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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

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2020

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the Honorable DEB FISCHER, a Senator from the State of Nebraska.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Prince of Peace, give us today Your pardon and peace. Pardon the sins of our lips, the untrue and unkind words we have spoken. Pardon the sins of our minds, the ignoring of truth and the refusal to face the facts. Pardon the sins of our hearts, the pride that makes us esteem ourselves as better than others and unwilling to forgive.

Lord, place Your peace within us, that we may no longer be torn by the cares of this life. As the Members of this body receive Your peace, help them to live in unity with each other.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 29, 2020.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable DEB FISCHER, a Senator from the State of Nebraska, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. FISCHER thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

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

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the veto message on H.R. 6395 received from the House be considered as having been read, spread in full upon the Journal, and be printed in the RECORD.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The veto message was ordered to be printed in the RECORD as follows:

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning, without my approval, H.R. 6395, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (the "Act"). My Administration recognizes the importance of the Act to our national security. Unfortunately, the Act fails to include critical national security measures, includes provisions that fail to respect our veterans and our military's history, and contradicts efforts by my Administration to put America first in our national security and foreign policy actions. It is a "gift" to China and Russia.

No one has worked harder, or approved more money for the military, than I have—over \$2 trillion. During my 4 years, with the support of many others, we have almost entirely rebuilt the United States military, which was totally depleted when I took office.

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



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S7955

Your failure to terminate the very dangerous national security risk of Section 230 will make our intelligence virtually impossible to conduct without everyone knowing what we are doing at every step.

The Act fails even to make any meaningful changes to Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, despite bipartisan calls for repealing that provision. Section 230 facilitates the spread of foreign disinformation online, which is a serious threat to our national security and election integrity. It must be repealed.

Additionally, the Act includes language that would require the renaming of certain military installations. Over the course of United States history, these locations have taken on significance to the American story and those who have helped write it that far transcends their namesakes. My Administration respects the legacy of the millions of American servicemen and women who have served with honor at these military bases, and who, from these locations, have fought, bled, and died for their country. From these facilities, we have won two World Wars. I have been clear in my opposition to politically motivated attempts like this to wash away history and to dishonor the immense progress our country has fought for in realizing our founding principles.

The Act also restricts the President's ability to preserve our Nation's security by arbitrarily limiting the amount of military construction funds that can be used to respond to a national emergency. In a time when adversaries have the means to directly attack the homeland, the President must be able to safeguard the American people without having to wait for congressional authorization. The Act also contains an amendment that would slow down the rollout of nationwide 5G, especially in rural areas.

Numerous provisions of the Act directly contradict my Administration's foreign policy, particularly my efforts to bring our troops home. I oppose endless wars, as does the American public. Over bipartisan objections, however, this Act purports to restrict the President's ability to withdraw troops from Afghanistan, Germany, and South Korea. Not only is this bad policy, but it is unconstitutional. Article II of the Constitution makes the President the Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States and vests in him the executive power. Therefore, the decision regarding how many troops to deploy and where, including in Afghanistan, Germany, and South Korea, rests with him. The Congress may not arrogate this authority to itself directly or indirectly as purported spending restrictions.

For all of these reasons, I cannot support this bill. My Administration has taken strong actions to help keep our Nation safe and support our service members. I will not approve this bill, which would put the interests of the

Washington, D.C. establishment over those of the American people. It is my duty to return H.R. 6395 to the House of Representatives without my approval.

DONALD J. TRUMP.

THE WHITE HOUSE, December 23, 2020.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, Congress has returned to work this week to enact the 60th annual National Defense Authorization Act into law. Yesterday, a bipartisan supermajority in the House voted to reapprove the conference report of this must-pass legislation. Today, the Senate will set up a final vote for tomorrow, Wednesday, for this Chamber to follow suit. Soon, this important legislation will be passed into law.

President Trump has rightly noted this year's Defense bill does not contain every provision we Republicans would have wanted. I am confident our Democrat colleagues feel the same way, but that is the case every year.

Yet for 59 consecutive years and counting, Washington has put our differences aside, found common ground, and passed the annual Defense bill. Not once in six decades has a Congress let its differences prevent it from completing this work for our national security and our men and women who wear the uniform.

This year's NDAA will continue our momentum in rebuilding and modernizing our Armed Forces. It will authorize the personnel, equipment, tools, and training we need to reinforce the national defense strategy and to deter great-power rivals like China and Russia. It will cement our advantage on the seas, on land, in the air, in cyber space, and in space. The bill will help us continue to recruit, retain, and support the men and women who keep us safe. It provides a pay raise for the troops, improvements for military housing, childcare, and more.

For the brave men and women of the United States and our Armed Forces, failure is simply not an option. So when it is our turn in Congress to have their backs, failure is not an option either.

I would urge my colleagues to support this legislation one more time when we vote tomorrow.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. On Sunday, President Trump signed into law another bipartisan rescue package that will provide major support to American families through what we hope will be the home stretch of our fight with the coronavirus.

Congressional Republicans and congressional Democrats and President

Trump's senior team had all worked together to pass hundreds of billions more dollars of urgent assistance to the people who need it most.

This new law will set up a targeted second round of the Paycheck Protection Program to save jobs. It will renew and continue Federal programs that helped laid-off workers endure this crisis. It will send more cash to households. It will invest billions in vaccine distribution so the success of Operation Warp Speed kills this pandemic as fast as possible, and much more.

This bipartisan compromise was our shot at getting help to working families on the urgent timeline that they need.

Once again, I want to applaud President Trump for signing the bill and getting this much needed assistance into the pipeline.

During this process, the President highlighted three additional issues of national significance, which he would like to see Congress tackle together. First, as he explained, the President would like further direct financial support for American households. Second is the growing willingness on both sides of the aisle to at least reexamine the special legal protections afforded to technology companies under section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, including the ways that benefit some of the most prosperous, most powerful "Big Tech" firms. And the third subject—since every American, regardless of their politics, should feel the integrity of our democracy beyond reproach—is exploring further ways to protect the sanctity of America's ballots, while continuing to respect the Federal Government's limited role in standing behind State and local elections authorities who actually run elections.

Those are the three important subjects the President has linked together.

This week, the Senate will begin a process to bring these three priorities into focus.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 3985

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3985) to improve and reform policing practices, accountability and transparency.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that following leader remarks on Wednesday, December 30, the time until 1:15 be equally divided between proponents and opponents of the bill, with opponent time being controlled by Senator PAUL or his designee; further, that upon the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate vote on passage of the bill, the objections of the President to the contrary notwithstanding; finally, if passed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon

the table with no intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Reserving the right to object, the Senate is here this week for a rare holiday session to address two major issues: the President's veto of the annual Defense bill and the effort to send \$2,000 survival checks to millions and millions of American families, something Senate Democrats strongly support.

The Senate should be in session to address both issues. There are only a few days left in this session. We should not adjourn until the Senate holds a vote on both measures—the NDAA veto override and the House bill to provide \$2,000 checks for the American people.

As we all know, the majority leader controls the schedule on the floor. So Leader MCCONNELL holds the key to unlocking this dilemma. The solution is a simple one: Put both bills up for a simple up-or-down vote and then let the chips fall where they may. I believe both measures will pass, as they should. But Leader MCCONNELL must allow the Senate to vote on both pieces of legislation, the Defense bill and the \$2,000 checks, before we go home. We will start the process on overriding the President's veto of the Defense bill tomorrow.

Today, at the end of my remarks, I will ask the Senate's consent to take up the House-passed bill to provide the American people immediate survival checks of \$2,000 a person.

Throughout this pandemic, working Americans have taken it on the chin. Right now, they are facing their hardest and their darkest days. Tens of millions have lost their jobs. Tens of millions are struggling to put food on the table, to keep a roof over their heads. In the wealthiest Nation on Earth, modern-day breadlines stretch for miles down American highways.

The fastest way to get money into Americans' pockets is to send some of their tax dollars right back from where they came. And \$2,000 stimulus checks could mean the difference between American families having groceries for a few extra weeks or going hungry, the difference between paying the rent or being kicked out of your home that you have lived in for years. It would buy precious time for tens of millions of people as the vaccine thankfully makes its way across the country. Of course, we could have taken up this issue weeks ago.

In the COVID bill Congress just passed, Democrats wanted generous direct payments to the American people. Speaker PELOSI and I repeatedly asked our Republican counterparts how much they could support. Their answer: \$600. It was a compromise many of us were not happy about. I came to the floor myself with the Senator from Vermont

to ask that we double at least the size of those checks. A Republican Senator objected. Six hundred dollars was the most Republicans would support.

Well, my colleagues and my fellow Americans, \$600 is not enough. It is not enough for the mother in Nashville \$4,000 behind on the rent whose water was shut off earlier this month; not for the medical receptionist in Macomb \$2,100 behind on the rent, whole electricity shut off in September on her son's third day of virtual kindergarten; not for the 12 million Americans who have fallen on average nearly \$6,000 behind on their rent and their utilities or the 26 million Americans who have had trouble putting food on the table in the past 5 days. Six hundred dollars? Nope. It is not enough.

So in a moment, I will move to have the Senate take up the House bill to increase that number to \$2,000, which, I might add, had broad bipartisan support. I don't want to hear that we can't afford it. I don't want to hear that it would add too much to the deficit. Senate Republicans added nearly \$2 trillion to the deficit to give corporations a massive tax cut. Republicans just fought to include a tax break for three-martini lunches in the COVID relief bill. So I don't want to hear that it costs too much to help working families get a check when they are struggling to keep their jobs, pay their rent, feed their families, and live a halfway normal and decent life.

Even in our deeply divided times, this issue has united Americans from coast to coast and bridged the massive political divide here in Washington. A vast majority of the public, Republican and Democrat, strongly supports \$2,000 checks. An overwhelming bipartisan majority in the House supports \$2,000 checks. Senate Democrats strongly support \$2,000 checks. Even President Trump supports \$2,000 checks.

There is one question left today: Do Senate Republicans join with the rest of America in supporting \$2,000 checks?

Now, some of my Republican colleagues have said they support the checks, but there is a major difference in saying you support \$2,000 checks and fighting to put them into law. The House bill is the only way—the only way—to deliver these stimulus checks before the end of session.

Will Senate Republicans fight for a vote on the House-passed CASH Act, or will they look some other way? Will Senate Republicans stand against the House of Representatives, the Democratic majority in the Senate, and the President of their own party to prevent these \$2,000 checks from going out the door? We are about to get the answers to these questions.

So now, Madam President, would the Senator modify his request to include a 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 per individual; that the bill be read a third time and passed

and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection to the modification?

Mr. MCCONNELL. I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

Is there objection to the original request?

The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, reserving the right to object, we should all be very, very clear. The working class of this country today faces more economic desperation than at any time since the Great Depression of the 1930s, and working families need help now—not next year but right now.

Last night, the House of Representatives, with a two-thirds majority—275 to 134, a two-thirds bipartisan vote—moved to increase the direct payment going to working families from \$600 per adult to \$2,000 per adult. The House did the right thing; I congratulate them. Now it is time for the Senate to step up to the plate and do what the working families of this country overwhelmingly want us to do.

Madam President, as a result of the pandemic, tens of millions of Americans have lost their jobs and their incomes. These families, in the middle of the winter, now face the threat of eviction and the possibility of being thrown out in the streets. Hunger in America is at the highest level that it has been for decades, with moms and dads struggling to feed their kids and working families lining up mile after mile to get emergency food packages. We are even seeing an increase in grocery store shoplifting as desperate Americans try to keep their families from going hungry. All of this is taking place in the wealthiest country in the history of the world.

Over the last number of years, as I think everybody in America knows, Congress has provided massive tax breaks for the very wealthiest people in our country, which is one of the reasons why today we have more income and wealth inequality than any time since the 1920s. In fact, in the midst of this pandemic, this terrible pandemic, inequality has grown worse, with many in the billionaire class seeing their wealth increase by hundreds of billions of dollars while average Americans struggle to put food on the table.

Congress has given huge tax breaks to large corporations so that some of the most profitable and largest corporations in America today pay zero in Federal income taxes.

We have just passed the largest military budget in the history of our country—\$740 billion, more than the next 10 nations combined. By the way, there was almost no debate about the size of that huge budget. Trump's veto dealt with other issues.

Meanwhile, over half a million Americans are homeless, half of our working families are struggling to survive paycheck to paycheck, and in the midst of

this terrible, unprecedented pandemic, over 90 million Americans are uninsured or underinsured. In the midst of a pandemic, they are not sure whether they can afford to go to a doctor.

We are coming to the close of one of the most terrible and painful years in American history. That is a tragic fact. Over 330,000 of our people have died of COVID-19, and, as we speak, we are seeing recordbreaking numbers of new cases, and hospitals around the country are being overwhelmed with new admissions.

During the last year, the education and well-being of tens of millions of our young people, from childcare to graduate school, has been disrupted. The terrible emotional isolation this pandemic has caused, where people are unable to spend time with their families and friends, has resulted in a huge increase in mental illness, drug addiction, and even suicide.

As I mentioned, the House has done the right thing. By an overwhelming vote, Democrats and Republicans voted to increase that \$600 direct payment to \$2,000. A recent poll came out, and 78 percent of the American people think that was the right decision. They are hurting. They want help. The leaders of our country—President Trump, President-Elect Biden, Minority Leader CHUCK SCHUMER, the Speaker of the House, NANCY PELOSI—are all in agreement: We have to raise that direct payment to \$2,000.

So that is where we are right now in this historic moment. Do we turn our backs on struggling working families, or do we respond to their pain?

So, Madam President, would the Senator modify his request that immediately following the vote on the veto override, the Senate proceed to the consideration of H.R. 9051; that the bill be considered read a third time and the Senate vote on passage of the bill with no intervening action or debate; further, that, if passed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection to the request for modification?

Mr. MCCONNELL. I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

Is there objection to the original?

Mr. SANDERS. I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 Massachusetts.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, this is our historic moment. We can see the

suffering across our country. We can see how desperate people are. We can see how during this holiday season, the people are looking at the prospect, in the words of Tony Fauci, where the worst may be ahead of us for these families. The worst may yet to have been actually inflicted upon families and our country. Yet the Republicans are refusing to allow for a vote on giving each individual \$2,000 in order to make it through the rest of this pandemic.

Senator SANDERS today speaks for the millions of Americans who are suffering through a devastating health crisis, an unemployment crisis, an eviction crisis, a hunger crisis, and a crisis of faith—faith that their leaders in this country will stand up and provide for Americans in their hour of need.

Meanwhile, we here in Washington must confront a moral crisis: Why can't we keep working families from starving even as we stand ready to approve a massive defense bill?

That is why I am here with my colleague BERNIE SANDERS to call for a simple vote to provide \$2,000 in direct cash payments to Americans across our country. It is this simple. Just like they did in the House of Representatives, the Senate should have a vote—up or down, yes or no—on providing these increased cash payments to desperate Americans. We can get this done quickly and before the holiday if Leader MCCONNELL will simply agree to do it. They already had this vote in the House, and 44 Republicans voted for it. Give the Republicans in the Senate the same opportunity to vote. We already know that many of them have already said they will vote for the \$2,000 if they get a chance to vote. It is this simple.

We can do this because a simple vote will just say that you want to provide a grand total of \$2,000 to Americans who need it to pay the rent, to keep the electricity on, to buy diapers, to pay for lifesaving medication—just to survive this devastating pandemic. There are 44 House Republicans who voted for the \$2,000 checks. I believe that the Republicans in this Chamber will do so as well, and President Trump has already made it very clear that he will sign the bill. So we can see where the opposition is. It is with the leadership of the Republicans in the U.S. Senate.

People across our country are falling ill and falling behind on their bills, and for the families of the hundreds of thousands who have died from coronavirus, the medical and funeral expenses are compounding their grief. They need money in their pockets.

In Massachusetts, this past Sunday, we hit 100 deaths in a single day—the highest death toll our State has seen in a 24-hour period since the very beginning of this pandemic. In the week before Christmas, 21,000 new people in our State applied for unemployment benefits just as Donald Trump let these protections lapse before millions of Ameri-

cans lost their benefits, and that is a tragedy.

A \$2,000 check is the most direct and effective mechanism for delivering economic relief right now to those who are barely holding on throughout this crisis, particularly low-income Americans, immigrant communities, and our gig and service workers—our essential workers. They need help. They have been helping our families, and we need to help their families. Right now, these checks would help 158 million people across our country pay for housing, put food on the table, and make sure that grandma and grandpa have their diabetes or heart medication.

That is why Senator SANDERS, Senator KAMALA HARRIS, and I introduced legislation to provide every person in our country, regardless of immigration status, with \$2,000 monthly recurring payments in order to help weather this storm. We knew then, 7 months ago, that a single \$1,200 relief check was not going to be enough to help families get by, and the \$600 payment in the latest coronavirus package is a crumb to the working people who have faced economic hardship through no fault of their own. It won't even cover a month of rent, let alone heating bills, food bills, Wi-Fi bills for students who are learning from home, and all of the other expenses that are piling up for these families.

Now, some of my Republican colleagues have said that providing \$2,000 would be too expensive. Well, here are some other costs they seem to have forgotten. If our proposal to increase stimulus checks to \$2,000 is soaring, the overall cost of the stimulus bill would go from \$900 billion to \$1.36 trillion. Yes, that is a \$464 billion increase over what we were currently projecting for this bill, but it is only a fraction of the \$740 billion Defense bill that this Chamber stands ready to approve again this week.

I hate to say this, but my Republican colleagues seem to be more interested in funding defense than in funding the defenseless, and that is what this debate is all about. What do we do to help these defenseless families? In this moment of national crisis, we were able to afford spending three-quarters of a trillion dollars on a bloated defense budget—spending that was supposed to protect our country yet did nothing to inoculate against the most profound public health emergency in a century—but we can't give hungry and suffering Americans \$2,000? That is a moral failure for our country. Give Americans this money.

Most of my colleagues support this defense budget. They got to vote on it a few weeks ago, and I know they stand ready to override President Trump's racist, belligerent veto. We are here today, asking the same thing for \$2,000 payments—a simple up-or-down vote. Let's bring the House bill up for a vote. Leader SCHUMER is committed to bringing it forward. We can get this done before the holiday. We can do this for Americans before the year is out.

We must remember that what makes America the envy of the world is not simply the strength of our defense and military but the strength of our people—people like Ahmed Jaya, a parent of three, who was laid off from his job as a doorman at the Omni Parker House in Boston this past March. Ahmed receives \$400 a week in unemployment benefits, but it is not enough to cover the bills that keep rolling in as he now faces expiring health coverage as well. It is people like Tanya DiStefano, from Spencer, MA, who gave birth to a beautiful baby boy on Halloween, to return from the hospital to find an eviction notice taped to the front of her door. These are the stories that should be driving our fights. These are the people who need relief now. And these checks will go right back into our economy because people will spend this money. They need it for the necessities that are confronting their families right now.

Last week, Donald Trump used these people as political pawns. He stalled signing the coronavirus relief package, claiming that he wanted to give \$2,000 checks to every American. By delaying, President Trump may have stifled unemployed Americans out of \$300 this week in unemployment benefits—benefits that they will not get back. So let's now hold Donald Trump to his word. Let's bring this to a vote, and let's pass \$2,000 relief checks for every person in our country and put that bill on Donald Trump's desk.

This pandemic has laid bare the tragedy of two Americas—one in which billionaires have grown their wealth by \$931 billion over the course of this pandemic, an America where the rich continue to get richer, and the other America that has seen unprecedented economic uncertainty, Great Depression-level unemployment rates, and devastating losses. It is one in which Blacks and LatinX workers suffer disproportionately higher rates of unemployment and their families suffer higher rates of coronavirus infection and death; where workers get laid off while CEOs get raises and companies engage in stock buyback plans; and where residents get evicted or their electricity shut off but major corporations barely pay taxes.

For those workers and families and struggling households in America—for the very vast majority of America—\$2,000 is a lifeline, and it is time for Leader McCONNELL to bring this legislation to the floor for a vote. The American people have a right to know where every Member of the Senate stands on this issue. They now know where President Trump says he stands, and they now know where every Member of the U.S. House of Representatives stands. The American people have a right to know, in this desperate time that we are living through, who was on their side to give their families the help they needed.

Senator SANDERS is right. We should have a vote—it should be yes or no—

and we should do this before the end of this year.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, America has 600 billionaires. Now, \$1 billion doesn't sound like a lot of money these days. President Trump just signed a bill, begrudgingly, that has \$900 billion in it. But trust me—\$1 billion is still a whole lot of money. It is actually so much money that it is really hard to find words to describe what it looks like, but let me try.

If you are, for instance, one of the half a million Americans who make the minimum wage in this Nation and are lucky enough to work 40 hours a week, guess how many years you would have to work in order to get \$1 billion. Five hundred years? A thousand years? Ten thousand years? No, you are not even close. If you make minimum wage in America today, you would need to work for 75,000 years in order to make \$1 billion—75,000 years. Neanderthals were roaming the Earth 75,000 years ago. Those guys, if they had made minimum wage, would have had to have worked up until present day, every single day—that is, of course, if they hadn't spent a dime of the money they had made in order to accrue \$1 billion.

One billion dollars is a bananas amount of money, and there are 600 people in America today who make at least that amount of money or have that amount of money to their names. That is crazy. With \$1 billion, you are leading a life that, frankly, none of us can really imagine, right? You have private planes. You have yachts. You have household staffs in the dozens. You have enough money to make sure that your children and your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren and your great-great-grandchildren never have to work a day in their lives. Generations of your offspring can just live lives of indolent luxury, without a care, if they so choose.

Do you know where I was 2 days before Thanksgiving this year? I was at Hamden Middle School, in my State, to help hand out free food for the unemployed, the poor, and the disabled ahead of a long holiday weekend. Those long weekends can be really hard, especially the ones that fall at the end of the month when the SNAP benefits have long run out. I got there as darkness fell but right at the beginning of the event. I noticed that down the hill from the roundabout at the school at which they were handing out the food, there was usually an empty parking lot. That night, at that moment, at the beginning of the event, that parking lot was lit up by hundreds of sets of headlights of hundreds of cars that were just sitting there, idle, in that parking lot.

I asked the organizer of the event what was going on in that parking lot.

Was there some other event happening that evening? Why all the cars?

He told me: The cars started pulling into that lot hours ago. They got wind we were handing out food, and they got here early to make sure they didn't get left out. We have enough food for 300 people, and there were 300 cars in that lot before I even got here.

That is what has happened during this pandemic. Millions of families all across this Nation, through no fault of their own, have lost their jobs or have had their hours dramatically cut back. They have no savings because work doesn't pay in this country anymore. They spend everything they earn each month.

So when the economy collapsed, virtually overnight in the spring, they got desperate—really fast.

I want you to think about what it is really like on an hour-to-hour basis when you don't have enough money for food for your family. The decisions you have to make every single day are practically animalistic. Do you make your kids go hungry during the day, when they need the most energy, or do you skimp on dinner and force your kids to go to bed with hunger pangs?

There are hundreds of thousands of mothers and fathers who, right now, as I am speaking, are making that decision today. That is the reality of this pandemic.

But here is another reality: Those 600 billionaires in this country? As it turns out, as a group, they lost nothing—nothing—during this pandemic. No, exactly the opposite. They got richer.

The wealthiest 600 Americans collectively added \$1 trillion to their bank accounts. Let me say it again. The richest 600 Americans gained \$1 trillion over the course of 2020.

Let's be clear. That is not money that grew in their money tree orchards. Yes, we are printing some more money these days, but wealth isn't far away from a zero-sum game still. So when we allow for 600 people in the country to control 50 percent of the Nation's wealth, that is coming out of your pocket.

Six hundred people in a country of 328 million isn't a lot of people. But do you know what is a smaller number than 600? Fifty-two.

There are 52 Republicans in this Chamber—52 people who are going to have a decision to make about what to do in a country where millions are literally starving as we speak, while 600 billionaires count the \$1 trillion in additional wealth that they have accumulated during this period of national calamity.

The question before these 52 Senate Republicans is simple. It is simple: Should we give \$2,000 to low- and middle-income Americans right now to help them survive this crisis? That is the decision Senate Republicans have to make right now. Time is running out.

Six hundred billionaires got \$1 trillion richer this year, and the question

before Senate Republicans is this: Are you willing to spend an amount equal to just half of that windfall to America's billionaires in order to help 160 million Americans?

Right now, the 52 Senate Republicans serving in this Chamber are the only thing standing in the way of \$2,000 being sent to 160 million of our neediest citizens.

The House passed the bill authorizing the checks in a big, bipartisan vote. It is hard to get two-thirds of the House of Representatives to agree on what time it is, but two-thirds of the House of Representatives voted for the \$2,000 checks. President Trump supports the \$2,000 checks, so he will sign the bill if the Senate sends it to him. We can vote on the House bill today in a matter of hours if Senate Republicans agree.

So why isn't this happening? Why didn't Senator MCCONNELL announce the schedule for the vote on the \$2,000 checks bill? Why didn't he agree to Senator SCHUMER's request to bring it up for an immediate vote?

Now, a lot of Republicans are saying they object to the payments because they cost too much and they are going to add too much to the deficit. Well, frankly, spare me the fake righteous indignation about the deficit all of a sudden.

Three years ago, these same deficit hawk Republicans passed a tax cut bill that, before the pandemic hit, had already added over \$200 billion to the annual deficit, and that was a tax cut where 80 percent of the benefits went to the richest 1 percent of Americans.

Warren Buffet wrote in his note to investors last year that the deficit-financed tax cuts earned his empire \$29 billion overnight. That windfall, Buffet noted, "did not come from anything we accomplished at Berkshire." So it is funny: Deficits just didn't matter to the 52 when it was tax cuts to the 600 richest people in America.

But even if this Congress weren't ending in 5 days and we had time to figure out how to pay for it, do you know how we can't pay for it? Cutting foreign aid.

President Trump has been talking a lot about foreign aid in the last week. Now, the money we spend on foreign aid, all supported by Democrats and Republicans over the years, all of it smart investments in our Nation's security—that actually wasn't in the COVID relief package. It was in the annual budget, as it always is. It just so happens that this year the COVID relief package and the annual budget were passed together.

But just for argument's sake, let's say Trump got his way and every single dollar of foreign aid was cut out of the budget. Would that pay for the \$2,000 checks? Not even close. President Trump apparently has an oversized impression of how much money we spend on foreign aid, because our annual foreign aid spending doesn't even equal 10 percent of the cost of a one-time \$2,000 payment to low- and middle-income citizens.

There is also some speculation that Senator MCCONNELL is going to join together the \$2,000 payments with other, much more controversial measures, much more complicated measures, like the reform of our internet liability laws. That is an invitation for this entire effort to fall apart.

The House has finished voting. They have passed the \$2,000 payment bill and sent it to us. They are not interested in taking up anything else. If we start adding poison pills to the \$2,000 payment bill, that is just another way of telling the American people that this body doesn't support \$2,000 payments.

Listen, being a billionaire must be crazy. I make a lot of money as a Senator, but even I would have to work 7,500 years before my earnings equaled \$1 billion. You know what was happening 7,500 years ago? The Stone Age.

There isn't a good reason to oppose giving Americans who aren't billionaires a measly \$2,000 check to help them put food on the table for their kids in the middle of this once-in-a-lifetime crisis.

There isn't a good reason to choose to make moms and dads all across this country decide which two meals they will feed their kids each day because three meals are not an option. Two thousand dollars doesn't put dinner on the table every night, but, man, going to bed hungry when you are 11—it sucks. And even dealing with it every other night instead of every single night, no kid is going to turn that down.

There are 52 of you, and in the next 24 to 48 hours, you get to decide: Do you protect the billionaires or do you choose to feed that 11-year-old kid? The only thing that stands between the American people and a \$2,000 emergency survival check is 52 Senate Republicans. Got it? Understand?

There is a bill pending right now before the Senate that gives \$2,000 to ordinary Americans. Yes, it costs a lot of money, and maybe down the line we will have to ask the billionaires to pay for it, but the bill is here right now. The legislative session expires in 5 days. President Trump says he will sign it, and all that matters right now is what these 52 people decide.

The House passed the bill with lots of Democratic and Republican support. The President supports the idea. The only thing that can stop \$2,000 payments to struggling Americans right now is 52 Senate Republicans.

Some things in Washington aren't that simple—but this is.

I yield the floor.

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. CORNYN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. COLLINS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, we didn't expect to be in session this week, but we are. And, of course, as we all know, the theme for this entire year has been "COVID-19 writ large."

More than 330,000 Americans have died from the novel coronavirus. Tens of millions have lost their jobs, and every community across the country has felt the devastating blow dealt by this pandemic, but, as we know, the threats that existed long before this virus still are with us. Even though most of the world hit pause to battle COVID-19, our adversaries did not, and our brave servicemembers didn't pack their bags and not show up for work when everybody else shut down.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, over the last several months, as the Senate has worked to support our country through this pandemic, we have kept an eagle eye on the other threats on the horizon, and we passed the National Defense Authorization Act to ensure that we are prepared for whatever comes at us.

For our forces to continue fighting and defeating our adversaries in every corner of the world, they need funding. They need stability. They need to be able to plan, and they need the unwavering support of the U.S. Congress and all 330 million Americans.

The 2021 NDAA provides that support from Congress. It will prepare our military and servicemembers to address the threats that exist today, while preparing for those that we will inevitably face tomorrow.

Earlier this month, this legislation passed the House by a vote of 335 to 78 and the Senate by a vote of 84 to 13. Those are rare vote margins in Congress these days, and that alone is a testament to the importance of this legislation and its bipartisan support.

We know the President has the constitutional authority to veto any bill for virtually any reason, and he has exercised that power with this legislation. The reasons the President has given I don't think are frivolous at all, but they just shouldn't be tagged to this particular piece of legislation. His concerns about section 230 under the Communication Decency Act and the power of these social media platforms that censor speech is troubling indeed. This is something we really haven't confronted before. We know that under the First Amendment, the government can't censor speech, but with smalltown newspapers and media outlets and other alternatives fading away, more and more the American people rely on Facebook and Google and other internet platforms to get their information, and they have, I believe, become de facto public forums. So I agree that we do need to address section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, as the President has pointed out.

The President also has a point about the Commission to rename military bases that are part of the Defense Authorization Act. Unfortunately, the amendment that was adopted in the Armed Services Committee undermines the role of Congress, once the Commission makes its report, to do as Congress believes should be done. But the truth is, as we have learned from our friends across the pond in the UK, no Parliament can bind a future Parliament, and indeed no Congress can bind a future Congress. That is true. So if these are things the President believes we should address and that Members of Congress and the new administration believe we should address, we will address them, and we have an opportunity to do that, but we should not try to do that on this bill and risk the loss of this important piece of legislation now in its 60th year of adoption.

The Defense Department is hands down the largest employer in the United States, with nearly 2.9 million employees, including both servicemembers and civilians. These men and women can be found in more than 160 countries around the world and on all seven continents. Supporting them is a Herculean task, and the NDAA is a significant way in which we do that.

The Defense authorization bill also includes a 3-percent pay raise for our troops and additional support for their families, such as career support for military spouses and quality childcare on military bases. Given the fact that we have an All-Volunteer military, it is important we not only support our servicemembers who wear the uniform but the families who support them as well. I have heard it said, you can recruit a member of the U.S. military, but if you want to retain them, you have to take care of their family, and I believe that is absolutely true.

This bill also ensures previous reforms to improve the quality of military housing and healthcare are implemented appropriately. Those who serve in our military have made tremendous sacrifices in order to safeguard our freedoms and our way of life. I regard our support for them and for our national defense the No. 1 priority of the Federal Government. Everything else pales in significance. So we should do everything in our power to ensure that they and their families are appropriately taken care of.

Beyond pay and benefits, that means giving the military members the training, the facilities, and the equipment they need not only to succeed on the job but to return home safely.

The NDAA authorizes military construction projects across the country, including \$183 million in Texas, which will bring serious updates and improvements to our military bases. At Joint Base San Antonio, this funding will provide for a range of new facilities, including a barracks, a flight simulation system, and an F-16 Mission Training Center.

At Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth, it will support an F-35 operations and

maintenance facility, vehicle maintenance shop, and an aircraft maintenance hangar. It will also support fuel facilities at Fort Hood and provide additional funding for the Pantex Plant in Amarillo, which maintains a large portion of our nuclear stockpile. Maintained and modernized facilities are a critical component to military readiness, and this legislation makes tremendous investments in our facilities around the world. It will authorize 93 new F-35 Joint Strike Fighters that will be built by Texans in Fort Worth. As we work to counter increasingly sophisticated adversaries around the world, this investment in our military readiness could not be more important.

In addition to supporting our members in uniform and ensuring they are ready for action when called upon, the NDAA helps our military take stock of the evolving threat landscape and ensures that our country is taking active steps to counter threats on the horizon.

In recent years, China and Russia have risen to the top of the threats to our country and to world order, with China now assuming the No. 1 role. We remember the Cold War after World War II, where we sought to contain and counter Soviet expansionism, and, actually, the mutual deterrents that we have established during that time has worked. But China is a unique challenge, and none of the old rules apply to China.

They are increasingly belligerent and well resourced and continue to demonstrate a lack of respect not only for the United States and our closest allies but for basic human rights.

The Chinese Government continues its disturbing and unacceptable genocide against the Uighur people. The so-called political reeducation camps are nothing more than concentration camps where Uighurs are tortured. Recent reporting has found that the treatment in these camps often includes forced abortions, birth control, and sterilization. And China continues to chip away at the freedoms and autonomy of Hong Kong, notwithstanding its promises to the contrary, using a so-called national security law to extinguish opposition to the Chinese Communist Party and to deny the people of Hong Kong the freedoms that they were promised.

As I mentioned, though, China doesn't stand alone as a threat to the world. Russia has become increasingly aggressive around the world in its effort to wreak chaos and sow discord. Since their attempts to interfere with the 2016 election, we have witnessed aggression after aggression from Russia, not just here in the cyber space but around the world.

From Russia-backed mercenaries fighting in the Middle East to its attempt to steal the coronavirus vaccine research and, in the last few weeks, a massive cyber attack on U.S. Government agencies, Russia continues to undermine the United States and our allies and shows no signs of stopping.

It has become increasingly clear, if it wasn't already, that China and Russia adhere to no rules and no principles but their own. As the national defense strategy outlined, the threats posed by these two countries are increasingly dangerous, and countering these growing threats requires a clear and concentrated effort from Congress. That is exactly why passing the NDAA—the National Defense Authorization Act—is so important.

This legislation prioritizes strategic competition with China and Russia and takes a strong approach to counter the threats posed by adversaries around the world. It will build on the progress we have made in recent years to strengthen our military after the draconian cuts during the Obama-Biden administration and achieve peace through strength.

Over the last several decades, the NDAA has provided an annual opportunity for us to take stock of the evolving threat landscape and ensure that our national defense is prepared to meet the challenges not only of today but of tomorrow, and this year's Defense Authorization Act is no exception.

It takes a strong approach to counter the threats posed by our adversaries around the world. It invests in modernized national defense that is critical to maintaining peace through strength, and it provides support for our servicemembers and their families. Above all, it sends a message to the world that our country is and will remain the global military leader.

I have supported this legislation on the Senate floor many times, and I will do so once again when the opportunity to vote to override the veto presents itself.

One of Congress's most critical responsibilities is to provide for the common defense, and the NDAA—the National Defense Authorization Act—is how we will deliver.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam 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. Madam President, I was disappointed last week when President Trump vetoed the NDAA.

This will be the 60th year that we have had the NDAA. The NDAA is the National Defense Authorization Act, and I have said so many times, countless times—on the floor of the House and on the floor of the Senate—that this is the most important bill that we have. Some people don't agree with that, but I do.

That is what we are supposed to be doing here. We are supposed to be defending America. And there is a lot to do. We are in the most threatening situation that we have ever been in.

I sometimes look back and think of the good old days of the Cold War when you had two superpowers out there. We knew what they had; they knew what we had. Mutual assurance of destruction meant something at that time. If you kill us, we kill you, and everyone is happy.

But that is living in the past. But anymore now, with the weaponry that is out there, you can get one outside group that doesn't have any resources at all, and they have the ability to wipe out another country. So it is a real threat that we are up against.

I do chair the committee called the Senate Armed Services Committee, and, of course, I have been very active in the National Defense Authorization Act every year since—well, since 1987. It is a long time.

So I am proud of the conference report that we had. The NDAA right here—our vote in this Senate was 84 to 13. Wow. You can't find that kind of togetherness in a cause anywhere else. But it puts members of the families of the military first.

I share President Trump's frustration about section 230. I know that it is a complicated thing. The majority of people in America don't know what that is all about, but section 230 is something that has nothing to do with the military—nothing at all.

The committee that I chair is the Armed Services Committee. That would be found in the jurisdiction of the Judiciary Committee. The Judiciary Committee is chaired by Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM. He does a great job of chairing that. That is where any kind of reform in section 230 should come from.

I agree that the President should have the authority to determine troop levels. That is what we have in this bill. We have the President making those decisions. That is why we made sure that the final NDAA gave the President very broad authority in determining troop levels all around, and we have looked at them in Western Europe and Eastern Europe. We have looked at them in Ethiopia—in Afghanistan and other places around the world.

So we look at what we have done, and I was going to mention—I have been down here several times talking about the President and what he has done and the great job that he has done for the United States. And I am going to wind up with some comments on a card that I put together. I put this card together back 2 years ago, talking about the top 10 Trump accomplishments. I think it is important that people remember that. We have a lot of people down here forgetting about all the really good things that have happened, so I am going to talk about that in a minute.

But I am here today because we have to pass the NDAA. This would be the 60th year in a row that we have the NDAA, and it is necessary to have. It is the most important bill of the year. I have believed this for a long time. You have heard me say it before.

I always stand with our troops. The military servicemembers and their families will suffer if we don't enact it for the 60th year. If the NDAA is not passed, more than 200,000 military families will see smaller paychecks in January because the special pays and the bonuses for hazard pay are all part of this bill.

Additionally, it would hurt the areas where the military is having the most serious problem. In a way, it is kind of a mixed bag because we have—prior to the pandemic coming along, and that was in about March of this year—before that happened, we had the best economy, I could argue, that we have had in my lifetime, and all these things were very, very good. Then, of course, when that happened everything changed.

Now, one of the problems you have when you have such a great economy is that you have a lot of competition. We have to have a military force. That military force has to have resources. They have to have the ability to step in because we don't know where the next threat is going to come from.

And with people with special abilities—now I am talking about pilots, cyber experts, engineers, and doctors—that is where we have a problem. We don't have enough of them—pilots. I have been an active pilot now for longer than most Members here have been alive, and I know that back during the previous administration, the Obama administration, we had a real serious problem because we were not able to attract the pilots at that time because that was when we had a President who—he wasn't ashamed of it—his top priority was not defending America. He had other priorities.

So, consequently, we went through a period the last 5 years—the last 5 years of his administration were the years 2010 through 2015, and during that timeframe he reduced the funding for the military by 25 percent. At the same time he did that, China was increasing theirs in that same timeframe by 83 percent. So we have China increasing their military expenditures by 83 percent at the same time we are reducing ours by 25 percent. So we had serious problems there.

One of the areas, when people are cutting the military, that they do it where it won't be as noticeable is in the flying hours. So we had pilots out there, but they weren't flying the hours that they needed to fly to keep their proficiency up, and, consequently, a lot of them left and went to the airlines and went other places because they were wanting to be flying the hours. That is one of the problems that we had during that time.

So we have the military's ability to recruit and retain servicemembers who

are in the shortest supply. As I mentioned, that would be things like cyber experts and engineers and doctors, so they have the skill sets that need to be done out there.

Of course, this President came along, and we started rebuilding the military. I will always remember being at the White House during a time that we were talking about what we were going to do with the military, and he actually looked over at me, and he said: What do you think we need to do with the military? I said: We are going to have to rebuild the military. It is going to cost something like \$750 billion before it is over. He said: That is what we should do; we need to start with that.

And this President, with his leadership, took us with a new priority in defending America and building our military, and it happened.

So we have the things that will happen if we don't pass this thing—the education of children for military families. There is a thing called the impact aid. Impact aid comes about when you don't get the tax base increase with the added enrollment into the schools of the children of military families. So they have impact because they don't pay the taxes.

So the impact aid is the amount of money that supplements that. It is not just in my State of Oklahoma but throughout the country. It ensures that children of military families receive a quality education by supplementing the school districts, the budgets, where they are required.

If the NDAA is not passed, military construction projects—I have one in my State of Oklahoma that is one that would—let's see; where is that? Yes, we have a thing where we have an ammunition depot, a demolition shop, for one. This is something where we have gone through a lot of BRAC rounds—that is Base Realignment and Closure Commissions—and we have increased the size of our ammunition demolition activities substantially. And we are doing most of it now right there in Oklahoma. Well, this has a new demolition shop in there so we can get rid of a lot of these things we were not able to get rid of.

So we have military construction projects in 38 States, and one happens to be in the State of Maine. It is very significant that they be able to do these projects. If the military construction doesn't happen, both an authorization and appropriation—people don't understand this because it is kind of talked around, but in order for something to get done, you have to have it authorized. That is what the committee that I chair does—authorizes the military projects.

Then it has to be appropriated. The appropriators come along, and they put the money in there. That is how this system works.

If the NDAA is not passed, the military won't be able to increase the end strength—or the total number of troops in the military services—where

that is needed to address the growing threats. End strength increases don't happen without authorization. You can't appropriate it.

So if the NDAA should not be passed, the Pentagon loses the ability to quickly and efficiently process security clearance investigations. Right now there is a backlog because it takes a long time to do this, but this has a streamlining provision in it that is going to make that a lot easier so we will be able to get security clearances.

All these things are tied into this bill. The DOD, if we didn't pass this thing, would lack the authority to pay the nonmilitary personnel on hospital shifts. They are the ones who are doing the great job right now with the COVID response.

That is just kind of a snapshot of what we are counting on to support our troops in the field, the bare minimum we need. Without the NDAA, we lose all of that and also lose all the other policies.

Right now, this bill makes China the primary strategic threat. I think we all understand that. We have strategic threats from Russia and China. Last year, we had the European part addressed. This year, the bill that is pending right now that we are going to try to get passed for this year—and I think we will successfully do that—is going to be concentrating on the Pacific area; that is, China and the things that China is doing that people don't—many people don't realize the threat that is out there.

Right now we are up, as I understand it, to seven different areas where the Chinese are actually building, creating islands in the South China Sea. This is something that is different than has ever been done before. I contend and have always contended it is illegal, but they are still doing it. They are doing it, and that is the effort that they are making there.

If you go into these islands where they are rebuilding, it is almost as if China is preparing for World War III—all of it. This is what is happening right now.

Right now we know about this SolarWinds hack, the hack that we are facing. That is something where we have language to deal with that in the Defense authorization bill.

The new "hunt forward" authority that allows our cyber operators to do more work to find malicious actors proactively, this is something that we need to get done for the defense of our country.

It implements the Cyber Solarium Commission and the recommendations. There are 27 recommendations that they have in this commission. And it establishes a new National Cyber Director.

These are things where it is a moving target. There are a lot of things that we are doing now that we should have been doing before, and it took China and Russia to kind of forge ahead of us, as they did in the previous administra-

tion, to remind us that we have these very serious problems. Our troops need the NDAA. It is our responsibility to make sure that they have the equipment, training, and resources to complete the mission and return home safely.

I will close with this one reminder. On December 29, 1777, 243 years ago today, General George Washington wrote to the Continental Congress imploring that they needed to provide the resources his troops needed. He wrote:

I hope that the supplies they will be able to furnish in aid of those, which Congress may immediately import themselves, will be equal and competent to every demand. If they do not, I fear—I am satisfied the Troops will never be in a situation to answer the Public expectation and perform the duties required of them.

That is as true today as it was in 1777. We have to do that.

We look at the national security wins of this President. I think people don't talk about that as much. We have identified China as the No. 1 adversary. That was in the NDS, the national defense survey. It was put together by 12 of the real experts—6 Republicans, 6 Democrats. It has been the blueprint for our military ever since that time, about 3 years ago. They identified China as the major threat.

There is \$2.5 trillion to rebuild the military. That is what we were able to get done. We increased the size of the military, replaced obsolete equipment, and made new investments in future tech. Hypersonics is a good example. Both Russia and China are ahead of us in the area of hypersonics; it is the new "state of the art." There is a pay raise for the troops.

They took out the terrorist leaders. How many people remember Baghdadi and Soleimani? They were the top terrorists in the world. They are gone now. This President, this administration took care of that.

We established the Space Force. The Space Force was the first new force that was established in many, many years. I wasn't really sold on it at first because I thought we were doing a pretty good job. It wasn't coordinated. You had different military units doing it, and they weren't even really talking to each other. That is what we put together. This President provided the leadership in doing that.

There is the widow's tax. Everybody remembers that. That was something that had to be done. Others talked about it. This President did it.

Then the ISIS caliphate was destroyed. There is the Abraham Accords. They supported Israel through new security assistance. We know that is going on today. All these things this President has done and has done a great job.

I do want to mention this, and I think it is worthwhile, really, because we know what won't happen if we don't pass this bill. We won't get the bonuses necessary; I already mentioned that. The impact aid, I mentioned that. Mili-

tary construction project authorizations, we would not have that. Full pay for DOD civilians, that has to be done. That has been talked about by a lot of administrations but not really done.

I will finalize this by talking about China. Nothing in the bill helps China any way at all. There is a group called the American Enterprise Institute. That is a group that is kind of the conservative conscience that evaluates programs that come along. They said: "This bill has the most substantial and consequential China-related provisions since the 2000 NDAA." They are talking about this bill and what it does for China. It establishes the Pacific Deterrence. We talked about the European Deterrence last year in the NDAA bill. This is the Pacific Deterrence. That is China we are talking about. It shifts the supply chains away from China in semiconductors, circuit boards, and pharmaceuticals, and it stimulates the economy in those ways. It brings Chinese malign national security activities into light so we know what they are doing—who the good guys are, who the bad guys are.

This supports Taiwan. We have talked about that for a long period of time. This bill accelerates that program.

It prevents Chinese intellectual property theft.

I have a whole list here.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that this list be inserted after my comments.

What I would like to wind up with, if I brought it—I did. Two years ago, I put this card together. This is when I realized the media hates Trump. People are not aware of all the good things he did in those first couple of years. People were not aware of it.

First of all, on the card—I am going to run over these. Biggest tax cuts. We learned a lesson back there during a Democratic administration. John Kennedy said the best way to get more revenue in for the Great Society programs that they were advocating at that time was to reduce marginal rates and that would increase revenue. It did. Unfortunately, John Kennedy died before he could reap the benefits that came with that, but it worked. Of course, others followed him, including Presidents Clinton, President Bush, and others, by reducing the rates. That also increased the revenue.

What this President did that was different than the rest of them is that he did not just decrease the rates—the tax rates—but he also decreased all the overregulation.

How many people know that, back during the Obama administration, we had a rule that we were adhering to that said if you were a domestic oil and gas producer in the United States of America and you were in competition with China or somebody else, you had to give them our whole playbook on how we put together our system over here and all the elements. And that put us at a disadvantage with our competitors in China and in energy.

I was happy that I used to say, after Obama got out of office, that the war on fossil fuels was over for a while. Look at the energy dominance now. We are the global leader in oil and gas production: a 277-percent growth in crude exports, a 132-percent increase in coal exports, a 52-percent increase in natural gas exports. These are exports. That is what we are doing now in the United States as a result of the efforts of this President and bringing our economy around.

Crackdown on illegal migration. Nobody wanted the wall, they said. Now people realize that is where a lot of the bad people were getting in.

We moved the Embassy. Every Democrat and Republican President, in my memory, tried to move the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. They all talked about it. This President went in and did it.

He enacted the infrastructure bill, the WRDA bill, or the Water Resources Development Act, and the FAA reauthorization.

And on the judges we have, not just Kavanaugh and Gorsuch, but I think our number is up to about 225 new judges.

He repealed the overregulation of the Dodd-Frank rules. Anyone in business will tell you that that was one of the major accomplishments of this President, President Trump—and the record employment.

But then I would say that the 10th and last one I mention to everyone who will listen is what he did for the military. We went from the time of dropping down in the last 5 years of the Obama administration by 25 percent, while China was increasing 83 percent. Now we have rebuilt that military. That is why the NDAA is so significant right now and to make sure that that gets passed and that we are able to have that. That is what this vote is all about.

The NDAA, or National Defense Authorization Act, is the most important bill of the year. That is why we are doing it, and that is why we are here today during this holiday season.

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

TRUMP NATIONAL SECURITY WINS

Identified China as #1 adversary in 2018 NDS; \$2.5 trillion to rebuild military; Increased size of military; Replaced obsolete equipment; New investments in future tech—hypersonics, AI, cyber; 3.1% pay raise—biggest in a decade; Took out terrorist leaders (Baghdadi, Soleimani); Established Space Force; Eliminated widow's tax; Destroyed ISIS caliphate; Historic Abraham Accords; Supported Israel through new security assistance; Withdrew from Iran deal; Withdrew from INF Treaty; Maximized arms sales; Improved military spouse employment; Rescued 55 hostages in 24 countries; Secured \$130 billion in new NATO spending, growing to \$400 billion by 2024.

Mr. INHOFE. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. 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. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is an unusual sight of a Senator in the Capitol between Christmas and New Year's. This is the one time we really try to reserve for our personal and family responsibilities. Our families, like others, look forward to the Christmas season. It is the one time of the year we desperately try to find ways to come together.

Of course, COVID-19 intervened and made that more challenging. But, even so, the notion of coming back to Washington this week and staying, perhaps, more than a day to try to finish our work is unusual, and the circumstances surrounding it are extraordinary, as well, not the least of which is the fact that we have two bills that have to be thought of in the context of our responsibilities.

First and foremost is the National Defense Authorization Act. This month, both the House and the Senate passed, with overwhelming bipartisan majorities, the fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act.

Senator INHOFE of Oklahoma, a Republican, was on the floor before me. He and Senator JACK REED of Rhode Island put in more time than most Members can appreciate to make sure that this bill really served our military and the goal of national security. They came up with a good bill, one I was proud to support it.

This annual legislation has been signed into law for six consecutive decades. When the Senate fails to do anything, they always do the National Defense Authorization Act. It shows Congress can come together, at least on this measure, when it comes to supporting our men and women in uniform and keeping our country safe.

This year, the bill authorized \$740.5 billion in defense spending. It provides another 3 percent, well-deserved, pay raise for our troops. It also recognizes that many in the Armed Forces are on the frontlines here at home, as well, helping fight the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic, providing our troops with necessary benefits and protections, including a 10-percent increase in hazardous duty pay.

The bill also includes a number of provisions that I authored and supported, including language expressing strong support for the Baltic States and Ukraine, especially in the face of continued, unforgivable Russia aggression. It requires the renaming of military bases in the United States which were once named in honor of Confederate generals, those who served in the Confederacy in an attempt to secede

from the Union and to defend the institution of slavery and have been enshrined in the names of these bases for many, many years. This effort to rename them is long, long overdue. It tries to correct and recognize the mistakes of our past and really address the sensitive racial inequities at the Pentagon when it comes to this decision-making.

It places restrictions on the transfer of military equipment to law enforcement agencies. We have to address the issue of the militarization of our police at a time when we are, frankly, making an assessment of the role of police to make certain that the overwhelming majority of law enforcement officers—those who are good, principled, civic-minded individuals—is honored and that those who fail to meet the test are removed from service.

It expands benefits to our veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange during the Vietnam war. There are 191,000 Vietnam-era veterans in my State of Illinois. Many of them were exposed to toxins, such as Agent Orange, during their service and now are paying the price.

It makes it easier for victims of military sexual trauma to report instances of such crime and expand support for survivors. The most recent, horrible incident at Fort Hood was a reminder of what we need to do to bring the military into the 21st century when it comes to respecting the rights of all people, men and women.

It strengthens safeguards against foreign cyberattacks. We know how important that is since the recent revelation confirmed by Secretary of State Pompeo that Russia is at work again in its attempting to compromise our Federal agencies, their data, their information, and the security secrets that they keep for our protection.

It authorizes funding for PFAS-related research. If you have never heard of the phrase “PFAS” before, I can tell you that you are bound to hear it in the future. This was used as a flame retardant and in some other capacities on many Air Force bases and military bases around the United States. We are finding that it is still there and is still dangerous. We need to put money into remediation to help these military installations, including the Scott Air Force Base in Belleville, IL, where PFAS was detected earlier this year.

Still, despite all of the good things in this bill and the bipartisanship that supported it, President Trump decided to veto the bill—one of his rare vetoes. He prefers we continue to honor the Confederate leaders who committed treasonous atrocities in order to preserve slavery. I don't think that this is reflective of the United States of today or its values, but that is his position.

When he was called out for this racist inclination, he changed the reason for his veto. He claimed the bill didn't do enough to fight China or that we should include a measure to address liability issues for tech companies—

never mind that tech company liability matters have nothing to do with the National Defense Authorization Act. He just doesn't like that there was criticism coming down for some of the misstatements and lies and disinformation he has been spreading on social media.

The President also fails to recognize that this Defense authorization bill, in fact, does get tough on China. It creates a new Pacific Deterrence Initiative that puts America back in the seat of leadership in that region, where we need to be. The Trump administration could have started this initiative on its own, but it did not, so Congress stepped up and created this security partnership because the White House was asleep at the wheel. At the end of the day, I suppose we can't expect anything more from a President who has denigrated our troops by calling them suckers and losers.

I voted to support the fiscal year 2021 NDAA. I will support it again to override this President's unforgivable and reckless veto. I am glad the House did so on Monday. I hope we in the Senate do the same. Coming back to Washington was not something I looked forward to this week. I wanted to stay home. Yet I knew, when it came to funding our troops, I had to be here. Many of my colleagues feel the same. I hope, tomorrow, we can take that up quickly.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, there was then the drama around the COVID-19 relief bill.

It was hard to describe what we went through in the last week to 10 days with messages from the White House. I wish that the President and those around him, advising him, would have called to mind the 335,000 Americans who have lost their lives due to this deadly pandemic and the many more who have lost a family member, friend, or loved one. In Illinois, we have lost 16,000 lives to COVID-19—tragic, historic. I extend my deepest condolences to the friends and families of those who have died or who are fighting this virus. Many are my friends.

More than 121,000 Americans spent last night in the hospital—a grim new record of hospitalizations as our heroic nurses and doctors face unrelenting stress from this crisis. I just think, as I reflect on the interviews of these men and women who are on the frontline of healthcare, how stoic they usually are, how controlled they usually are, and how they are losing it now. With the overwhelming numbers they are facing and the terrible prospect of someone's dying with a member of the family being unable to even enter the room in the last minutes of one's life has got to be heartbreaking on a scale that none of us can imagine. Think about doing that every single day. They have done it. I will tell you we will never be able to repay them with our gratitude. They are true American heroes.

Many of us returned to Washington this week. As I said, we are celebrating the holidays in a fashion like never before with social distancing, Zooms, FaceTime, and calls with family and loved ones. It is no substitute for the kids being there to open their gifts on Christmas morning, but it is the reality of what we face today.

There is some hope on the horizon, and though I have been many times critical of the Trump administration, I do want to give the President credit for the Warp Speed Program. It is amazing, as I read the stories, of what they were able to achieve in discovering two vaccines that can treat Americans and people around the world and keep them safe as they face this coronavirus. It broke all the records in the discovery of these vaccines. As I read about it, I continue to be grateful and want to make sure America recognizes the doctors, the scientists, and the researchers.

Barney Graham—I didn't know his name until yesterday—came out of a story published in the *New Yorker*. He works at the National Institutes of Health. He is given a great deal of credit for the breakthrough in the first two vaccines that have been approved. There are others just like him. I salute Dr. Francis Collins, of the National Institutes of Health, and Dr. Anthony Fauci, both of whom have become my friends over the years—and what a job they have done for America. So many more deserve recognition, and I hope there will be an opportunity to give it to them.

The fact is, these doses of vaccines are starting to move across the country. Last week, Illinois—I am proud to say—led the Nation. I congratulated our Governor, J.B. Pritzker, yesterday. More than 100,000 healthcare workers received their first shots last week. I asked him why we led, and he said: I don't know. We just put together our own program of distribution, and it worked. Thank goodness it did. Lives will be saved because of it, but there is so much more to do.

Progress in administering the vaccine has been slow as we still struggle to reach the hardest hit areas. The rosy projections from the administration have not come to fruition yet, but the fact is, we have two viable vaccines. That is miraculous. I look forward to the new administration's—the Biden administration's—new management in this effort, and I am glad Congress came together to pass a relief bill that included \$30 billion for vaccine development and distribution.

When the President said he wasn't going to sign this bill, I thought: How can he say that? He should be taking credit, rightfully, for the Warp Speed Program and his role in seeing that program move forward instead of complicating the distribution of the vaccines by threatening to veto the bill. Fortunately, for us, in the end, he signed the bill.

On Sunday evening, the President signed the bipartisan annual spending

bill and the COVID-19 relief bill. There were complaints about the size of the bill. Well, the entire Federal budget was included in that bill, as well as the COVID-19 relief undertaking, as well as many other bills, such as the Water Resources Development Act. All of these are major pieces of legislation, and they were combined in one bill that went way beyond 5,000 pages.

Unfortunately, the President delayed in signing the bill and created needless uncertainty in America, particularly among the unemployed and others who are suffering from this public health and economic crisis. This agreement provides much needed support for many of them, but they will have some delay in receiving their checks because of the President's period of indecision. Enhanced unemployment benefits of \$300 a week and an extension of the unemployment program, created under the CARES Act, through March 14 will bring more relief to many millions of families.

Possibly the largest single item in the COVID relief bill—\$325 billion—went to provide our Nation's ailing small businesses another chance at survival. The Paycheck Protection Program worked in the initial CARES Act, and it was renewed in this undertaking.

An extension of the Federal eviction moratorium through January 2021, coupled with \$25 billion in emergency rental assistance, will literally mean that people will not be evicted right after Christmas. Approximately, \$850 million is going to Illinois to help keep families in their homes during this pandemic.

The 15-percent increase in nutrition assistance is certainly needed. It goes through the SNAP program, which was historically known as food stamps, to make sure that families have something on the table. I can tell you that I woke up this morning in Springfield, IL, to look at the front page of the newspaper and learn that an anonymous donor had given our local food bank \$500,000. The people at the food bank were, of course, appreciative and said they desperately needed it in my hometown and towns all across America. This increase in food stamp assistance is long overdue, and I am glad it was included.

The bill includes a number of important measures, but we have to go to work to make sure that we deal with the sharp turn of an emergency response to this bill and do more. We address the needs required to respond to this pandemic immediately, but more will follow. It was a tough negotiation and an honest compromise, and I was happy to be part of a bipartisan group of Senators who may have gotten the ball rolling—at least we think we did—in order to hand it over to the leaders to finish the job. I think what we have achieved, on a bipartisan basis, was largely included in the final bill, and it addressed the major elements that were necessary.

One of the most important items that Congress failed to reach agreement on was funding for State and local governments. States and localities are struggling with increased costs and decreased revenues due to the pandemic. By this summer, my home State of Illinois will have lost more than \$5 billion in revenues. I can tell you that this is going to cause pain and cutbacks. This is not money that was lost in our pension system, which has its own share of troubles; it is money that was directly attributable to the downturn in revenues because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It isn't just happening in Illinois; it is happening all around the country—in red and blue States. Our neighboring State of Kentucky, to the south of us, is facing the same hardships we are.

Federal funding for States and localities needs to be done for our great cities and great States that are struggling, and I certainly hope that the next President, when he is sworn in on January 20, will take this up as one of his highest priorities. Our Nation's economic recovery is slowed down by budget cuts that will be necessary in States and localities because of this cutback in revenues.

Now, the most widely discussed measure of the COVID-19 relief bill is a second round of economic impact payments. Just yesterday, the House of Representatives passed the CASH Act, which is a measure that would increase the direct payments to individuals—adults and children—from \$600 to \$2,000 for those who earn less than \$75,000 a year. The measure passed in the House by a vote of 275 to 174. Over the past several months, we have heard time and again from economists that we run the risk of doing too little, which far outweighs the risk of doing too much when it comes to this economic recovery.

The head of the Federal Reserve, Chairman Powell, has really instructed us to keep the foot on the accelerator so that our economy doesn't slump into a recession. At a time when so many American families are laid off, unemployed, and simply struggling to get by, there is nothing more invigorating to the economy than to have a cash infusion. Those with limited resources who are battling to pay bills turn around and spend that money quickly. They don't salt it away for some future rainy day. They need it now. That is why we should seriously consider this.

By passing this enhanced measure, we can restore the American public's confidence in Washington and by the fact that we are listening and working together, on a bipartisan basis, to respond. This measure that passed the House of Representatives has the support of the President, Speaker PELOSI, House Democrats, as well as many House Republicans. Leader SCHUMER and my Senate Democratic colleagues support it. So I hope Senator MCCONNELL—the Republican leader—and his

colleagues in the Republican caucus will join us and allow us to pass this bill quickly this week. Let's step up to the plate and get this done. The American people have waited too long for this relief.

I, for one, am proud of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for coming together and passing a meaningful relief bill, but the time for patting one another on the back is over. Let's finish the job. Let's make sure that we have this authorization bill for the Department of Defense and that we come to the rescue of our families across America who need defense against the vagaries of this pandemic and this economy. We can finally see a slight glimmer of light at the end of this tunnel. If we want to address the needs of Americans in crisis, it starts with passing this legislation.

I yield the floor.

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

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

COMPETITIVE HEALTH INSURANCE REFORM ACT

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about my bipartisan legislation, the Competitive Health Insurance Reform Act, which I introduced with my colleague Senator PATRICK LEAHY. This is important legislation that will protect consumers from anticompetitive practices by repealing the outdated antitrust exemption for the health insurance industry. This bill has wide bipartisan support, as well as a strong history of near-unanimous congressional consensus, having passed the House of Representatives three times, most recently this September.

In 1944, the Supreme Court ruled in *United States v. South-Eastern Underwriters* that the business of insurance was a form of interstate commerce. This meant that the health insurance industry would be subject to Federal antitrust laws under the Commerce Clause of the Constitution. The insurance industry began raising uncertainties about whether this meant that States would no longer have authority to regulate insurance. When Congress acted to reaffirm this State authority, in the McCarran-Ferguson Act, the insurance industry managed to add a last-minute special-interest loophole that exempted the business of insurance from Federal antitrust laws.

It has become clear that this antiquated exemption has effectively given insurance companies the power to collude to drive up prices, restrict competition, and deny consumers choice. The large health insurance companies of today have taken advantage of this exemption to abuse the market and ar-

tificially inflate healthcare costs. As a result, consumers are paying higher prices to get basic healthcare services, which couldn't be a worse outcome in the middle of a major pandemic.

I recognize concerns have been raised about whether this legislation might impair or create uncertainty regarding the authority of State insurance regulators. I appreciate hearing from all stakeholders and wish to put those concerns to rest by making clear the intent and scope of the bill. This legislation merely amends a peripheral provision of the McCarran-Ferguson Act containing an antiquated exemption from Federal antitrust laws as it applies to health insurance companies. It does not in any way interfere with, supersede, or abrogate the authority provided and guaranteed by the McCarran-Ferguson Act to State insurance regulators to regulate the health insurance industry.

This legislation would ensure that health insurance companies would be subject to Federal antitrust laws in the same way as the rest of the American economy, including other regulated sectors. Most importantly, as this bill does not disturb any of the authority provided to State insurance regulators under the McCarran-Ferguson Act, it does not empower Federal authorities to interfere with, supersede, or prevent states from regulating the health insurance industry however they see fit.

Simply put, this legislation would give the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission authority to apply antitrust laws to anticompetitive practices in the health insurance industry. Furthermore, it is the intent of the authors of this legislation that the DOJ and FTC notify and work with states on investigations they have received or are undertaking that involve health insurance entities in their state.

The Competitive Health Insurance Reform Act will restore full transparency, promote oversight, and encourage competition within the health insurance industry. I look forward to this legislation being signed into law by the President.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I appreciate Senator DAINES joining me to clarify the intent of the Competitive Health Insurance Reform Act of 2019. This legislation, which Senator DAINES has introduced with Senator LEAHY, would modify the McCarran-Ferguson Act by eliminating the health insurance industry's exemption from Federal antitrust laws. That sounds like a good idea, but it has implications for longstanding State regulation of the insurance industry.

States have had the primary responsibility for the regulation of health insurance since the 1940s. Given my past experience as commissioner of Maine's Department of Professional and Financial Regulation, I know firsthand that State insurance regulators do a good job of responding to the needs and concerns of their insurance consumers. To protect consumers, State insurance

regulators hold probing hearings on rate requests which often lead to lower rates being approved. Most State insurance regulators have consumer protection advocates who resolve disputes between insurers and individual consumers. State regulators do not tolerate unfair or anticompetitive practices. As the National Association of Insurance Commissioners wrote to the leaders of the Senate and the Senate Judiciary Committee, "The potential for bid rigging, price-fixing and market allocation is of great concern to state insurance regulators and we share your view that such practices would be harmful to consumers and should not be tolerated. However, we want to assure you that these activities are not permitted under state law. Indeed, the state insurance regulators in all states actively enforce their antitrust rules and review rates to ensure they are actuarially justified, sufficient for solvency and nondiscriminatory."

Based on this experience, I have consistently raised concerns about legislation that could interfere with the current State-level regulation of insurance and could ultimately harm Maine consumers and smaller insurers. These concerns extend to the Competitive Health Insurance Reform Act.

While the bill does not directly modify the portion of McCarran-Ferguson that affirms State regulatory authority, it, however, does add a layer of Federal review, and we need to ensure that in doing so we do not create increased confusion, cost, and possible conflicts between State and Federal efforts.

This is why it is very important to make clear Congress's intent that along with the changes specified in the bill, it is Congress's expectation that the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission must notify State bureaus of insurance and attorneys general of any complaints or investigations they have received or are performing that involve entities in their state. I appreciate Senator DAINES' willingness to join me today to ensure this intent is clearly stated in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

Given the agreement to provide formal clarification of the expectation that DOJ and FTC shall provide notification to States regarding complaints or investigations they have received or are performing, I will withdraw my objection to passage of this legislation.

Thank you.

CONFIRMATION OF ERIC J. SOSKIN

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, for over 40 years, inspectors general have acted as independent, nonpartisan watchdogs tasked with preventing and uncovering fraud, waste, and abuse in the Federal Government. Simply put, inspectors general make sure government is doing what it's supposed to do. To accomplish this immense task, inspectors general must be experienced in oversight, trusted by both political parties,

and ready to hit the ground running on any audits, investigations, and other reviews of their agencies.

Unfortunately, the nominee for inspector general that we considered last week does not meet this basic test.

The Department of Transportation is charged with ensuring that America has the safest, most efficient and modern transportation system in the world, so that Americans are able to travel safely and efficiently by road, rail, or air. The Department has an annual budget of over \$87 billion and employs over 55,000 personnel, with a footprint in every State.

The DOT inspector general must be ready to oversee the full range of these activities, from every dollar that funds our highways to every safety decision issued by DOT regulators. To meet this task, the office employs over 400 personnel, with an annual budget of over \$94 million.

Eric Soskin, the nominee for DOT inspector general, is not qualified to oversee an agency of this size and scope, or to lead the activities of one of the largest Offices of Inspector General in the Federal Government. Mr. Soskin does not have any experience managing large organizations. He has never worked in an Office of Inspector General, and he does not have experience in many of the basic activities of such an office, like audits or inspections. Although he has legal experience, he has not focused on DOT or transportation issues at any point in his career.

While I appreciate Mr. Soskin's service at the Department of Justice and his enthusiasm for the position, he simply lacks the qualifications to ensure DOT is fulfilling its responsibilities.

I am most troubled, however, by the increasing politicization of inspectors general by the President and by the majority.

Since 1981, this body has confirmed over 150 inspectors general; until last week, all but two of these nominees had been confirmed by unanimous consent, a voice vote, or a unanimous vote. The reason for this is simple: To do their jobs, inspectors general must be trusted by each member of Congress and by every American, regardless of political party.

Until this Congress, when an inspector general has faced significant opposition, the Senate either worked through any concerns or declined to advance the nomination. The majority did not force through partisan or unqualified nominees. That is how we have upheld this institution. That is how we have maintained trust in the independence, qualifications, and integrity of inspectors general.

This Congress, we held our first party-line vote in 40 years to confirm a deeply partisan inspector general nominee. We have now confirmed yet another inspector general on a party-line vote during a lameduck session, with a nominee who was already rejected by nearly half of the Commerce

Committee and as well as on the Senate floor.

The inspector general is a position that continues across administrations. It is one with tremendous authority to look at every agency record, to interview any employee, and to carry out criminal investigations. We cannot transform this institution into one of Democratic inspectors general and Republican inspectors general. This is not and cannot become a political position.

Inspectors General hold government accountable to the law and to the American people. And it is our responsibility to protect this institution and reject any nomination that will undermine their independent, nonpartisan work.

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE RECEIVED DURING ADJOURNMENT

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

Under the authority of the order of the Senate of January 3, 2019, the Secretary of the Senate, on December 22, 2020, during the adjournment of the Senate, received a message from the House of Representatives announcing that the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BEYER) had signed the following enrolled bills:

H.R. 1240. An act to preserve United States fishing heritage through a national program dedicated to training and assisting the next generation of commercial fisherman.

H.R. 4031. An act to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to reauthorize the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, and for other purposes.

H.R. 5458. An act to modify the boundary of the Rocky Mountain National Park, and for other purposes.

H.R. 5852. An act to redesignate the Weir Farm National Historic Site in the State of Connecticut as the "Weir Farm National Historical Park".

H.R. 6535. An act to deem an urban Indian organization and employees thereof to be a part of the Public Health Service for the purposes of certain claims for personal injury, and for other purposes.

H.R. 7460. An act to extend the authority for the establishment by the Peace Corps Commemorative Foundation of a commemorative work to commemorate the mission of the Peace Corps and the ideals on which the Peace Corps was founded, and for other purposes.

Under the authority of the order of the Senate of January 3, 2019, the enrolled bills were signed on December 24, 2020, during the adjournment of the Senate, by the Acting President pro tempore (Mr. BLUNT).

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

Under the authority of the order of the Senate of January 3, 2019, the Secretary of the Senate, on December 24, 2020, during the adjournment of the Senate, received a message from the House of Representatives announcing that the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BEYER) had signed the following enrolled bill:

H.R. 133. An act making consolidated appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2021, providing coronavirus emergency response and relief, and for other purposes.

Under the authority of the order of the Senate of January 3, 2019, the enrolled bill was signed on December 24, 2020, during the adjournment of the Senate, by the Acting President pro tempore (Mr. BLUNT).

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 12:02 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House of Representatives having proceeded to reconsider the bill (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, returned by the President of the United States with his objections, to the House of Representatives, in which it originated, it was resolved, that the said bill pass, two-thirds of the House of Representatives agreeing to pass the same.

The message also announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

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.

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME

The following bills were read the first time:

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.

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.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. McCONNELL:

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; read the first time.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. McCONNELL:

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; read the first time.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 5085

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. INCREASE IN 2020 RECOVERY REBATES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 6428A of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (as added by the COVID-related Tax Relief Act of 2020) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(1), by striking “\$600 (\$1,200)” and inserting “\$2,000 (\$4,000”),

(2) in subsection (g)(1), by striking “\$600” and inserting “\$2,000”, and

(3) in subsection (g)(2)—

(A) by striking “\$1,200” in the matter preceding subparagraph (A) and inserting “\$4,000”, and

(B) by striking “\$600” in subparagraph (A) and inserting “\$2,000”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect as if included in section 272 of the COVID-related Tax Relief Act of 2020.

SEC. 2. REPEAL OF SECTION 230.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 230 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 230) is repealed.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(1) COMMUNICATIONS ACT OF 1934.—The Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 151 et seq.) is amended—

(A) in section 223(h) (47 U.S.C. 223(h)), by striking paragraph (2) and inserting the following:

“(2) The term ‘interactive computer service’ means any information service, system, or access software provider that provides or enables computer access by multiple users to a computer server, including specifically a service or system that provides access to the Internet and such systems operated or services offered by libraries or educational institutions.”; and

(B) in section 231(b)(4) (47 U.S.C. 231(b)(4)), by striking “or section 230”.

(2) TRADEMARK ACT OF 1946.—Section 45 of the Act entitled “An Act to provide for the registration and protection of trademarks used in commerce, to carry out the provisions of certain international conventions, and for other purposes”, approved July 5, 1946 (commonly known as the “Trademark Act of 1946”) (15 U.S.C. 1127) is amended by striking the definition relating to the term “Internet” and inserting the following:

“The term ‘Internet’ means the international computer network of both Federal and non-Federal interoperable packet switched data networks.”.

(3) TITLE 17, UNITED STATES CODE.—Section 1401 of title 17, United States Code, is amended by striking subsection (g).

(4) TITLE 18, UNITED STATES CODE.—Part I of title 18, United States Code, is amended—

(A) in section 2257(h)(2)(B)(v), by striking “, except that deletion of a particular communication or material made by another person in a manner consistent with section 230(c) of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 230(c)) shall not constitute such selection or alteration of the content of the communication”; and

(B) in section 2421A—

(i) in subsection (a), by striking “(as such term is defined in defined in section 230(f) the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 230(f)))” and inserting “(as that term is defined in section 223 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 223))”; and

(ii) in subsection (b), by striking “(as such term is defined in defined in section 230(f) the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C.

230(f)))” and inserting “(as that term is defined in section 223 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 223))”.

(5) CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES ACT.—Section 401(h)(3)(A)(iii)(II) of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 841(h)(3)(A)(iii)(II)) is amended by striking “, except that deletion of a particular communication or material made by another person in a manner consistent with section 230(c) of the Communications Act of 1934 shall not constitute such selection or alteration of the content of the communication”.

(6) WEBB-KENYON ACT.—Section 3(b)(1) of the Act entitled “An Act divesting intoxicating liquors of their interstate character in certain cases”, approved March 1, 1913 (commonly known as the “Webb-Kenyon Act”) (27 U.S.C. 122b(b)(1)) is amended by striking “(as defined in section 230(f) of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 230(f)))” and inserting “(as defined in section 223 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 223))”.

(7) TITLE 28, UNITED STATES CODE.—Section 4102 of title 28, United States Code, is amended—

(A) by striking subsection (c); and

(B) in subsection (e)—

(i) by striking “‘construed to’ and all that follows through ‘affect’ and inserting ‘‘construed to affect’’; and

(ii) by striking “‘defamation; or’ and all that follows and inserting ‘‘defamation.’’.

(8) TITLE 31, UNITED STATES CODE.—Section 5362(6) of title 31, United States Code, is amended by striking “section 230(f) of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 230(f))” and inserting “section 223 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 223))”.

(9) NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION ADMINISTRATION ORGANIZATION ACT.—Section 157 of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration Organization Act (47 U.S.C. 941) is amended—

(A) by striking subsection (e); and

(B) by redesignating subsections (f) through (j) as subsections (e) through (i), respectively.

SEC. 3. 2020 BIPARTISAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established within the Election Assistance Commission the 2020 Bipartisan Advisory Committee (referred to in this section as the “Advisory Committee”).

(b) MEMBERSHIP.—

(1) COMPOSITION.—The Advisory Committee shall be composed of 18 members of whom—

(A) nine shall be appointed by the leader of the Republican caucus in the Senate (in consultation with the minority leader of the House of Representatives), one of which shall be appointed as a Co-Chairperson of the Advisory Committee; and

(B) nine shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives (in consultation with the leader of the Democratic caucus in the Senate), one of which shall be appointed as a Co-Chairperson of the Advisory Committee.

(2) REPRESENTATION.—Individuals appointed to the Advisory Committee under paragraph (1) shall be geographically balanced and shall include representatives of Federal, State, and local governments and of the legal, cybersecurity, and election administration and technology communities.

(3) DATE.—The appointments of the members of the Advisory Committee shall be made not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

(c) PERIOD OF APPOINTMENT; VACANCIES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), a member of the Advisory shall be appointed for the duration of the Advisory Committee.

(2) REMOVAL.—A member may be removed from the Advisory Committee at any time at the upon concurrence of both of the Co-Chairpersons of the Advisory Committee.

(3) VACANCIES.—A vacancy in the Advisory Committee—

(A) shall not affect the powers of the Commission; and

(B) shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

(d) DUTIES.—

(1) STUDY.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Advisory Committee shall, consistent with applicable law, study the integrity and administration of the general election for Federal office held in November 2020 and make recommendations to Congress to improve the security, integrity, and administration of Federal elections.

(B) MATTERS STUDIED.—The matters studied by the Advisory Committee shall include—

(i) the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the administration of the general election for Federal office held in November 2020;

(ii) the election practices adopted by Federal, State, and local governments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including—

(I) practices that undermined the security and integrity of the election; and

(II) practices that strengthened the security and integrity of the election;

(iii) the laws, rules, policies, activities, strategies, and practices regarding mail-in ballots, absentee ballots, and vote-by-mail procedures, including—

(I) measures that undermined the security and integrity of the election; and

(II) measures that strengthened the security and integrity of the election;

(iv) any laws, rules, policies, activities, strategies, and practices that would have allowed improper or fraudulent votes to be cast in such election and the scope of any improper and fraudulent votes that were cast in the election; and

(v) any laws, rules, policies, activities, strategies, and practices that would have allowed improper or fraudulent voter registration and the scope of any improper or fraudulent voter registration.

(2) REPORTS.—

(A) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Advisory Committee shall submit to the Election Assistance Commission and the appropriate Congressional committees a report on the matter studied under paragraph (1). Such report shall include—

(i) precinct-by-precinct data highlighting the number and incidence of any improper and fraudulent votes that were cast in the election; and

(ii) precinct-by-precinct data highlighting the number and incidence of any improper and fraudulent voter registrations.

(B) RECOMMENDATIONS.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 360 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Advisory Committee shall submit to the Election Assistance Commission and the appropriate Congressional committees recommendations on the following:

(I) The best practices that should be adopted by at each level of local, State, and Federal Government for administering elections for Federal office—

(aa) during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

(bb) during other national emergencies.

(II) The best practices that should be adopted at each level of local, State, and Federal Government to mitigate fraud and increase the integrity and security of mail-in ballots, absentee ballots, and vote-by-mail procedures.

(III) The best practices that should be adopted at each level of local, State, and

Federal Government to prevent improper or fraudulent votes from being cast.

(IV) The best practices that should be adopted at each level of local, State, and Federal Government to prevent improper voters from being registered.

(ii) MINORITY VIEWS.—In the case of any recommendation with respect to which one-third or more of the Committee does not concur, the report shall include a justification for why such members do not concur.

(C) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—For purposes of this paragraph, the term “appropriate Congressional Committees” means—

(i) the Committee on Rules and Administration of the Senate;

(ii) the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate;

(iii) the Committee on House Administration of the House of Representatives; and

(iv) the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives.

(e) COMMISSION PERSONNEL MATTERS.—

(1) PROHIBITION ON COMPENSATION OF MEMBERS.—The members of the Advisory Committee may not receive pay or benefits from the United States Government by reason of their service on the Advisory Committee.

(2) STAFF.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Each Co-Chairperson of the Advisory Committee may appoint not more than 5 subject matter experts to serve as staff to the Advisory Committee.

(B) COMPENSATION.—The Co-Chairpersons of the Advisory Committee may fix the compensation of the staff of the Advisory Committee without regard to chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of title 5, United States Code, relating to classification of positions and General Schedule pay rates, except that the rate of pay for the staff may not exceed the rate payable for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of that title.

(F) TERMINATION.—The Advisory Committee shall terminate 90 days after the date on which the Advisory Committee submits the report required under subsection (d).

(g) NONAPPLICABILITY OF FACA.—The Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) shall not apply to the Advisory Committee.

SEC. 4. DISCLOSURE OF ACCESS TO ELECTION INFRASTRUCTURE BY FOREIGN NATIONALS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Title III of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (52 U.S.C. 21081 et seq.) is amended by inserting after section 303 the following new section:

“SEC. 303A. DISCLOSURE OF ACCESS TO ELECTION INFRASTRUCTURE BY FOREIGN NATIONALS.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Each chief State election official shall disclose to the Commission the identity of any foreign national known by the chief State election official—

“(1) to have physically handled—

“(A) ballots used in an election for Federal office; or

“(B) voting machines; or

“(2) to have had unmonitored access to—

“(A) a storage facility or centralized vote tabulation location used to support the administration of an election for public office; or

“(B) election-related information or communications technology, including voter registration databases, voting machines, electronic mail and other communications systems (including electronic mail and other systems of vendors who have entered into contracts with election agencies to support the administration of elections, manage the election process, and report and display election results), and other systems used to manage the election process and to report and display election results on behalf of an election agency.

“(b) TIMING.—The chief State election official shall make the disclosure under subsection (a) not later than 30 days after the date on which such official becomes aware of an activity described in such subsection.

“(c) FOREIGN NATIONAL DEFINED.—The term ‘foreign national’ has the meaning given that term in section 319 of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 (52 U.S.C. 30121).”.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT RELATING TO ENFORCEMENT.—Section 401 of such Act (52 U.S.C. 21111) is amended by striking “sections 301, 302, and 303” and inserting “sub-title A of title III”.

(c) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents of such Act is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 303 the following new item:

“Sec. 303A. Disclosure of access to election infrastructure by foreign nationals.”.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, for the information of all the Senators, we will have a live quorum call at 5 p.m. tomorrow, followed immediately by a rollcall vote on proceeding to the veto message on the NDAA. So Senators should be on the floor at that time. Again, that is 5 p.m. tomorrow.

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME—S. 5085 AND H.R. 9051

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand there are two bills at the desk, and I ask for their first reading en bloc.

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

The senior assistant 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. I now ask for a second reading, and I object to my own request, all en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will receive their second reading on the next legislative day.

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2020

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 3 p.m., Wednesday, December 30; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; finally, that following leader remarks, the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 3 P.M.
TOMORROW

sent that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous con-

There being no objection, the Senate, at 3:20 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, December 30, 2020, at 3 p.m.