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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Thursday, December 31, 2020, at 10 a.m.

Senate

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2020

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our gracious King, You are the one clear power of love in the midst of lesser powers. Thank You for giving us the confidence that You hear and answer prayers.

Lord, use the Members of this body as ambassadors of reconciliation. Help them to bring wholeness, healing, and unity to a fragmented nation and world. Inspire them to discover Your love in each other and to see Your image in all creation.

Lord, settle our Senators down into a contemplative stillness that will make them yearn for righteousness, justice, and peace. May they speak wise words from a reservoir of wisdom that will transform discord into harmony.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore, 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). The majority leader is recognized.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today, the Senate was supposed to finish legislation securing critical tools, training, and support for America's Armed Forces, but the junior Senator from Vermont had other ideas.

Remember, Senator SANDERS spent last summer, literally, trying to defund our military. Not my words, but the title of a piece he published: "Defund the Pentagon: The Liberal Case." Our colleague offered an amendment to strip 10 percent of funding from our servicemembers and decimate our defense budget. The Russians aren't cutting military funding. China isn't cutting funding. But last summer, Senator SANDERS and fellow Democrats, including the Democratic leader, voted to make America unilaterally disarm and cut ours.

The left took a break from trying to defund the police to try to defund our Armed Forces. Their amendment went down in a landslide, but now our colleague from Vermont is again putting political stunts before the needs of our men and women in uniform.

Our colleague says he will slow down this vital bill unless he gets to muscle through another stand-alone proposal from Speaker PELOSI that would add roughly half a trillion dollars to the national debt, which does not align with what President Trump has suggested and which has no realistic path to quickly pass the Senate.

Well, as I have said, the Senate will not let our national security be shoved off course, certainly not by Senators who have spent years—literally years—

trying to gut America's capabilities while our adversaries continue ramping up. The Senate will stay on this important bill until we complete it one way or another.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Now let's talk about COVID-19 relief. Four days ago, President Trump signed the second largest rescue package in American history. The largest one was the CARES Act back in March. Due to this pandemic and our massive response, we now have a national debt far larger than our entire economy for the first time since World War II, but we knew our people needed more help, so Congress just passed another nearly \$900 billion in emergency relief targeted to those who need it most, a second round of payroll support to save small business jobs, more unemployment aid, vaccine distribution money, funding for safe schools, and much more.

In addition to historic amounts of targeted help at the request of President Trump and his team, the package also included another round of direct checks to households, whether or not each household needs the help, whether or not their finances have changed dramatically this past year.

Yesterday, Secretary Mnuchin announced households should begin receiving these payments as early as today and this week. That is more good news to a lot of people.

After Congress and the administration finalized the bipartisan bill, the President expressed interest in further

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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expanding nontargeted direct payments. So to ensure the President was comfortable signing the bill into law, the Senate committed to beginning one process that would combine three of the President's priorities: larger direct checks, a repeal of section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, and further efforts to review the integrity of our democracy—three of the President's priorities in one Senate process. That was the commitment, and that is what happened yesterday when I introduced text reflecting just what the President had, in fact, requested.

Now House and Senate Democrats want something very different. As they tried to do countless times in the past 4 years, Speaker PELOSI and Leader SCHUMER are trying to pull a fast one on the President and the American people.

First of all, they are hoping everyone just forgets about election integrity and Big Tech. They are desperate to ignore those two parts of President Trump's requests, and you can draw your own conclusions. Even on the question of larger checks, the Democrats have tried to warp what President Trump actually laid out.

Look, it is no secret that Republicans have a diversity of views about the wisdom of borrowing hundreds of billions more to send out more nontargeted money, including to many households that have suffered no loss of income during the crisis. COVID-19 has not affected all households equally—not even close.

It is hardly clear that the Federal Government's top priority should be sending thousands of dollars to, for example, a childless couple making well into six figures who have been comfortably teleworking all year. Our duty is to help get help to the people who actually need help, like we did, to a historic degree, just 4 days ago.

But above and beyond that discussion, the Democratic leaders have broken from what President Trump proposed. They quietly changed this proposal in an attempt to let wealthy households suck up even more money. Speaker PELOSI structured her bill so that a family of four would have to earn more than \$300,000 in order not—not to qualify for more cash. A family of three could pull in \$250,000 per year—a quarter of a million dollars—and still qualify for some money.

Democratic leaders want to call this scheme “survival checks.” Only my friends Speaker PELOSI and the Democratic leader could look at households in New York and California who make \$300,000, in households where nobody has been laid off, where earnings have not even dropped during the past year, and conclude these rich constituents of theirs need “survival checks” financed by taxpayer dollars and borrowed money.

Everyone sees the game here. These are the same Democrats who proudly blocked the entire aid package for months because they tried to hold out

their special tax cuts for rich people in rich States. Now they say it is a matter of survival to send another boatload of cash to people making \$300,000, regardless of whether they have experienced any disruption at all this past year.

Even the liberal Washington Post today is laughing at the political left for demanding more huge giveaways with no relationship to actual need. Here is what the Washington Post wrote: “Especially wrongheaded . . . is the progressive left, spearheaded by Sen. BERNIE SANDERS . . . who depicts the \$2,000 as aid to ‘desperate’ Americans despite the huge amounts destined for perfectly comfortable families.”

That is from the editors of the Washington Post.

The Wall Street Journal, usually their opposite number, actually agrees. These nontargeted “checks are unnecessary,” and struggling households can access targeted support like “expanded jobless benefits, food stamps, child-care subsidies and much more.”

The liberal economist Larry Summers, President Clinton's Treasury Secretary and President Obama's NEC Director, says: “There is no good economic argument” for universal \$2,000 checks at this moment. He points out the CARES Act and the brandnew law will already have boosted overall household income, relative to the economy, back to its prepandemic levels, if not higher.

If specific struggling households need still more help after the huge, historic package that was just signed into law 4 days ago has taken effect, then what they will need is smart, targeted aid, not another firehose of borrowed money that encompasses other people who are doing just fine.

So, in my view, colleagues like Senator CORNYN and Senator TOOMEY have pointed this out persuasively. But, more broadly, here is the deal. The Senate is not going to split apart the three issues that President Trump linked together just because Democrats are afraid to address two of them. The Senate is not going to be bullied into rushing out more borrowed money into the hands of the Democrats' rich friends who don't need the help.

We just approved almost a trillion dollars in aid a few days ago. It struck a balance between broad support for all kinds of households and a lot more targeted relief for those who need help the most.

We are going to stay smart; we are going to stay focused; and we are going to continue delivering on the needs for our Nation.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

JUST AND UNIFYING SOLUTIONS TO INVIGORATE COMMUNITIES EVERYWHERE ACT OF 2020—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 480, S. 3985.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows: Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 480, S. 3985, a bill to improve and reform policing practices, accountability and transparency.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 3985 AND H.R. 9051

Mr. MCCONNELL. I understand there are two bills at the desk due a second reading en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bills by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 5085) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to increase the additional 2020 recovery rebates, to repeal section 230 of the Communications Act of 1934, and for other purposes;

A 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.

Mr. MCCONNELL. In order to place the bills on the calendar under provision of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

ELECTORAL COLLEGE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I was prepared this afternoon to speak about the business the Senate must address, and I will do that, but, first, I must respond to the recent announcement by the junior Senator of Missouri that he intends to contest the certified votes of the electoral college when Congress meets to count those votes next week. The process for electing American Presidents is provided in our Constitution and laws.

The process has been followed fully, fairly. The results have been duly certified by the Governors of the States, and they have been reviewed and confirmed by the courts many times over. The result is that Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS won the election by overwhelming margins in both the popular vote and the electoral vote.

The Biden-Harris ticket received more than 81 million votes, more than any ticket in American history. That was over 7 million more votes than Trump-Pence. The Biden-Harris ticket won the electoral college 306 to 232, the very same total that President Trump called a landslide for himself then just 4 years ago.

Since the election process, President Trump and his acolytes have lost more than 50 lawsuits, falsely claiming fraud or other irregularities in the conduct of the 2020 election, including the unanimous decision by the Supreme Court to dismiss a lawsuit brought by the attorney general of Texas and more than half the Republican Members of the House.

Today, we heard from the junior Senator from Missouri that he intends to object to the election results, particularly in Pennsylvania—a State where