

So the bottom line is Congress needs to act. The American people want Democrats and Republicans to come to an agreement on the things our country actually needs to make it through this crisis.

It won't be the last piece of legislation we pass, but we do need to do this next step, and we need to do it soon—as soon as possible.

It is time for our Democratic colleagues to realize the election is over and the only real people being hurt by their intransigence are the people they represent in their various States.

So it is time to start getting back to work for all the American people on a bipartisan piece of legislation and to quit the partisan games. I can't say it any more directly than that.

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.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, this week, as we return to DC, we are going to resume consideration of the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act. Around DC we call it the NDAA. And before I get into discussing some of my priorities in this legislation, I want to encourage each and every one of my colleagues to carefully consider why we go through the lengthy process of drafting and reconciling this authorization. And we do this every single year.

The easy answer, of course, is that we have a duty to provide for our common defense and that of our allies and partners. But every year the media devotes most of their attention to how much money we have agreed to spend on the tools of war—the Chinook helicopters, the Virginia-class submarines, and the Reapers. They want to know about the flashy hardware and end up ignoring the people who are in the driver's seat.

Thousands of service men and women call Tennessee home, and when I accepted the role of Senator, I took on a special responsibility to look after and to take care of each and every one of them.

Their decision to serve came with necessary and serious lifestyle changes, both for themselves and for their families. Anyone who knows a servicemember knows that their lives are not their own. They go where they are told to go. They do the job they are told to do. They do it without hesitation because they have accepted that serving their country is more important than the autonomy they sacrificed when they put on that uniform and took their oath.

"Sacrifice" is the key word here because it applies not only to the servicemember, but it also applies to their family. This is why we spend so much time focusing on programs that make their lives as seamless as possible.

For example, this year, I continued work on military spouse license portability to make it easier for spouses who wish to continue working in their chosen field after they have changed locations, moved from one State to another, because they were told this was going to be their new duty station. We hope these spouses are able to continue their careers, to be fulfilled in their jobs and responsibilities. Last year, we established a pilot program for licensure reciprocity, and this year, we worked to increase funding for this very important program.

With my remaining time, I want to focus on our special operations community, especially the 5th Special Forces Group and the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment. They each call Fort Campbell their home.

For those who serve in these elite units, uncommon bravery is an everyday occurrence. They go to some of the worst places on the face of the Earth, to be surrounded by the most dangerous people alive, to do work that no one can ever know about and at a higher occupational tempo than any other aspect of our forces. Their operational tempo is unbelievable. The physical, spiritual, and psychological toll of that work and the stigma attached to it by those who do not understand its importance cannot be overstated. It is not a unique burden, but it is an especially heavy burden.

U.S. Special Operations Command knows this and has made taking care of the people behind this mission a priority. They created the Preservation of the Force and Families Program to support these warriors and their families, but, like any program of this nature, it requires continuous innovation and evolution to stay effective.

This year's Senate-passed NDAA reaffirms the importance of this initiative to both servicemembers and their families and improves human, psychological, spiritual, and social performance programs. It also requires a deeper study on new opportunities for special and incentive pay parity in order to increase retention of our valuable special operators.

This is only one aspect of an expansive piece of legislation, but it provides a useful reminder that every dollar—every single taxpayer dollar that we spend to defend the cause of freedom is gone to waste if we ignore the unique needs of the people fighting our battles for us. We have to put the emphasis on this human capital—on the individual, on their family.

This is one of those moments where it would be in everyone's best interest and our Nation's best interest to avoid playing politics with a very important policy—protecting these men and women in uniform, providing for the

common defense, providing the tools, the training, and the services they need in order to be ready to deploy, in order to take care of their families, in order to treat their wounds when they return—to care for the whole of the soldier.

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, delay isn't an inconvenience when it comes to the NDAA. It is not a bump in the road. When it comes to our Nation's defense spending, delay is dangerous. It is dangerous for our national defense, it is dangerous for the allies and the partners who depend on us, and it is dangerous for our troops and their families. It is my hope that we will be able to proceed with consideration of the final 2021 NDAA with that above all else at the forefront of our minds.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Taylor B. McNeel, of Mississippi, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Mississippi.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent now that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Taylor B. McNeel, of Mississippi, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Mississippi.

Mitch McConnell, Mike Crapo, Tom Cotton, David Perdue, Mike Rounds, Pat Roberts, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Kevin Cramer, Lindsey Graham, Thom Tillis, Tim Scott, James E. Risch, Michael B. Enzi, John Cornyn, Roger F. Wicker, John Thune, John Boozman.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.