

and tenuous until the vaccines that will end this fight have been distributed all across the Nation.

For months—literally months—Senate Republicans have been calling for another targeted package to reopen the job-saving Paycheck Protection Program, extend Federal unemployment benefits, fund K-12 schools, fund vaccine distribution, and get a lot more help onto the frontlines as fast as possible. I am relieved that we appear to be just hours away from legislation that will finally do that.

When we get this done, Congress will not deserve any special praise, not with this relief having waited until late December and not with some of our Democratic colleagues openly saying the reason they finally changed their tuned was that they finally got a President-elect of their own party. When we finalize this measure and pass it, Congress will only have done our job. We will have finally done our duty in getting more relief to those who need it most.

Let's make today the day we join together, put differences aside, and finally get it done.

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 Brian Noland, of Tennessee, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2024.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, we have spent the past 4 to 5 days locked in intense bipartisan negotiations over the final details of an emer-

gency relief package. There are a few issues outstanding, but I am quite hopeful that we are closing in on an outcome. It appears that, barring a major mishap, the Senate and House will be able to vote on final legislation as early as tonight—tonight.

Many of the provisions in this bill are already public. They are all items that the country desperately needs and upon which there is no disagreement. We all are ready to deliver a desperately needed extension of enhanced unemployment benefits; direct survival checks to millions of American families; crucial relief to our schools, our small businesses, our healthcare system; and funding to support the production and distribution of a vaccine.

As of yesterday, we have been steadily working through all of the other outstanding issues, but one issue threatened to derail the bill. The Senator from Pennsylvania made an eleventh-hour demand to curtail the authority of the Fed to respond to economic crises, potentially leaving the Fed with less authority than it had even prior to the pandemic.

The language in his provision was so broad, the intent seemed to be to sabotage the incoming administration's ability to stabilize the economy and save jobs. That was completely unacceptable to Democrats.

But late last night the logjam was broken. Senator TOOMEY accepted my compromise to remove the dangerous "similar to" language in his bill that was overly broad. We sent the Senator far more limited language around 8 p.m. last night, and it was accepted a few hours later with a few technical changes. As a result, the Federal Reserve will retain its tools and authority in the event of a true emergency.

Now, this compromise should not have taken as long as it did, and, frankly, it was irresponsible to threaten the entire package with this ideological attempt to limit the Fed and Treasury's powers in an emergency.

But I am very glad that our Republican colleagues relented and accepted our offer. The Toomey legislation was the last significant stumbling block to a bipartisan agreement moving forward.

Solving our disagreement over the Fed's authority was a key to unlocking the rest of the bill and putting us on a path to final legislation. Now that we have solved that disagreement, we can close in on a final agreement, finish drafting legislation, and move it through both Chambers of Congress—hopefully, as soon as tonight. As we speak, the legislative text is being finalized.

The time has come to move forward and reach a conclusion. The legislation that is coming together will put money in the pockets of everyday people and extend many of the benefits that we included in the CARES Act, a bill I was proud to negotiate with Secretary Mnuchin.

I will be the first to admit that, while this short-term deal is necessary

to meet the urgent and growing needs that so many people are facing immediately going into the winter, this bill is not sufficient. It is necessary. It is not sufficient.

Democrats would have liked to provide more relief, especially to State and local governments and especially to American families on the brink of financial collapse. The survival checks in this bill are a good start, but there was bipartisan support for \$1,200 checks.

So let me be clear about one thing: This bill will not be the final word on congressional COVID relief.

When this Chamber gavels back in 2021, we must pick up immediately where we left off. We must protect people's jobs, whether they work for a company or a local government; whether they live in blue States or red States; whether they are office employees or teachers, bus drivers and firefighters.

Still, the significance of this package should not be underestimated. We will deliver the second largest Federal stimulus in our Nation's history. Only the CARES Act will have been bigger. This package will give the new President a head start as he prepares to right our ailing economy. And it won't include any provision to limit the legal rights of workers who are put in harm's way. It won't include any provision to gratuitously limit the authority of the Fed.

On many issues, where Republicans once refused to grant an inch, we were also able to make meaningful steps forward. Republicans, in their initial proposal, wanted zero direct payments. They wanted zero unemployment insurance. They wanted zero rent relief. Only a few months ago, the Republican leader admitted that 20 Members of his caucus didn't want to approve another dime in spending. Now we are on the verge of passing more than \$900 billion.

Once an agreement is finalized, I will have a lot more to say about the contents of the bill and the process it took to achieve it. But for now, I am happy to report we have surmounted the final largest hurdle, and an ending is in sight. Let's get the job done together for the sake of the American people.

I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory call be waived.

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

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

The legislative clerk read the following:

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 Brian Noland, of Tennessee, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2024.

Mitch McConnell, Lamar Alexander, Rick Scott, Tom Cotton, Mike Crapo, Cory Gardner, Ron Johnson, James Lankford, Roger F. Wicker, Marco Rubio, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Thom Tillis, Shelley Moore Capito, John Boozman, Joni Ernst, Mike Braun, Pat Roberts.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Brian Noland, of Tennessee, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2024, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BARR), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI), the Senator from Nebraska (Mrs. FISCHER), the Senator from Georgia (Mrs. LOEFFLER), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS). Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS) is necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 84, nays 5, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 281 Ex.]

YEAS—84

Baldwin	Graham	Portman
Barrasso	Grassley	Reed
Bennet	Hassan	Roberts
Blackburn	Hawley	Romney
Blunt	Heinrich	Rosen
Booker	Hirono	Rubio
Boozman	Hoeben	Sasse
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Schatz
Brown	Inhofe	Schumer
Cantwell	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Capito	Jones	Scott (SC)
Cardin	Kaine	Shaheen
Carper	Kelly	Shelby
Casey	Kennedy	Sinema
Cassidy	King	Smith
Collins	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Coons	Lankford	Sullivan
Cornyn	Leahy	Tester
Cortez Masto	Lee	Thune
Cotton	Manchin	Tillis
Cramer	McConnell	Toomey
Crapo	Menendez	Udall
Daines	Merkley	Van Hollen
Durbin	Moran	Warner
Ernst	Murkowski	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murphy	Wicker
Gardner	Murray	Wyden
Gillibrand	Peters	Young

NAYS—5

Blumenthal	Markey	Warren
Duckworth	Sanders	

NOT VOTING—11

Alexander	Fischer	Perdue
Burr	Harris	Risch
Cruz	Loeffler	Rounds
Enzi	Paul	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 84, the nays are 5.

The motion is agreed to.
The Senator from Texas.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, the fact that we are here on a Sunday indicates to me something is different about what we are about and, to me, speaks to a sense of urgency that we ought to have to complete our work before the Christmas holiday, and there are few things more pressing than our agenda today.

Government funding, as we know, is scheduled to expire at 12 midnight tonight, and unless we take action in the next few hours, our country will be thrown into another government shutdown. I hope every Member of this body can understand why this is simply not an option. I have heard some people talk about, well, it is not a real shutdown if it happens for just a few hours or a couple of days over the weekend, but I think the appearance is horrible and speaks to our not living up to our responsibility to do this on a timely basis and without any lapse in government funding. This is not the time to furlough hard-working public servants or send our various governmental Departments and Agencies into chaos.

We need to pass a funding bill that will provide stability for the remainder of the fiscal year, through the end of September next year, and give our government the ability to operate with certainty. All you have to do is talk to the leaders at the Pentagon, and they will tell you how chaotic and inefficient it is when Congress passes short-term continuing resolutions, which speaks to the importance of providing some certainty and predictability to the funding stream, but we know government funding is only one of the things left to do on our list.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. President, our country is racing to distribute two now successful vaccines to bring an end to this pandemic that we have been living through that has claimed the lives of more than 315,000 Americans. Millions of workers have lost their jobs. They have no income. They lost those jobs either weeks or several months ago and have been struggling to support themselves and their families. Sometimes I wonder, as we delay in responding and providing additional relief, whether those who receive paychecks have sufficient empathy for those who are receiving no paychecks. Time is of the essence.

Small businesses are crunching the numbers, trying to determine how much longer they can hang on and keep their employees on the payrolls, if they have been able to at all.

Of course, teachers are doing the best they can to teach our children virtually or in hybrid situations, with some children going back to the classroom. This has been a tragic circumstance, I believe, particularly for many low-income children for whom virtual learning is simply not an option or is simply failing them because

many of them have no access to broadband. They may not have sufficient supervision at home to help them through their studies. To me, it is incredible that we expect to put children who are in elementary school in front of computer screens for 8 hours a day and expect them to get what they need in terms of their education.

Of course, none of this is news. We have known about not only the need but the urgency of each of these priorities for months now. Unfortunately, the partisan dysfunction leading up to the election prevented us from making more progress since the CARES Act was passed last March. Yet, with the election in November, we finally saw some interest on the part of congressional leaders on both sides of the aisle, on both sides of the Capitol, in negotiating a compromise.

There are many of our colleagues—some of whom are sitting here in the Chamber today—who have dedicated a lot of time and effort to trying to help the leadership build a consensus and get to yes, which I hope we will get to very soon. We know there have been a lot of negotiations and a lot of loose ends, but vaccines, workers, small businesses, and schools should be our priority.

According to the Democratic leader and the majority leader, we apparently are just hours away from finalizing a bipartisan deal, but none of us have actually seen the text yet of what this looks like. The only responsible thing is for us to be able to study it and understand exactly what is happening. The House Committee on Rules, presumably, will meet and pass a rule, and then it will go to the House floor. I know some people are saying we can get this done today. To me, that seems unlikely, but I guess we can all hope. I hope we do this responsibly and not just quickly.

We do know that the American people are suffering and that this is not the time for politics or delay for delay's sake. This is a time to come together to compromise and make good on the commitment we have made to support the American people. I am sort of expecting smoke signals from some quarters, but I hope the signs that we are all trying to read, the tea leaves and the like, become a lot clearer today so that we can chart a clear path forward to both government funding and coronavirus relief.

While the size and shape of this legislation is still coming together, I hope it will include legislation I introduced earlier this year to help some of our hardest hit small businesses.

Over the last few months, we have heard much about the incredible success of the Paycheck Protection Program, which deserves all of the accolades it has received because it has provided a vital lifeline to America's small businesses and their employees.

These loans helped employees make payroll and cover business expenses during the most difficult parts of the