

House and the Senate broke with tradition and used this year's NDAA process to insist on all manner of partisan items, including nongermane domestic policy changes. This partisan approach left the future of the Pentagon's most urgent missions in the lurch.

So I am encouraged that bicameral negotiations, with participation from the White House, reached a conclusion last week. Most of the partisan demands predictably fell away. The result is not either side's ideal bill, but it is one that should be able to pass both Chambers under the circumstances. I hope the bipartisan conference report will be signed and moved quickly through each Chamber so Congress can finally fulfill our responsibility to America's Armed Forces for another year.

Then there is the appropriations process—another fundamental responsibility which, for the good of the Nation, is historically approached with a bipartisan willingness to find common ground.

It seemed like that might again be the case when a bicameral, bipartisan deal was struck by the President and the Speaker of the House back in July, but then, when negotiations resumed in earnest back in September, some of our Democratic colleagues realized they weren't really ready to part with partisan poison pills. They ignored their own agreement and months of stalemate ensued.

Fortunately, our appropriators are working hard to salvage the process. Last month, Chairman SHELBY and Chairwoman LOWEY and our other colleagues reached a deal on subcommittee allocations. I understand their hard work continued in earnest over this past weekend, with the goal of producing bills that both Chambers could consider before the end of this year.

I am grateful to colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their hard work. I hope this progress continues, and we can consider appropriations measures this month.

Now, there is still one more major piece of bipartisan legislation awaiting action by House Democrats. For months, Speaker PELOSI and House Democrats have been slow-walking President Trump's landmark trade agreement with Mexico and Canada. Month after month, House Democrats kept 176,000 new American jobs in limbo, but, finally, after weeks of a full-court press from Republicans in the House and the Senate, we are seeing hopeful signals that Speaker PELOSI's months-long stalling campaign may at long last be coming to an end. Reports suggest the Speaker may finally allow the House to vote in the near future. For our country's sake, I certainly hope so.

So what has been true for months is especially true now that time is short—it is going to take bipartisan collaboration and hard work for any of these outstanding legislative priorities to become law.

Even if House Democrats do finally relent and allow these key priorities to move forward, it is now the eleventh hour, and it will require consent and cooperation for the Senate to consider legislation in a timely fashion.

I ask for that collaborative spirit from my colleagues on both sides in the Senate as we move forward. We Republicans have been ready and eager for weeks to legislate on these key priorities. I hope these reports are accurate that leading Democrats may finally—finally—be willing to let Congress govern, and I hope we can move forward at a brisk pace and in a bipartisan way.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Patrick J. Bumatay, of California, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—CALENDAR NO. 535

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that with respect to the Halpern nomination, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

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

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

E-CIGARETTES

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, after months of headlines about the dangers of vaping and a litany of mysterious medical conditions, we hit a pretty concerning milestone last week—vaping-related lung injuries have now been reported in all 50 States.

Alaska became State No. 50 with the identification of a teen suffering from these illnesses. I said a teen. The teen

reported regularly vaping both nicotine and THC products, and while I am glad to hear the patient is recovering, it highlights the need for immediate action to this public health emergency.

Nationwide, nearly 28 percent of high school students and 1 in 10 middle school students are using e-cigarettes. That is just to the best of our knowledge.

Folks at home are struggling to respond to these growing numbers, and parents and teachers and others are trying to figure out how to get their arms around this problem.

Last year, 19 percent of Texas high school students had used an e-cigarette in the last 30 days, and all of these recent cases lead me to believe that this number has gone up and gone up significantly.

It is, I believe, a growing epidemic, but folks in North Texas are bearing the brunt of it. More than half of all the vaping-related injuries at home occurred in North Texas. It is also home to the first vaping-related death in the State.

Last Friday, I visited the University of North Texas Health Science Center in Fort Worth to learn more about the dangers of e-cigarettes and the community-led efforts to curb their use.

Let me be clear. When we are talking about adults making choices on what to put in their body, I will leave those choices to the individual adult, but if we are talking about children exposing themselves to a chemical that is addictive, which may lead to a life—even if they avoid some of the immediate public health consequences, it may lead to a lifetime of addiction and worse.

We heard from a pulmonary specialist that a lot of kids she talks to don't understand the risk of e-cigarettes. They think that because these devices aren't subject to the same regulations and restrictions as traditional cigarettes, they are somehow different and safer.

We got to hear from a teen who certainly had that mindset. Sixteen-year-old high school junior Anna Carey is one of the many students in her high school using e-cigarettes, and she admits to becoming rather quickly addicted to the nicotine.

She said she began to display symptoms like those we have seen across the country. She was extremely lethargic and would experience random and severe pains in her chest.

Two initial x rays came back clear. So her doctors released her, but her symptoms continued. Eventually, she was admitted to the Cook Children's Hospital and diagnosed with chemical-induced pneumonia in both lungs. That, Anna told us, was her wake-up call.

I am glad to report that Anna has fully recovered and is using her story to help educate and alert her fellow teens from going down the same path.

Everyone who participated in our discussion in Fort Worth last Friday