

pressure Ukraine to interfere on President Trump's behalf in the 2020 election. In furtherance of that scheme, OMB illegally withheld security assistance for Ukraine under Mr. Vought's leadership, which violated the Impoundment Control Act according to the independent and nonpartisan Government Accountability Office. GAO even stated that OMB's stonewalling of their inquiry had "constitutional significance" due to the undermining of legislative branch oversight. During his confirmation hearing, Mr. Vought could not even explain why OMB stonewalled GAO's inquiry by refusing to turn over relevant documents requested by GAO and then failed to provide a reason for withholding these documents in response to my questions following the hearing.

Mr. Vought is among those responsible for the Trump administration's disastrous response to the COVID-19 pandemic. OMB dragged its feet on requesting urgently needed resources to respond to the pandemic, which led to deadly shortages of key supplies. Due to insufficient guidance from OMB and the Office of Personnel Management, Federal agencies are moving forward with haphazard plans to bring teleworking employees back into offices in ways that needlessly risk spreading COVID-19 among Federal workers, their families, and surrounding communities.

OMB is responsible for preparing the President's budget, and Mr. Vought has advanced budgets that would pay for tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations by slashing support for healthcare, education, and nutrition assistance. The Trump administration would have been even less prepared for COVID-19 if Congress enacted the cuts in these budgets to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Mr. Vought personally called for cutting the CDC budget as recently as March 10, 2020, when the pandemic was sweeping the country. At that time, Mr. Vought insisted that he would not send a budget amendment to reverse these cuts. The administration was forced by circumstances to submit such a budget amendment shortly thereafter.

The Senate should not reward this record of failure and lawbreaking by confirming Mr. Vought's nomination.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Under the previous order, the question is, Shall the Senate advise and consent to the Vought nomination?

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BRAUN) and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) and the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 131 Ex.]

YEAS—51

Alexander	Gardner	Perdue
Barrasso	Graham	Portman
Blackburn	Grassley	Risch
Blunt	Hawley	Roberts
Boozman	Hoeven	Romney
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Cassidy	Inhofe	Rubio
Collins	Johnson	Sasse
Cornyn	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Cotton	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Cramer	Lee	Shelby
Crapo	Loeffler	Sullivan
Cruz	McConnell	Thune
Daines	McSally	Tillis
Enzi	Moran	Toomey
Ernst	Murkowski	Wicker
Fischer	Paul	Young

NAYS—45

Baldwin	Harris	Reed
Bennet	Hassan	Rosen
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Sanders
Booker	Hirono	Schumer
Brown	Jones	Shaheen
Cantwell	Kaine	Sinema
Cardin	King	Smith
Carper	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Casey	Leahy	Tester
Coons	Manchin	Udall
Cortez Masto	Markey	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Menendez	Warner
Durbin	Merkley	Warren
Feinstein	Murphy	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Peters	Wyden

NOT VOTING—4

Braun	Murray
Burr	Schatz

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. ROMNEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that 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.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ROMNEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that 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.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. ROMNEY. Mr. President, I rise to address the administration's plan to

withdraw some 10,000 troops from Germany, and I rise to advance a bipartisan amendment to slow that process down and potentially even to stop it.

The administration explains that Germany needs to get to 2 percent of its spending on military matters, a direction I support. Germany is already at 1.5 percent and is on track to get to 2 percent.

By all appearances, the withdrawal of 10,000 troops in Germany is a very bad idea. First of all, it is a slap in the face at a key ally, a friend, and a great country. This country is an economic powerhouse. It is dynamic and productive people who have created that economic vitality. It has been driven to global leadership not by virtue of having cheap labor or polluting the air with pollutants or CO<sub>2</sub>.

China buys more from Germany than Germany buys from China. Why? Not because Germany threatens China but because Germany is making products that China wants. It is a democracy noted for its strong, steady, and firm leader. Germany pays an equal share to the United States into NATO, and NATO, of course, has preserved peace in Europe for over 70 years.

Now is also a time to draw our friends closer and to link arms with our allies, in part because of China's ambition to become the dominant player on the Earth, to displace the West, to displace the United States, and to supplant democracy with authoritarian despotism. China brutally represses its minorities. The Uighurs, we read, even today are being forced into labor. China invades sovereign lands and nations of its neighbors. It is propagandizing our children here through Confucius Institutes. It steals technology in our country and other countries in the West, and it attacks our cyber bases relentlessly day in and day out.

Its military procurement is equal to that—or nearly so—of the United States. Even though we spend far more money than they do on military, as reported, our procurement budgets procure about the same amount of military hardware.

Of course, the tip of its spear is its economic predation. China has attacked one industry after another, and through subsidy and predatory pricing techniques, it has driven western businesses out of business. In my view, to divert China from that dangerous path, we need allies—allies like Germany.

Now, there is a second reason that I am opposed to this idea of withdrawing troops from Germany, and that is, it is a heck of a time to give a gift to Russia. We just learned about Russia's support of the Taliban—even reports that they may have been paying bounties for killing Americans. Russia has stepped in to support some of the world's worst actors, like Assad and Maduro. It has invaded Georgia and Ukraine, and it violates nearly every arms agreement it enters into.

It is a wounded and declining nation. It has an uncompetitive economy. Senator McCain used to joke that Russia is a gas station pretending to be a country. Its declining population, of course, contributes to its decline. Nations in decline may lash out, and that is what we have seen time and again.

This is a time not to give a gift to Russia but to show solidarity with our dear friends, like the people of Germany.

One final reason: Germans welcome American troops in their country, and our presence there is of enormous aid to our own military. In Landstuhl, we have a hospital that cares for some 250,000 military personnel and their families across Europe. We also care for those who come in injured from Afghanistan or Iraq. It is a staging area for training exercises that are done with NATO. It is a central hub for our troops in the EU and the Middle East and Africa. In Stuttgart, the European Command, the African Command, and the Special Ops Command are there. Ramstein Air Base is the largest in Europe for our Nation. It also hosts extensive infrastructure of schools, housing, hospitals, and airport maintenance. Moving from those facilities—it would be expensive and wasteful to abandon them.

Finally, we are so welcomed by the German people that the leaders of their various states—their state premiers wrote a letter to the Senate, and it said this: “Do not sever the bond of friendship” between the United States and Germany. I also got a personal letter from leaders in Germany saying: Do not do this. This sends exactly the wrong message at the wrong time.

To slap an ally, a great friend, and a great country like Germany and at the same time give a gift to a malevolent adversary like Russia is ill-conceived and ill-considered. I implore the Senate to consider an amendment to slow this process down and to study it.

There is a real question as to whether there will be a chance for a vote of such a nature. In my view, the Senate needs to speak on something of such magnitude. This is a matter of extraordinary significance to American foreign policy. How could we possibly allow the administration to make a decision like this without the input of the Senate?

We must vote on this. I will be satisfied if we come together as a body and vote no. People say: No, let the President take out the 10,000 troops. But I won't be satisfied if we don't get a chance to even vote on this.

We have a national defense authorization amendment coming forward. This is the time for this amendment to be seen on the Senate floor or in the managers' package. Barring that, I don't see how I can support the managers' package. I don't see how I can support, as a Senator, proceeding without taking up this vital provision of our support for our friend Germany, of our support for our interests in NATO,

the interests of our military, as well as our desire not to give Russia a gift, particularly at a time when America has been silent as Russia has been supporting the Taliban and potentially even paying hostages to kill Americans.

I suggest the absence of a quorum. The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). The clerk will call the roll. The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. ALEXANDER pertaining to the introduction of S. 4231 are printed in today's RECORD under “Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

Mr. ALEXANDER. 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.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the en bloc consideration of Executive Calendar Nos. 605, 721 through 743, 745 through 749, 751, 752, 753, and all nominations placed on the Secretary's desk; that the nominations be confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate, all en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

The nominations considered and confirmed are as follows:

#### IN THE ARMY

The following named officer for appointment as Chief of Engineers and for appointment in the United States Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., sections 601 and 7036:

#### *To be lieutenant general*

Maj. Gen. Scott A. Spellmon

#### IN THE AIR FORCE

The following named officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203:

#### *To be brigadier general*

Col. Kathleen M. Flarity

#### IN THE NAVY

The following named officer for appointment in the Navy Reserve to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203:

#### *To be rear admiral (lower half)*

Capt. Terry W. Eddinger

The following named officer for appointment in the Navy Reserve to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203:

#### *To be rear admiral (lower half)*

Capt. Patrick S. Hayden

The following named officer for appointment in the Navy Reserve to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203:

#### *To be rear admiral (lower half)*

Capt. Eric L. Peterson

The following named officer for appointment in the Navy Reserve to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203:

#### *To be rear admiral (lower half)*

Capt. Donald Y. Sze

The following named officers for appointment in the Navy Reserve to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203:

#### *To be rear admiral (lower half)*

Capt. Stephen D. Donald

Capt. Gregory K. Emery

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Navy Reserve to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203:

#### *To be rear admiral*

Rear Adm. (lh) Grafton D. Chase

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Navy Reserve to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203:

#### *To be rear admiral*

Rear Adm. (lh) Eugene A. Burcher

Rear Adm. (lh) Joey B. Dodgen

Rear Adm. (lh) William G. Mager

The following named officers for appointment in the Navy Reserve to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203:

#### *To be rear admiral (lower half)*

Capt. William L. Angermann

Capt. Marc S. Lederer

Capt. Donald M. Plummer

Capt. Jeffrey S. Spivey

#### IN THE AIR FORCE

The following named Air National Guard of the United States officer for appointment as Director, Air National Guard, and for appointment in the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., sections 601 and 10506:

#### *To be lieutenant general*

Maj. Gen. Michael A. Loh

#### IN THE ARMY

The following named officer for appointment as the Chief of Army Reserve and appointment in the Reserve of the Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., sections 601 and 7038:

#### *To be lieutenant general*

Maj. Gen. Jody J. Daniels

The following named officer for appointment as the Chief of the National Guard Bureau and for appointment in the Reserve of the Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., sections 601 and 10502:

#### *To be general*

Lt. Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

#### *To be lieutenant general*

Maj. Gen. Willard M. Bursleson, III