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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Sunday, January 3, 2021, at 10 a.m.

Senate

FRIDAY, JANUARY 1, 2021

The Senate met at 12 noon 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.

Sovereign Lord, we thank You for the dawning of a New Year, for the promise of fresh starts and fertile opportunities. We sing Your praises and will not keep silent for You are God forever. We see changes and decay all around us, but You are God forever. Although the wrong so often seems strong, You are God forever.

Mighty One, abide in this Chamber to inspire and empower our lawmakers to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies. May our Senators strive to permit their thoughts, words, and actions to please You.

Oh God, our refuge and redeemer, You are God forever. 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. KENNEDY). The majority leader is recognized.

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 senior assistant 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

The majority leader.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, first I want to wish all my fellow Senators and our staff colleagues here in the Capitol a happy and healthy new year. In particular, I would like to extend our gratitude to the Capitol Police, offices of the Secretary of the Senate and the Sergeant at Arms, and the many other staff who have gone above and beyond to help us attend to important business this holiday season.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Today, by the grace of God, the genius of science, and the resilience of the American people,

we appear to have a bright 2021 on the horizon. Our great Nation is poised to defeat this pandemic in the months ahead through safe and effective vaccines.

The pace of the American people's economic recovery has already beaten expectations and predictions. Thanks to the ingenuity of our citizens and historic relief policies from Congress, overall personal income in our country is already higher now than it was prior to the pandemic.

Now, the country needs more support, and the significant remaining pain is not—I repeat, not—evenly distributed, far from it. So we just enacted another historic \$900 billion rescue package to get vaccines distributed, to keep small businesses alive, and to get a whole lot more targeted support to struggling people who actually need it. From multiple kinds of extra Federal unemployment benefits to nutrition assistance, rental assistance, direct cash, and beyond.

This latest, huge, historic package was just signed into law less than 1 week ago. It is beginning to take effect right now. Many households have already received the latest round of direct cash, or will receive it very soon, to help them turn the page into this brand new year.

While this huge new aid package takes effect, a bipartisan, common-sense caucus in both Chambers is not keen to let Speaker PELOSI and Senator SANDERS rush to borrow half a trillion dollars for universal cash giveaways, regardless of need. A huge chunk would essentially be socialism for rich people—money flowing to

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



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households earning well into six figures who did not lose any jobs or income last year.

The House Democrats' bill is just simply not the right approach. That is what editorial pages across the political spectrum say. That is what even liberal economists say. And that is what common sense tells us.

Here is what the Senate is focused on: completing the annual Defense legislation that looks after our brave men and women who volunteer to wear the uniform. We passed this legislation 59 years in a row and, one way or another, we are going to complete the 60th annual NDAA and pass it into law before this Congress concludes on Sunday.

It is a serious responsibility, but it is also a tremendous opportunity to direct our national security priorities to reflect the resolve of the American people and the evolving threats to their safety at home and abroad. It is our chance to recommit to research and development so that our 21st century military is equipped to outmatch any adversary. It is our chance to ensure that we keep pace with competitors like Russia and China. It is our chance to remind brave servicemembers and their families that we have their backs with facilities, resources, and support benefiting the finest fighting forces in the world.

Over the past year, our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee have made sure the legislation delivers for our troops and for our Nation. Now it is time for us to deliver this bill.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— H.R. 9051

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, well, I can't remember the last time the Senate convened on New Year's Day. I want to take this opportunity to wish all of my colleagues a happy new year. I want to thank the staff for having to come into work on New Year's Day, and I want to bid good riddance to 2020.

There can be no question that last year was a horrible year—as they have said in Britain, an “annus horribilis.” But as we begin the first year of this new decade, preparing to inaugurate a new President and inoculate the country against this virus, the American people have reason to hope.

The Senate can start off this new year by adding to that sense of hope by sending \$2,000 checks to struggling American families. The Senate can start off 2021 by really helping the American people. We can start off 2021 by sending \$2,000 checks to struggling American families to carry them through the darkest and final days of this pandemic.

The votes today, on this uncommon New Year's Day session, could be the

last of the 116th Congress. That means that today is the last chance to take up and pass the House bill to provide \$2,000 checks to the American people. If the Senate does not take action today, \$2,000 checks will not become law before the end of Congress, and they will know that Leader MCCONNELL and the Republican majority have prevented them from getting the checks, plain and simple.

This is the last chance—the last chance for a mother in Nashville, \$4,000 behind on the rent, whose water was shut off earlier this month. This is the last chance—the last chance for the medical receptionist in Macomb, \$2,100 behind on the rent, whose electricity was shut off in September, on her son's third day of virtual kindergarten. The kid can't go to school. This is the last chance for 12 million Americans who have fallen nearly \$6,000 behind on rent and utility or the 26 million Americans who have had trouble putting food on the table—the last chance.

Make no mistake about it, \$600 has never been enough for them. This is the last chance to deliver \$2,000 before a new Congress is sworn in and the legislative process must start all over again.

For once, we have progressive Democrats, conservative Republicans, the President himself, and not to mention the majority—the vast majority—of the American people singing from the same songbook in support of these checks. We have a bill that has already passed the House.

All we are asking for is a simple vote in the Senate. I, for one, am confident it would pass if given the chance, and that may be the real reason that Leader MCCONNELL and the Republicans don't want to bring it up. We have had many opportunities this week to vote on the measure. Senator MCCONNELL has blocked every one of them.

We have offered to vote on whatever unrelated issues the Republican leader says he wants to vote on, so long as we can get a clean vote on the House bill to provide \$2,000 checks—the only way to actually make it happen in this year, in this session of Congress. That offer still stands. That offer still stands. But give us a vote. Give us a vote on the House bill.

It is OK if the Republican leader opposes checks. It is OK if the majority of Republican Senators oppose the checks. They can make their case to the American people and oppose the bill, but let us vote. It is OK if the Republican leader wants to call direct assistance to American people “poorly targeted” and “socialism for the rich,” even after he drove the passage of a \$2 trillion across-the-board reduction in corporate taxes. But give us a vote. Make the argument. Let the Senate work its will.

To me, it seems like the Republican leader is afraid to schedule a vote on \$2,000 checks because he is afraid it will pass. What a terrifying thought that struggling Americans would get some

money to feed their families, pay the rent, and get on with their lives; pay the utility bill of that kindergarten kid or third grade kid who can't even go to school because his family can't afford electricity.

We have a chance—a chance at the end of this painful year and at the beginning of a new one—to give Americans reason for hope in 2021. The only thing standing in the way right now is Leader MCCONNELL and the Republican Senate majority.

In a moment, I will ask consent for the final time that the Senate set a time for a vote on the House bill to provide \$2,000 checks. I have done it every day this week. This is it, the last chance for the 116th Congress to pass \$2,000 checks and to say to regular Americans: “Help is on the way.”

Let's have a vote. Let's have a vote. Pass this bill. There is no better way to usher in the new year.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 645, H.R. 9051, a bill to increase recovery rebate amounts to \$2,000 per individuals; that the bill be read a third time and the Senate vote on passage; and if passed, that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The assistant majority leader.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, reserving the right to object—and let me say, through the Chair, thank you to the Senator from New York and the Senator from Vermont, the Senator from Illinois, and others here for the opportunity to spend New Year's with them. I know that has always been something that has been on my bucket list—maybe not on top of the bucket list. But, nevertheless, thank you for that opportunity. It does feel like a long time ago, but it was, actually, only—if you can believe this—the beginning of last week when both sides of the aisle and both sides of the Capitol came together to pass a targeted, responsible, and necessary relief package, which became law with overwhelming bipartisan support. It passed here in the Senate 92 to 6. Members on both sides of the aisle, myself included, have demonstrated that we are willing to dedicate resources to those who are struggling during this pandemic.

The problem with what is being put forward—the House-passed CASH Act—is that it is not targeted to help those who are the most in need. I will just point out that it is not just our saying that; even the Washington Post editorial board called it “one last bad idea” for 2020. It singled out as “especially wrongheaded” the efforts of the progressive left to depict this “as aid to ‘desperate’ Americans despite the huge amounts”—this is the Washington Post's term—“destined for perfectly comfortable families.”