



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 166

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2020

No. 220

House of Representatives

The House met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: Loving and gracious God, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

We ask today that You bless the Members of the people's House to be the best and most faithful servants of the people they serve. As this Second Session of the 116th Congress draws near its end, withhold not Your holy spirit of wisdom and truth from this assembly.

They return to the Capitol with a huge weight lifted from their shoulders, for which a nation is grateful. Strengthen them as they address the needs of our Nation's citizens, despite the significant hurdles that have been placed in the way of the assistance and protections Americans have always relied upon in the past.

Continue to bless and protect those across our Nation who work each day to minister to the health needs of those who suffer from COVID.

May all that is done this day in the people's House be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to section 4(a) of House Resolution 967, the Journal of the last day's proceedings is approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. The Chair will lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The SPEAKER 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.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 4 of rule I, the following enrolled bill was signed by Speaker pro tempore BEYER on Thursday, December 24, 2020:

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

RECESS

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 2 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1601

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. JACKSON LEE) at 4 o'clock and 1 minute p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which the yeas and nays are ordered.

The House will resume proceedings on postponed questions at a later time.

CARING FOR AMERICANS WITH SUPPLEMENTAL HELP ACT OF 2020

Mr. NEAL. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the 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.

The Clerk read the title of the bill. The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 9051

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Caring for Americans with Supplemental Help Act of 2020" or the "CASH Act of 2020".

SEC. 2. RECOVERY REBATE AMOUNTS INCREASED.

(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 by striking "\$600" each place it appears and inserting "\$2,000", and by striking "\$1,200" each place it appears and inserting "\$4,000".

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section are contingent upon the enactment of the COVID-related Tax Relief Act of 2020 and shall apply (if at all) as if included in the enactment of section 272 of such Act.

SEC. 3. DEPENDENTS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN DETERMINING CREDIT AND REBATES.

(a) RECOVERY REBATES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 6428(a)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by striking "qualifying children (within the meaning of section 24(c))" and inserting "dependents (as defined in section 152)".

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(A) Section 6428(f)(2) of such Code is amended by inserting "and subsection (a)(2) were applied by substituting 'qualifying children (within the meaning of section 24(c))' for 'dependent (as defined in section 152)'" before the period at the end.

(B) Section 6428(g) of such Code, as amended by the COVID-related Tax Relief Act of 2020, is amended—

(i) in paragraph (1), by striking "qualifying child" each place it appears and inserting "dependent";

(ii) in paragraph (2)(C), by inserting "(determined after the application of subsection (f)(2))" after "subsection (a)(2)", and

(iii) in paragraph (3)(B), by inserting "or dependent" after "child" both places it appears.

(3) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this subsection are contingent upon the enactment of the COVID-related Tax Relief Act of 2020 and shall apply (if at all) as

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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if included in the enactment of section 273 of such Act.

(b) ADDITIONAL 2020 RECOVERY REBATES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 6428A(a)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as added by the COVID-related Tax Relief Act of 2020, is amended by striking “qualifying children (within the meaning of section 24(c))” and inserting “dependents (as defined in section 152)”.

(2) AUTHORITY TO MAKE ADVANCE REFUNDS WITHOUT REGARD TO MODIFIED DEFINITION OF DEPENDENT.—Section 6428A(f) of such Code is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(7) AUTHORITY TO MAKE ADVANCE REFUNDS WITHOUT REGARD TO MODIFIED DEFINITION OF DEPENDENT.—To the extent the Secretary determines appropriate to make or allow the maximum number of advance refunds by the deadline described in paragraph (3)(A)(ii), the Secretary may determine the advance refund amounts under this subsection without regard to the amendments made by paragraphs (1) and (3) of section 3(b) of the CASH Act of 2020.”

(3) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(A) Section 6428A(f)(2)(B) of such Code is amended by striking “qualifying child” and inserting “dependent”.

(B) Section 6428A(g) of such Code is amended by striking “qualifying child” each place it appears and inserting “dependent”.

(C) Section 6428A(g)(4)(B) of such Code is amended by striking “such child” and inserting “such dependent”.

(4) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this subsection are contingent upon the enactment of the COVID-related Tax Relief Act of 2020 and shall apply (if at all) as if included in the enactment of section 272 of such Act.

SEC. 4. BUDGETARY EFFECTS.

(a) STATUTORY PAYGO SCORECARDS.—The budgetary effects of this Act shall not be entered on either PAYGO scorecard maintained pursuant to section 4(d) of the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010.

(b) SENATE PAYGO SCORECARDS.—The budgetary effects of this Act shall not be entered on any PAYGO scorecard maintained for purposes of section 4106 of H. Con. Res. 71 (115th Congress).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BRADY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. NEAL. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

Mr. NEAL. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, we are here today at a moment of extreme hardship for families across the country. Last week, both the House and the Senate passed bipartisan legislation that would provide relief for people who are struggling to make ends meet. That package includes a wide variety of provisions that will allow Americans who are at the end of their ropes to stay in their homes and to put food on the table.

Despite the fact that the Trump administration was part of the negotiations for the legislation and approved of all the measures that it contained, the President unexpectedly decided to delay signing the package into law for several days. This stalling was an act of theater that cost the American people millions of dollars in terms of pandemic-related unemployment assistance that they desperately need.

Fortunately, last night, the President finally signed the bill. At last, workers and families can exhale a bit, knowing that aid is on the way.

The primary reason that the President provided for holding up his signature was the enactment of this important legislation that we are about to undertake in the next 40 minutes.

Democrats agree that families deserve more, and that is why I introduced the CASH Act on Christmas Eve to increase the payments in the relief package to \$2,000, the exact amount the President said he wants.

Madam Speaker, I introduced this legislation on Christmas Eve with the following parable in mind. Jacob Marley forewarned that the three ghosts would visit Ebenezer Scrooge to warn him about the path to redemption. He started with Christmas Past, and we might start here with Christmas past, acknowledging that, 3 years ago, one of the largest tax cuts in American history that overwhelmingly came to people at the very top, including a top individual rate cut of 39 percent to 37.5 percent and a corporate rate cut from 36 percent to 21 percent, were part of that endeavor.

In the Christmas present, there are 20 million Americans who are receiving unemployment insurance, more than 350,000 dead, and 19 million people infected with this pandemic.

For Christmas Future, Marley warned Ebenezer Scrooge that there was a way for redemption, and that was through a new generosity and a new kindness. We could emulate that here this afternoon by raising that impact payment from \$600 to \$2,000. The miracle of this season would remain the triumph of light for those who desperately need our assistance.

Madam Speaker, we could have passed this bill 4 days ago, but our colleagues on the other side went against the President's wishes, and they blocked it. So, here we are today, back again to try to get a bigger check for the American people. I sincerely hope that the House Republicans have had a change of heart and will join us in passing the CASH Act.

Madam Speaker, let's pass this bill and do what is right for our neighbors back home as they simply try to survive each day.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BRADY. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, last fall, Speaker NANCY PELOSI and Washington Democrats refused to accept a bipartisan

COVID relief bill, insisting instead on more than \$3 trillion of absurd policies, from marijuana banking to early release of criminals. Months ago, they even rejected a nearly \$2 trillion COVID relief proposal by President Trump. Many Americans knew right then that leading Democrats were sabotaging the economy ahead of the election for political gain.

During those crucial months, while Speaker PELOSI stalled COVID relief, thousands of Americans died, tens of thousands of small businesses closed, and hospitals and nursing homes struggled, while millions of Americans were left jobless.

In the election, Democrats and Congress paid a steep price for this cruel inaction, with voters giving House Republicans nearly two-thirds of the seats needed to take back the majority.

I thank President Trump for signing bipartisan legislation, even with its flaws, that included several separate bills that hitched a ride on the annual funding bill for the government, including COVID relief, a first-ever ban on surprise medical bills, and \$328 billion in urgent tax relief for families and local businesses.

Madam Speaker, I recognize that today's CASH Act will pass with bipartisan support, Republicans and Democrats alike, and I respect the decision of each Member of Congress. But for me, I worry that this whopping \$463 billion won't do what is needed: stimulate the economy or get the jobless back to work.

At this point in the recovery, the fact is, it is hard to stimulate a Main Street that is locked down by local politicians.

This won't help local restaurants get their workers permanently back or hospitality and convention industries rehire their workers for the long term, and it won't help get energy workers back on the job.

Will this stimulate our local economies? Not a lot.

What we know is that much of this extra \$1.600 will go to pay down credit card debt or savings or even make new purchases online at Walmart, Best Buy, or Amazon.

So, rather than merely sending checks to credit card companies, this half-trillion dollars could more than double the number of small businesses and midsize businesses getting PPP forgivable loans to hire their workers and stay alive through the recovery. It could make sure airline workers have secure jobs for more than just a few months and do more to replenish frontline healthcare workers.

Madam Speaker, we should be focused on the families that are hurting most, none more than the 8 million Americans who lost their jobs due to COVID. Our top priority, in addition to defeating the virus, is to get them back to work. So far, Congress has already approved more than \$20,800 directly to a family of four with one parent out of

work. That is on top of their State unemployment benefits.

Madam Speaker, if we want to do even more for the jobless, this same huge amount of money today could give every unemployed worker from COVID and their employer a \$50,000 incentive to return to work. With this huge amount of money, you could even give the bottom 90 percent of workers in America an income-tax-free year for 2021, a full year where you go to work each day for yourself rather than for Washington.

Can you imagine what a no-tax 2021 would do for low-and middle-income families, workers, and the local economy?

Or we can simply hold this money back, not hastily spend another half-trillion dollars we don't have, while we assess the impact vaccinations are having on consumer confidence and the unlocking of the economy.

Madam Speaker, there are a lot of ways to spend money, if that is the goal. But in my view, let's be smart about it. Let's target assistance to those who need it most. The Committee on Ways and Means should be the place to explore and analyze these options, not just have a bill that spends over \$400 billion hastily dropped on us at the last minute.

I know, working together, Republicans and Democrats, we can do better to help people get back to work and truly help this recovery.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. NEAL. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE).

Mr. KILDEE. Madam Speaker, I thank the chairman for his leadership on this and for recognizing me.

Madam Speaker, I stand in strong support of this legislation. The American people are struggling. We hear from them every single day, and they need this additional relief now. The recent coronavirus relief bill passed by Congress obviously is long overdue. The House wanted to pass relief last May, but Republicans refused. Then, the pandemic has only gotten worse, and the pain has been worse for so many families and small businesses.

While the relief bill does supply short-term relief, it was regrettable to see President Trump delay signing this legislation. That decision, that delay, had consequences. It hurt families with greater uncertainty and, in some cases, caused people to lapse their benefits.

I did support the legislation that included the \$600 stimulus checks because that was all we could get the other side to agree to. But it is obviously not enough. That is why I support this legislation, \$2,000 in direct payments for Americans who are struggling.

I, along with my Democratic colleagues, have pushed for these higher payments for some time, and now, President Trump agrees. The leader of the Republican Party stands in support of this effort.

These \$2,000 payments, every Member of Congress should support them. This would make a difference in the lives of Americans who are facing the greatest uncertainty that they have experienced, for many of them, in their lifetimes, putting money in their hands, allowing them to pay their bills, which will help them support those small businesses. Probably more importantly, it can give them some of the financial support they need in order to make the decisions that they have to make to protect their families.

President Trump changed his mind and supports this legislation. That is why we acted. We would have included much larger payments in the legislation had he spoken up sooner, but it is never too late to do the right thing.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. NEAL. Madam Speaker, I yield an additional 1 minute to the gentleman.

Mr. KILDEE. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

This is a moment we can all come together, Democrats and Republicans, including the President of the United States, and do something big and bold that would help American families get through this most difficult time.

Madam Speaker, I commend the chairman for his work in moving quickly and putting this legislation together. I commend those on the other side who will stand with us today and support this.

It is my hope that this legislation will quickly go over to the Senate. They will get the message and send this legislation on to the President, wherever he may be. He will sign the bill, and we can get this help to the American people.

□ 1615

Mr. BRADY. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. SCHRADER).

Mr. SCHRADER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak against the CASH Act. This is an ineffective and poorly targeted approach to aiding Americans in distress. It is clearly a last-minute political maneuver by the President and extremists on both sides of the political spectrum who have been largely absent during months of very hard negotiations. They have chosen to tweet their opinions instead of coming to the table to get aid in the hands of Americans and small businesses who need it most.

Over the last 6 months, and especially in the last few weeks as the holidays loomed and COVID cases skyrocketed, the Problem Solvers Caucus worked with Senators on both sides of the aisle and House and Senate leadership to craft legislation that includes vetted programs like the PPP and unemployment compensation that have been improved upon since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I feel for all of those who are suffering today due to financial hardship

and look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues on a bipartisan, bicameral basis to continue to find ways to help provide relief.

People who are making six-figure incomes who have not been impacted by COVID-19 do not need checks. We have had 9 months to fix this program to get aid to the people who need it most. That has not happened. Let's reverse course and target those in need.

Mr. NEAL. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. SUOZZI), who did a great job on the surprise billing legislation that passed in the COVID Act.

Mr. SUOZZI. Madam Speaker, I thank Mr. Chairman for his leadership on the CASH Act and also, as he mentioned, on the Ban Surprise Billing Act. It is really amazing the relief we are going to be giving to consumers this year on a bipartisan basis with his leadership. We are going to be making people's lives a lot better. So I thank him so much for the work he has done on both the CASH Act and on the work to address surprise billing.

Madam Speaker, the effects of this pandemic have been cruelly uneven. Some remain unscathed, working remotely and still healthy, while millions of others are awash in misery, unable to return to work or pay their bills, even funeral bills for lost loved ones.

While the stock market has hit a new record today, there are still bodies stored in refrigerator trucks. While online retail and grocery stores are booming, airline, Broadway, and mom-and-pop store employees have been laid off, and life savings invested in small businesses have been wiped out.

The President's cynical ploy to threaten the COVID relief package to obscure his dark-of-night pardons has now resulted in a fighter's chance that we can pass this \$2,000 stimulus check legislation if we can only get MITCH MCCONNELL to finally show some empathy.

Let's pass this bill, and then let's immediately work to send the billions necessary to save our State and local governments before they fire police officers, teachers, and frontline workers, which will only result in more unemployment checks from us and financial ruin for those families and the communities they serve.

Let's rebuild our infrastructure and put Americans back to work. Let's build back better. We can do this if we remember why we are here and we, both Democrats and Republicans, recognize that outside of this Beltway fantasyland, millions of Americans are desperately pleading for our help.

Mr. BRADY. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GROTHMAN).

Mr. GROTHMAN. Madam Speaker, as I look around the room here, it looks like I am in the U.S. Congress. I mean, I see the American flag there; George Washington is over there; it says "In God We Trust." But looking at this bill

today, it makes me feel like we are in the Parliament of Afghanistan, Burundi, Yemen, or Bolivia.

Do we really think the way to improve the quality of life for Americans is to just print more money from the Fed? If you look around, we are going to be printing another \$400 billion.

Has anybody looked lately at what is going on with the monetary supply? M1 up 50 percent; M2 up 20 percent.

Don't people realize that just printing more is not a way to make our citizens wealthier; it is just a way to debase the currency?

The way for a wealthy country is to work hard through frugality and through improving one's skills, not by having the Fed print money.

Last time, when we sent out \$1,200 checks, I stopped by my local Walmart, and the people in charge of the electronics section said they had never seen such sales in their life.

Is that really going to improve the lot of Americans, to go over and buy some more electronic junk from China? Apparently so.

And let's not forget when we look at inflation. We have inflation right now. Twice, in the recent past, we have changed the definition on what inflation is.

So we do have inflation; it is just that we keep changing the definition to mask it. That is why the market is up. The market is up because we really do have inflation.

We are in the U.S. Congress. We should not think the way to prosperity is just printing money. We should act like we are the United States. That is why, for my whole life, other countries like to invest in the dollar. They respect the value of the dollar more than the national currencies of Burundi, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Bolivia. Those are four poor countries; that is why I picked them out.

So I encourage Senator McCONNELL to hold the line here, to act responsibly.

Mr. NEAL. Madam Speaker, might I remind the gentleman that this is not about creating a path to prosperity. This is about creating a path to liquidity, which subsequently creates a path to demand for people at the lower end of the economic spectrum, 20 million of whom are not working at the moment through no fault of their own.

Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BEYER), an excellent member of the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. BEYER. Madam Speaker, I rise to support the CASH Act, which will send \$2,000 checks to the American people.

I want to thank Chairman NEAL for coming together very quickly to create this act in a thoughtful way.

The American people are hurting this holiday season, and they need our help. Our bill would increase those payments to \$2,000, which would also include adult dependents and students.

We realize that \$600 is not enough for people facing eviction and hunger. For

many, this will just pay a past-due rental bill for July.

It is good and important that we are sending support to small businesses, strong unemployment aid, nutrition and rental assistance, but this relief is coming 7 months later than it should have. It is vital that Congress not penny-pinch the American people now.

This CASH bill is bipartisan, and if Senator MITCH McCONNELL would put it on the Senate floor, it would be bicameral.

Let me push back, too, that this is too much.

We have 40 million Americans who work full-time and made less than \$18,000 last year. With the minimum wage at \$7.25, there isn't a single two-bedroom apartment you can rent in a county in America for that money. There are tens of millions without healthcare.

My family sells new cars and used cars. I have watched the debt burden of so many people just rise and rise and rise over the years.

Is there a better way? You know, my Republican friends hate it when so-called Big Government decides what we need. The best way to let people manage their family is to put the money in their hands, give them that American freedom.

Somehow, we can print money to do a \$4 trillion tax cut over 20 years, but we can't print enough money to help the American people.

This is a good bill. I salute Chairman RICHARD NEAL, and I hope every Democrat and every Republican will vote for it.

Mr. BRADY. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. McCLINTOCK).

Mr. McCLINTOCK. Madam Speaker, let's get this straight. The small shopkeeper who has lost their entire savings because of the lockdowns will get the same \$2,000 grant as the government bureaucrat who has been enjoying a steady paycheck at home for the past 10 months.

This money is wholly inadequate for those who have been harmed by the lockdowns and wholly unnecessary for those who have not.

This free money doesn't come from Heaven. It comes from the future earnings of those who will be struggling to get back on their feet, making the post-lockdown recovery more difficult and prolonged.

Much of the burden of this debt will fall on the young, who have already borne the brunt of these lockdowns. It is, in a real sense, a massive wealth transfer from the future to the present, from the young to the old, and from those who have been hurt by the lockdowns to those who have not.

There is only one way to end the suffering caused by these lockdowns, and that is to end them.

Mr. NEAL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE).

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman and the chairman

of the Ways and Means Committee for his distinguished leadership.

I thank our Speaker for her persistent leadership.

I thank all of the Democratic Members and Republican Members who understand what this legislation is.

It is a survival cash payment for Americans making under a certain amount, which means they are on the survival pathway.

Maybe they haven't spoken to the constituents of, I believe, probably 90 percent of the Members of this Congress who have said they are on the edge and they are about to go over. They can't pay their rent or buy food. They are in food distribution lines. Before I came here Sunday, I was at a church, and we were giving out food.

I asked during the spring for \$3,000. I was willing to go for \$600 so that desperate Americans could get enough to survive.

Mr. Speaker, I am supporting this. I ask my friends and colleagues on both sides of the aisle to recognize that, when you are privileged to stand in a place like this where the constitutional Fathers gave us the opportunity to lead this government, stand for the American people.

I support the CASH Act because it is survival for Americans.

Mr. Speaker, as a senior member of the Committees on the Judiciary, on Homeland Security, and on the Budget, I rise in strong support of the CASH Act, a bill to provide \$2,000 in direct payments to individuals.

It was welcomed news that the President signed the COVID-19 relief bill that also includes the Omnibus Appropriations for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021.

This bill:

Accelerates vaccine distribution and crushes the coronavirus;

Provides rent, food, unemployment, and direct payment to put money in the Pockets of the American People through: direct payments worth up to \$600 per adult or child;

Averts the sudden expiration of Unemployment Insurance benefits for millions and added a \$300 per week UI enhancement for Americans out of work;

Delivers key tax benefits for Struggling Families—through changes to the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit that help ensure that families who faced unemployment or reduced wages during the pandemic are able to receive a strong tax credit based on their 2019 income;

Provides strong support for Small Businesses by providing: \$284 billion for first and second forgivable PPP loans, \$15 billion in dedicated funding for live venues, independent movie theaters, and cultural institutions, and \$20 billion for targeted EIDL Grants which are critical to many smaller businesses on Main Street;

Funds Education, Child Care & Students by providing: \$82 billion in funding for colleges and schools, and \$10 billion for childcare assistance to help get parents back to work and keep childcare providers open;

Provides Pell Grant expansion to reach 500,000 new recipients, ensuring more than 1.5 million students will now receive the maximum benefit; and

Supports the Global Fight Against COVID— with an additional \$3.36 billion for a total of \$4 billion for GAVI, the international vaccine alliance, recognizing that we are not truly safe until the whole world is safe from the coronavirus.

I will vote for the CASH Act because it increases direct payments to individuals from a \$600 direct payment to \$2000, which will help families struggling with the economic impacts of COVID-19.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that as of December 23, 2020, that 18,170,062 cases of COVID-19 resulting in 321,734 deaths had been reported in the United States.

The new year will mark a terrible milestone for the United States—the last time we saw death like this in our nation was during the 1918 Flu Pandemic, which recorded a total of 675,000 deaths in the United States.

What the costs will be to our nation for the over three-hundred thousand deaths have yet to be fully calculated.

It is a tragedy that too many households who have lost a member to COVID-19 are struggling to accept these deaths, but it is also the friends, co-workers, business owners, professionals, students, teachers, wives, husbands, brothers, sisters, aunts, cousins, and grandparents who also are feeling these losses because someone that mattered to them is no longer here.

Each of these lives could have had dozens of connections with other people who were not able to be with them during their final moments on this earth who are lost to us because we too often only consider the immediate household.

My deepest concerns are for the medical professionals who are seeing more death than soldiers who have fought on battlefields in defense of our nation since World War II.

Death every day for medical professionals who pride themselves on robbing death by keeping the very ill or critically injured alive are themselves wounded by each loss in ways that we cannot understand.

Too many of our medical professionals are losing that battle with death as they attempt to treat extremely ill COVID-19 patients because they do not have access to: sufficient amounts of essential therapies, or the special trained staff to administer interventions that could save lives.

Medical people also have not had the universal support of political leaders who are willing to promote wearing of face coverings, social distancing, and handwashing to limit the spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) the infection that causes COVID-19.

There is a hidden cost to the fool-hearty disregard for the seriousness of this moment in American history.

My concerns are for the economic impact and the long-term damage to our nation's health care delivery system.

Today we will focus on the economic injuries caused by COVID-19, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on addressing the systemic long-term issues caused by unequal access to the health care.

Small businesses and working men and women of this great nation are the life blood of the economy, and who pay the lion share of federal taxes, now find themselves, through no fault of their own, in need of assistance in

the form of direct payments that will provide a bridge to them and to the economy for the next few weeks so that the next Administration will have time to assess and craft the relief package needed to get the nation over the last hurdles of the pandemic's economic impact.

Since the 1980s, corporate income tax revenues have become a smaller share of overall tax revenues paid to the federal government.

In 2017, President Trump signed into law P.L. 115-97, which substantially and permanently changed the U.S. federal tax system for the wealthy and large corporations.

Most of the changes to the individual income tax system in P.L. 115-97 for those less well off are temporary and scheduled to expire at the end of 2025, after which the rates for these individuals will return to what it was for 2017.

In contrast, many of the tax cuts made in P.L. 115-97 affecting corporations and wealthy individuals are permanent, in other words they will keep the drastic cut in corporate taxes.

The facts are that working individuals and small businesses support the U.S. government's federal tax system.

The largest source of revenue to the federal government is the individual income tax, which in 2019, generated \$1.7 trillion.

The second-largest source of federal revenue is payroll taxes, which is collected by employers and is often paid quarterly.

In FY2019, payroll taxes generated \$1.2 trillion in federal revenue or thirty-six percent of the total revenue for the federal government.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projects that federal income tax revenues in FY2020 will be \$1.5 trillion, and payroll tax revenue will be \$1.3 trillion.

In FY2020, it is projected that about 47 percent of federal revenue will be generated through the individual income tax.

In FY2019, corporate tax receipts were only \$230 billion, or nearly 7 percent of federal revenue, and in FY2020, corporate tax receipts are expected to be \$151 billion, less than 5 percent of federal revenue.

Receipts from other sources are also projected to increase in FY2020 to \$298 billion, from \$271 billion in FY2019, which will result in 9 percent of total revenue up from 8 percent the previous year.

Obligated social insurance federal program payments for Social Security and Medicare are paid through payroll taxes and are expected to generate an additional estimated \$1.3 trillion, or 35 percent of revenue in FY2020.

The \$2,000 in payments to individuals will be used to pay bills, rent, utilities, car notes, or purchase needed items like winter coats, and other essentials, which will translate into income for small businesses.

All of this spending will generate local, state, and federal tax revenue as it fuels consumption and the provision of services that are still available through the economy.

Overtime basic Keynesian economics has proven itself to be a reliable economic model and has repeatedly proven that money turning over in the economy makes more money.

There is a reason why it is important to stimulate the economy during a deadly unchecked pandemic, the chief of which is its depression of the national and global economies resulting in a downturn creating recession conditions.

We know the end of the COVID-19 pandemic's vice on the economy is insight with the delivery of a vaccine, but we are not there yet—we must help the American people, and most importantly our small businesses, endure until we reach seventy percent herd immunity.

The use of direct payments is the Keynesian solution that is winning the day across the globe for countries able to support their economies in this way.

Payments to individuals allow them and not the government to make spending decisions on their household's essential life-sustaining needs such as paying for housing, utility bills, food, and clothing which allows money they spend to circulate through the economy like blood throughout the body.

People in this nation can and should be trusted to make decisions regarding how they spend the funds provided by the stimulus because they know their needs.

Consumers will spend money with small businesses who should have the freedom to pay their workers and suppliers, workers and suppliers will be free to buy goods from other businesses, and those businesses will pay their workers and suppliers, and so on.

In this way, the \$2,000 in spending by each individual is actually spent more than once as the effect of each dollar spent creates more spending.

This is called the expenditure multiplier effect: an initial increase in spending, cycles repeatedly through the economy, and has a larger impact than the initial \$2,000 amount spent.

The economy needs to be inoculated against recession, which is what the \$2,000 in individual payments will do, and it will need a booster in about thirty to sixty days.

If the overwhelming majority of those who will receive the \$2,000 were planning to put it in a bank account and not spend it, then this bill would not be needed because the basic needs of the people would be satisfied, but we know this is not the case.

No one is benefiting from the COVID-19 economy.

The U.S. poverty rate has grown at a historic rate over the past five months, with 7.8 million Americans falling into poverty after the expanded \$600 a week in unemployment assistance expired at the end of July.

This represents the greatest increase since the government began tracking poverty sixty years ago.

In the city of Houston, nine key service sectors accounted for seventy percent of all jobs lost which totaled 1,343,600.

Houston workers lost jobs in the following areas:

Healthcare 391,000; retail 303,600; food service 267,000; finance 166,000; private education 63,400; arts and entertainment 37,400; accommodations 28,700; air transportation 20,200; and other services 115,800.

In addition to these positions, jobs were also lost in other areas, the largest of which was construction which shut down 30,700 jobs; professional and business services followed, with 25,300 jobs lost, although 13,900 were in temporary and provisional jobs in employment services; upstream oil lost 12,300 in March/April; and non-oil manufacturing lost 7,700 jobs.

Americans out of work due to COVID-19 have generated 86 million jobless claims, with

new claims being filed in recent weeks topping 800,000.

Millions of Americans who lost their jobs during the pandemic have fallen thousands of dollars behind on rent and utility bills, a clear warning sign that people are running out of money for basic needs.

If this is not enough evidence of what is happening, look at the miles of vehicles lined up outside of food distribution centers for assistance; we have all seen this occurring in each of our states.

Moody's Analytics warned in November 2020 that 9 million renters said they were behind on rent, according to a Census Bureau survey.

The Bureau of the Census reports that twenty-one percent of all renters are behind on their rent, of which twenty-nine percent of Black families and seventeen percent of Hispanic households are behind on theirs.

The Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia's analysis of persons who were employed prior to the pandemic reports that 1.3 million of these households are now an average of \$5,400 in debt on rent and utilities, after those people had lost jobs and their family's income dropped.

The new COVID-19 stimulus bill, already agreed to by both the House and Senate and signed by President Trump, restores unemployment assistance, but cuts that assistance from \$600 a week to \$300 a week without consideration for the facts on the ground for the millions of Americans who remain out of work due to COVID-19 public health policy, and have been without sufficient income since August 1, 2020.

In fact, the decision about a \$600 a week in addition to unemployment benefits is a good idea for those in labor markets with high costs of living like New York and Washington, D.C., but may have far outstripped the going rate for labor and the actual cost of living where the spending power of \$600 exceeded market costs for living expenses.

The Congress may need to revisit models for future programs of this type and provide a formula that is based on the actual spending power of funds provided so the ability of meeting the cost-of-living needs can be more in line with the intent of the funds provided.

This may mean that, depending on where someone lived at the time a disaster of this nature was declared, the amount they would qualify for receiving may be different depending on the spending power of a dollar where they live.

Today, we have twenty million Americans who are receiving some kind of unemployment aid, and about 12 million of the unemployed stopped receiving their benefits.

The nation is on the cusp of a recession that is in danger of becoming a double-dip event that would plummet the economy into a precarious economic state that will take much more than a \$2,000 payment to each individual to overcome.

For all these reasons, I urge all Members to join me in voting for the CASH Act to increase individual payments from \$600 to \$2,000.

Mr. BRADY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would point out to my colleague that nothing in this bill helps anyone get back to work: not a dime to the 8 million people who are left unemployed because of COVID, not

a dime to help our small and medium-sized businesses, not a dime for Main Street.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. NEAL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN).

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, at some point on the infinite continuum that we call time, we will all have to account for our time.

We are all going to have to answer the question: Where were you when a pandemic was gripping the land? What did you do when you had the opportunity to put money in the pockets of people who needed it? Where was your courage when you had the chance to cast a vote to make a difference in the lives of people?

I say to you, my dear friends, this is the time for us to take a stand for the American people. Let's vote "yes" to put money in their pockets, because we caused them to stay home as a result of the pandemic. The government is for this reason. This is why the government exists: to take care of people.

Mr. BRADY. Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. NEAL. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, let me remind the Members of this Chamber why we are here today.

The CARES Act passed this House with, I think, five dissenters in the entire Chamber. That was months and months ago. People exhausted the \$1,200 that we allocated, based upon our tax system. And even the difficulty we had in trying to find adequate identification for those in America, as joint filers, making under \$24,000 a year, single filers making under \$12,000 a year.

Who can live on \$12,000 a year? That is \$1,000 a month.

People have exhausted that benefit. They have tried earnestly and seriously to overcome these obstacles that were created for them, not because of anything they did. We are not here because of malfeasance, speculation that derailed Wall Street in 2008, or corruption. We are here because of an international pandemic, and members of the American family at the lower end of the economic spectrum are hurting.

When we sought advice on putting together the CARES Act, the Speaker and myself, in particular, in those very earnest days with Secretary Mnuchin, sought the advice of the best economists—former Treasury Secretaries, members of the Federal Reserve Board, people who do this every single day—and they all said you need to act with speed and determination, speed to get that money into the hands of the people who will actually spend it.

And that is precisely what we did. We got it to people at the lower end of the economic spectrum.

□ 1630

As we proceed now to the new year, these people need another infusion of

cash. I am going to go back to this point that I think is something that we need to remember. Three years ago, this House, over the objection of myself and many others, passed a tax cut that clearly benefited the people at the very top of the economic spectrum, the top 1 percent, in particular—dividends, buybacks, a top cut in the corporate rate from 36 percent to 21 percent, and the top rate on the individual side from 39 percent to 37 percent.

And we can't find it in our hearts in this holiday season, again, based upon the Charles Dickens' parable of "A Christmas Carol," to provide \$2,000 worth of assistance to our brothers and sisters at the bottom end of economic income? This Chamber is better than that.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BRADY. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, you can say a lot about this Congress, but you cannot say we have not worked together and appropriated remarkable funding to help families defeat this COVID, to get back on their feet, and to save small businesses.

A good example is that, so far, Congress, both parties, has already approved more than \$20,800 in direct cash payments to a family of four with one parent out of work. That is on top of an estimated \$18,000 of State unemployment benefits, a little less than \$40,000 to help working families survive this COVID pandemic.

But, today, we do nothing in this bill to help 8 million Americans who lost their jobs due to COVID. We could double the amount of money that goes to small businesses or midsize businesses so they can rehire the workers and keep them on the payroll to try to survive and ride this out. We don't know yet what the vaccinations will do to consumer confidence or to the lockdowns.

Again, I expect a number of Republicans to support this bill. In my view, we would be wiser to assess the impact of the vaccinations in the recovery going forward so that we can target relief to Main Street, to helping get people back to work, and to truly stimulating our local economy. That is where we address the harm that has been done by COVID.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. NEAL. Madam Speaker, I am glad the ranking member reminded us of what we were able to accomplish together in the CARES Act, and I think that is what we are asking here again this evening.

Madam Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), the Speaker of the House.

Ms. PELOSI. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. And I thank him for his masterful work in not only bringing this legislation to the floor but working in a bipartisan

way to have so many important initiatives in the COVID and the omnibus bill that the President happily, for us, signed last evening. I thank him for his initiatives that are job-creating, that stimulate the economy and help meet the needs of the American people.

Madam Speaker, I am interested in the comments made by Mr. BRADY because he said we could be putting more money into small business, and we do indeed in the COVID package, around \$300 billion. I think it is important to note, Madam Speaker, that that brings it to almost about a trillion dollars since March 27 or 28, when the President signed the CARES Act, about \$950 billion for small business, nearly a trillion dollars. Very important.

Small business is the heart of our economy. What could be more optimistic for anyone to do but to follow their dreams, start a small business, create jobs, create wealth, create capital. It is so important. We see the importance of that to the tune of about a trillion dollars, just under a trillion dollars, in these past several months.

Madam Speaker, if you want to talk about job creation, I hope the gentleman will join us when we go forward to do State and local, our healthcare workers, honoring our heroes. They are at risk of losing their jobs. While they risk their lives to save lives, they may lose their jobs, and over a million of them have.

We are talking about healthcare workers. We are talking about police and fire, our first responders. We are talking about transportation, sanitation, food workers. We are talking about our teachers, our teachers, our teachers, the custodians of our children for a large part of their day.

They are at risk of losing their jobs because of the failure of the Republican side of the aisle to support funds for State and local government to honor our heroes. We want to honor them. While we cheer them, we applaud them, let's give them pay, and let's let them have job security. Let's give them PPE, the equipment that they need to do their job.

If we want to talk about saving jobs or growing jobs for the purpose that the distinguished gentleman from Texas mentioned, how are we going to focus on the distribution and the administration of the vaccine? Where do you think that happens but in city, county, and State hospitals, in large measure, by healthcare workers in those places, wherever it is distributed on an individual basis? They are the heart of the matter.

That is why we need to go forward with another bill that invests in our State and local governments, not to talk about government, but to talk about services, healthcare services, education, transportation, making our lives possible, making our very existence possible by what they do. Without them, how do we function?

Again, let's create jobs, let's save jobs, let's grow jobs by administering

this vaccine as fairly and as equitably as possible, and free to everyone in our country, because unless all of us are protected, none of us are protected.

This \$2,000, which I thank you for bringing it to the floor on Christmas Eve, was roundly rejected by Republicans. We asked for unanimous consent. This could already exist as a law if that had happened, but it didn't. So, now, today, we have another chance.

Some of the Republicans said: Oh, if they really wanted that, they would have called for a vote that day.

That wasn't true. It is important to note that was a pro forma session, and you had to have the consent of the Republicans to bring the bill to the floor. They withheld their consent.

So, here we are today, in a legislative day where we just act with the majority to bring the legislation to the floor.

Madam Speaker, I hope it will enjoy strong bipartisan support. The President of the United States has put this forth as something that he wants to see, in part of his signing the legislation yesterday. I hope that that view will be shared by the Republicans in the Senate because we will pass this bill today, either under suspension or under a rule, where it just requires a majority vote.

Under suspension, a two-thirds vote requires a large number of Republican votes, which I hope we will have because I do think that the American people would love to see that unity on their behalf.

We are a consumer economy. Putting money into the hands of the American people is a boost to our economy. This isn't a big stimulus package. The COVID bill is an emergency supplemental. But this piece will make it something very important to growing and sustaining our economy.

Madam Speaker, I thank the chairman for the work that your committee did, Brandon and the others, for putting in the dependent clause. Otherwise, 16 years and under would get the direct payment. But, I mean, as a mother of five and grandmother of nine, I know that children are dependent after 16 years of age, especially if they are still in school. There are others who are dependent because of one thing or another, some physical challenges that they may have in life. Who knows what goes on in a family?

Nonetheless, if they are dependent, they will be receiving a direct payment, another important boost for American working families, another important boost for our economy as we go forward.

So I, again, thank the chairman for his work. It is a simple vote. Our goals have been to crush the virus, honor our heroes who help us crush the virus, and put money in the pockets of the American people. Today, we will be doing that right now.

Legislation will be a lifeline for millions of Americans. It improves on the previously passed relief bill by including dependents, ensuring that families

with children in college, adults living with disabilities, or elderly family members can also receive relief.

The Republicans have a choice. The Republicans have a choice: vote for this legislation or vote to deny the American people the bigger paychecks they need. To reject this would be a denial of the economic challenges that people are facing, and it would deny them, again, the relief they need.

Madam Speaker, I urge a strong bipartisan vote for the aptly named CASH Act.

Mr. BRADY. Madam Speaker, may I inquire how much time is remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. JACKSON LEE). The gentleman from Texas has 9 minutes remaining. The gentleman from Massachusetts has 3½ minutes remaining.

Mr. BRADY. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, first, let me congratulate the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, Mr. NEAL, for working so closely together on our bipartisan priorities.

Ending surprise medical bills when you go to the ER or you have a scheduled medical procedure, ensuring, starting at the end of the next year, for the first time, when you go to that doctor's procedure, you will have a true and honest bill in advance of that. It will be so crucial for so many patients.

Madam Speaker, I also thank the chairman for working so closely in a bipartisan way on the COVID tax relief provisions in the first reforms of our temporary tax provisions in 5 years. I applaud Chairman NEAL for his work, and I have enjoyed working with him.

The previous speaker talked about essential workers, our firefighters, our healthcare workers, others who have done such an amazing job. We had an opportunity earlier this year to help them. President Trump, in his executive order, proposed a payroll tax holiday for nearly 5 months for these workers. That would have meant, for those essential workers, that firefighter, that hospital worker, that nurse, that a family of four would have kept an extra \$5,000 in their paycheck throughout the holidays.

If we really wanted to help essential workers, our Democrat friends would not have blocked that payroll tax holiday and would have adopted our bill to make sure that those payroll taxes were forgiven.

□ 1645

As for State and local governments, they, too—even though I disagree with many of the decisions—deserve our thanks. And, thankfully, because this was the most rapid labor market recovery following a crisis in history and we recovered more than half the jobs we have lost, State and local revenues this year are almost even, down a mere less than 1 percent.

Thank goodness Congress came together in the CARES Act to provide more than \$150 billion to those State

and local governments to be able to address these needs and continue to function.

I will tell you, too, that—again, I speak only for myself—the best way to help struggling families is to get them back to work. The best way to save our Main Street is to give our small and medium-sized businesses more help than we have. This bill does neither.

I don't believe—I think it is correct when the earlier speaker said this is not a stimulus; it is not. And it does nothing to help get people back to work.

I worry that, as we spend another nearly half a trillion dollars so hastily, we are not targeting this help to the very Americans who are struggling the most and need that help.

I will also point out that, as I said earlier, Congress has come together to provide a family of four with one unemployed parent, now, just a little short of \$40,000 of Federal money in their traditional State unemployment because we knew they were struggling. Now is the time to get them back to work. That is my personal objection to this bill.

I urge Congress to pause for a moment to assess the vaccinations over the next few months or year to determine where next we need to weigh in, if at all, on this recovery as we continue to work together to defeat this virus.

Madam Speaker, I am honored to be here today, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. NEAL. Madam Speaker, I am prepared to close, and I yield myself the balance of my time.

I acknowledge the good efforts of Ranking Member BRADY on the energy front in the tax package, as well. It is a series of compromised measures. He did a terrific job, I think it is fair to say, on surprise billing, and not to mention USMCA. Those were very substantial accomplishments that the Ways and Means Committee led on in the 116th Congress.

Mr. BRADY, as he was closing, mentioned that this measure he did not want to see treated as stimulus, and he is right; this is not about stimulus.

This is about stability.

This is about building a bridge for those people who are really hurting as we turn the page on this year.

This is about those who are wondering how they are going to make the next rental payment, sustenance for the American family, how they might repair that automobile that sits in the garage idle because they couldn't afford it.

That is what this is really about this evening.

I started with Charles Dickens and "A Christmas Carol" and the lessons of Jacob Marley, but let me conclude with a very simple description in "The Epic of America."

When asked what it was that set America apart from the rest of the world, it was suggested it was a habit of the heart, a kindness and a decency

and a goodness. And let me close the debate on that basis and urge passage of the CASH Act and \$2,000 for the American people.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 9051.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. BRADY. Madam Speaker, I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3 of House Resolution 965, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

WILLIAM M. (MAC) THORNBERRY
NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021—VETO MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 4 of House Resolution 1271, the unfinished business is the further consideration of the veto message of the President on 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.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is, Will the House, on reconsideration, pass the bill, the objections of the President to the contrary notwithstanding?

(For veto message, see proceedings of the House of December 24, 2020.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Washington (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Madam Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. THORNBERRY), the ranking member of the committee, pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on the veto message of the President of the United States to the bill H.R. 6395.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding and once again want to commend him for his stewardship of the committee through very challenging times.

Madam Speaker, I continue to support this bill, as more than 80 percent of the House did just 20 days ago. It is the exact same bill, not a comma has changed.

It still prevents the military from having their pay cut. It still creates new tools to deal with a newly aggressive China. It still includes the important U.S.-Israel Assistance Act and provides help for Vietnam veterans.

One thing, I guess, is new in the past few days, because a devastating cyberattack by Russia has been exposed; but, fortunately, this bill has dozens of provisions to help strengthen the country's defenses in cyber.

So the President has exercised his constitutional prerogative. Now, Madam Speaker, it is up to us. Our troops, the country, indeed, the world is watching to see what we will do, whether we can tune out other differences and still come together to support the men and women of the military and American national security.

I would only ask that, as Members vote, they put the best interests of the country first. There is no other consideration that should matter. This vote is about supporting our troops and defending America. While not perfect, this bill does a good job of advancing both and should be supported once again.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise to strongly urge Members to uphold what we did in this Chamber just a couple weeks ago and what the Senate did, as well; and that is we passed an overwhelmingly bipartisan bill, with roughly 80 percent of the vote in both the Senate and the House.

The legislative branch made it absolutely clear that we support this piece of legislation, and as the gentleman from Texas just noted, we support it with very good reason.

It is enormously important to give our troops the support that they need to carry out the job that we all are asking them to do. That is, I think, one of our minimum obligations as Members of Congress. And this bill reflects that.

This bill is the process of a lengthy effort involving Members of both Chambers, both parties, that have come together and put together an incredibly strong piece of legislation. That is why it passed so overwhelmingly just a couple weeks ago. And nothing has changed. Nothing has changed. The bill is exactly the same and every little bit as important.

Now, the President has the right to veto it, but I think we, as Members of