence become so routine that we are numb to it until it touches our homes and our families?

We must do better. Have we become so indifferent to gun violence in America that Senators in the highest legislative body in our land refuse to try to make our Nation safer? We must work for reforms like universal background checks and cracking down on illicit gun trafficking. And we must work to support children and families who have

faced violent trauma and to address disparities in healthcare and economic opportunity that contribute to increased violence.

Too many funerals, too many tears, too many lives lost to the scourge of gun violence.

We must do better.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

EMAIL FROM ROCKFORD MAYOR TOM MCNAMARA RE DEC. 26 SHOOTING

Dear Friend,

As we all know, it has been such a difficult year and now a tragic week for our city. Last Saturday, three people lost their lives in a horrific and random act of violence at Don Carter Lanes, a long-time anchor of our community. Three others sustained serious injuries in the attack, with two of them still fighting for their lives. As we move to the conclusion of what has already been an arduous year, we find ourselves coming together to support the families who lost their loved ones, the survivors and their families, and the employees and owners of Don Carter Lanes.

Don Carter Lanes is a staple in Rockford and has been for decades. It's a family-owned business that hosts tournaments, charity fundraisers, birthday parties and also is a long-time supporter of our business community. This is a difficult time for owner Brad Sommer, the employees, and the entire bowling family. I know we will come together as a community to support them during this time.

Rockford is at its best when times are tough and already we've seen examples of this in the wake of Saturday night's incident. The Rockford Police officers who responded within one minute of the first 911 call are heroes who ran toward the danger. They entered the building quickly and without hesitation to protect lives and apprehend the suspect. We should all be grateful for their actions.

GOFUNDME FUNDRAISER

While working through the trauma of this incident, the owners of Don Carter Lanes set up a GoFundMe fundraiser to benefit the shooting victims and families. You can donate by visiting: <https://gofund.me/62caa4df>.

ILLINOIS BANK & TRUST CARE FUND

And, Miracle Mile Rockford, a business association serving owners, neighborhood groups and residents in the area around Don Carter Lanes, has set up a care fund in partnership with Illinois Bank & Trust to accept donations to benefit the families impacted by the shootings. IBT has begun the fund with a generous \$5,000 donation and community donations can be made at any IBT location or via online or mobile banking. Click Here to donate or for more info.

While last week's events are heart-breaking, we can all be proud of and heartened by the reaction of our community. Thank you for your continued support of my work as your mayor and for your support of our great city.

Tom

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Roberts, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES TABLED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages

from the President of the United States submitting withdrawals which were laid on the table.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bills were read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

S. 5085. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to increase the additional 2020 recovery rebates, to repeal section 230 of the Communications Act of 1934, and for other purposes.

H.R. 9051. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to increase recovery rebate amounts to \$2,000 for individuals, and for other purposes.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 4867

At the request of Mr. COONS, the names of the Senator from Arizona (Ms. SINEMA) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) were added as cosponsors of S. 4867, a bill to direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to support research on, and expanded access to, investigational drugs for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, and for other purposes.

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2020

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 12 noon, Thursday, December 31; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, morning business be closed, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; finally, that following leader remarks, the Senate resume consideration of the veto message on H.R. 6395.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL TOMORROW

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 5:51 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, December 31, 2020, at 12 noon.

WITHDRAWALS

Executive Message transmitted by the President to the Senate on December 30, 2020 withdrawing from further Senate consideration the following nominations:

SHON J. MANASCO, OF TEXAS, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE, VICE MATTHEW P. DONOVAN, RESIGNED, WHICH WAS SENT TO THE SENATE ON MAY 4, 2020.

ERIC M. UELAND, OF OREGON, TO BE AN UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE (CIVILIAN SECURITY, DEMOCRACY, AND HUMAN RIGHTS), VICE SARAH SEWALL, RESIGNED, WHICH WAS SENT TO THE SENATE ON JULY 29, 2020.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

SENATE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Title IV of Senate Resolution 4, agreed to by the Senate of February 4, 1977, calls for establishment of a system for a computerized schedule of all meetings and hearings of Senate committees, subcommittees, joint committees, and committees of conference. This title requires all such committees to notify the Office of the Senate Daily Digest—designated by the Rules Com-

mittee—of the time, place and purpose of the meetings, when scheduled and any cancellations or changes in the meetings as they occur.

As an additional procedure along with the computerization of this information, the Office of the Senate Daily Digest will prepare this information for printing in the Extensions of Remarks section of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on Monday and Wednesday of each week.

Meetings scheduled for Thursday, December 31, 2020 may be found in the Daily Digest of today's RECORD.

MEETINGS SCHEDULED

JANUARY 6

10 a.m.

Select Committee on Intelligence
To receive a closed briefing on certain intelligence matters.

SVC-217

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

Daily Digest

Senate

Chamber Action

Routine Proceedings, pages S7971–S7984

Measures Considered:

JUSTICE Act: Senate began consideration of the motion to proceed to consideration of S. 3985, to improve and reform policing practices, accountability, and transparency. **Page S7972**

Veto Messages:

William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act—Veto Message: Senate began consideration of the veto message to accompany H.R. 6395, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2021 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, after agreeing to the motion to proceed. **Pages S7982–83**

A motion was entered to close further debate on the veto message to accompany the bill, and, in accordance with the provisions of Rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur on Friday, January 1, 2021. **Pages S7982–83**

During consideration of this measure today, Senate also took the following action:

By 80 yeas to 12 nays (Vote No. 290), Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to consideration of the veto message to accompany the bill. **Page S7982**

A unanimous-consent agreement was reached providing for further consideration of the veto message

to accompany the bill at approximately 12 noon, on Thursday, December 31, 2020. **Page S7983**

Nominations Withdrawn: Senate received notification of withdrawal of the following nominations:

Shon J. Manasco, of Texas, to be Under Secretary of the Air Force, which was sent to the Senate on May 4, 2020.

Eric M. Ueland, of Oregon, to be an Under Secretary of State (Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights), which was sent to the Senate on July 29, 2020. **Pages S7983–84**

Measures Placed on the Calendar: **Page S7983**

Additional Cosponsors: **Page S7983**

Statements on Introduced Bills/Resolutions:

Additional Statements:

Quorum Calls: One quorum call was taken today. (Total—5) **Page S7982**

Record Votes: One record vote was taken today. (Total—290) **Page S7982**

Adjournment: Senate convened at 3 p.m. and adjourned at 5:51 p.m., until 12 noon on Thursday, December 31, 2020. (For Senate's program, see the remarks of the Majority Leader in today's Record on page S7983.)

Committee Meetings

(Committees not listed did not meet)

No committee meetings were held.

House of Representatives

Chamber Action

The House was not in session today. The House is scheduled to meet in Pro Forma session at 10 a.m. on Thursday, December 31, 2020.

Committee Meetings

No hearings were held.

Joint Meetings

No joint committee meetings were held.

**COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR THURSDAY,
DECEMBER 31, 2020**

House

No hearings are scheduled.

(Committee meetings are open unless otherwise indicated)

Senate

No meetings/hearings scheduled.

Next Meeting of the SENATE

12 noon, Thursday, December 31

Next Meeting of the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

10 a.m., Thursday, December 31

Senate Chamber

Program for Thursday: Senate will continue consideration of the veto message to accompany H.R. 6395, William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act.

House Chamber

Program for Thursday: House will meet in Pro Forma session at 10 a.m.



Congressional Record

printed pursuant to directions of the Joint Committee on Printing as authorized by appropriate provisions of Title 44, United States Code, and published for each day that one or both Houses are in session, excepting very infrequent instances when two or more unusually small consecutive issues are printed one time. ¶Public access to the *Congressional Record* is available online through the U.S. Government Publishing Office, at www.govinfo.gov, free of charge to the user. The information is updated online each day the *Congressional Record* is published. For more information, contact the GPO Customer Contact Center, U.S. Government Publishing Office. Phone 202-512-1800, or 866-512-1800 (toll-free). E-Mail, contactcenter@gpo.gov. ¶To place an order for any of these products, visit the U.S. Government Online Bookstore at: bookstore.gpo.gov. Mail orders to: Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 979050, St. Louis, MO 63197-9000, or phone orders to 866-512-1800 (toll-free), 202-512-1800 (D.C. area), or fax to 202-512-2104. Remit check or money order, made payable to the Superintendent of Documents, or use VISA, MasterCard, Discover, American Express, or GPO Deposit Account. ¶Following each session of Congress, the daily *Congressional Record* is revised, printed, permanently bound and sold by the Superintendent of Documents in individual parts or by sets. ¶With the exception of copyrighted articles, there are no restrictions on the republication of material from the *Congressional Record*.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Superintendent of Documents, *Congressional Record*, U.S. Government Publishing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, along with the entire mailing label from the last issue received.