

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.”

As others here on the floor have noted, the bill would provide a payment to a family of five making up to \$350,000. A family of five making \$250,000 would receive a \$5,000 benefit. Just to put that in perspective, that is more than was paid to a middle-class family of five under the CARES Act that we passed back in March. In addition, the bill would add an additional \$463 billion—nearly half a trillion dollars—to the annual debt.

Again, it is all money we have to borrow. All of this is money we have to borrow, and that is more than the first two economic impact payments combined. Put that in perspective, and think of other ways you could use that amount of money. The truth is that those types of sums could potentially be spent in many more targeted ways, but our colleagues on the Democratic side don't even want to debate some of those alternatives.

Allowing small businesses a second draw from the Paycheck Protection Program would cost, approximately, \$285 billion. For the cost of the CASH Act, we could do another round of assistance to help small businesses keep their employees on the payrolls and still have almost \$200 billion left over. The expanded unemployment benefits—signed into law last week—will cost approximately \$120 billion for 11 additional weeks. That means, for the same cost as this proposal, we could provide an additional 40 weeks—10 months—of enhanced unemployment insurance benefits to those who have lost their jobs.

This is simply not targeted relief for the people who need it the most, and those who say that we should just vote on this flawed House bill conveniently leave out the fact that they do not want us to amend it to make it better in order to deliver more assistance to the people who are hurting the most.

Again, I will just point out one last time that it has been less than a week, really, since the Senate voted and the President signed into law a proposal negotiated, literally, over months. Every fine point of that proposal was negotiated, and it was signed into law to provide targeted, fiscally responsible assistance to the people of this country who need it the most. This proposal is a shotgun approach, where a rifle makes a lot more sense.

If you really want to help people who need this the most, at a time when we are running a \$26 trillion debt and are borrowing every penny that we are making available to do this, we ought to sit down and figure out how to do it in the most efficient, effective, targeted way possible. This, absolutely, does not do that. When you have a family who is making \$350,000 a year in this country getting up to thousands of dollars of payments and a family making \$250,000 a year in this country getting, under this proposal, a \$5,000 check, I would argue that it is not targeted, that it is not fiscally responsible, that it is not efficient, and that

it is not an effective way to spend the American taxpayers' dollars.

Let's help the people who need it the most. We just passed and signed into law a proposal that does that. I think many of us on this side of the aisle are willing to look at other ideas and things that we could do that would help these people more, but this is certainly not it, so I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The majority—excuse me. The Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Someday soon.

(Laughter.)

Mr. President, the only thing I would say, through the Chair, to my friend from South Dakota is that the many proposals he proposed as alternatives to our proposal are those to which the Republican majority objected when we had our negotiations on the CARES bill. We believe this can be in addition to the expansion of unemployment insurance and other things. Given the state of the economy, that is what is needed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—
H.R. 9051 AND S. 5085

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, let me say to my friend, Senator THUNE, that I certainly concur with you as to what a pleasure it is to be spending New Year's Day with you and our colleagues. It is exactly what I, I know, and every other Member here wanted to do, but here we are because we have to be here. We are here because, back home in my State and all over this country, millions and millions of families are struggling to put food on the table. They are struggling to pay their rent. They are struggling to come up with the money they need to go to the doctor.

This hits me, in a sense, in a personal way. The other day, I received a letter from a colleague of mine in Burlington, VT, where I live—the largest city in the State of Vermont, all of 40,000 people. He wrote to me, reporting on a food drive in Burlington, VT, where I live:

Over 30 volunteers showed up to the Champlain School to help bag groceries and to hand them out to those who came out. Unfortunately, there was not nearly enough donated food to provide a bag to everyone who showed up despite us planning on an increased need. The line of cars filled the parking lot, wrapped around the school, and went out onto the main road for half a mile. This represented a major up-tick for the October event that we were involved in.

This was in Burlington, VT, with hundreds of cars lining up for emergency food and the volunteers not having enough food to distribute. They had to say to the families who were trying to feed their kids: Sorry. We do not have enough food.

So what we are doing today is very simple, and that is that Senator

THUNE, Senator MCCONNELL, and others have raised objection to the House-passed bill. In the U.S. Senate, when we have differences of opinion, what we should be doing is debating that bill. So all that Senator SCHUMER is asking and all that I am asking is simple: Bring the bill to the floor. We are not even asking you to vote for it. Bring the bill to the floor. On top of everything else, we need 60 votes to pass it—60 votes. Can we get 60 votes? I don't know. I think virtually all of the 48 Democrats will vote for it.

It means, Senator THUNE, that we need 12 Republicans. I gather we have one right here who indicated he would vote for it, and five or six others have been public about saying they will vote for it. Will we get the rest? I don't know. You don't know. What is the problem with giving Members of the U.S. Senate the opportunity to vote on the legislation? When we have that debate, you can come up and raise all of your objections, and we can debate it.

Now, I heard Senator THUNE and Senator MCCONNELL before him talk about this bill being socialism for the rich, which I have to tell you I find somewhat hysterical because that is an issue I have been talking about for many, many years. I am very delighted that my conservative Republican friends now recognize that we do have socialism for the rich. To paraphrase Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he said we live in a society where we have socialism for the rich and rugged individualism for the poor. King was right.

Despite what my Republican colleagues are saying, the truth is that, according to the Tax Policy Center, the top 5 percent of Americans—the wealthiest people in our country—would receive less than 1 percent of the benefits of these direct payments—less than 1 percent. It doesn't sound, to me, like too much socialism for the rich.

While we are on the subject of socialism for the rich, which my Republican friends have suddenly become very concerned about, let me talk about the Trump tax proposal that was pushed very hard by Senator MCCONNELL and the Republican leadership and that, I think, every Republican voted for. Do you want to talk about socialism for the rich? It is not the bill that puts \$2,000 into working-class hands all over this country. That isn't socialism for the rich. This is socialism for the rich. In that bill, Amazon—oh, by the way, I must say this, if I may: We were quoting the liberal Washington Post, owned by Jeff Bezos—the wealthiest guy in the world. So here is Jeff Bezos' company, Amazon, and they received a tax rebate. They paid nothing in 2018 in Federal taxes. That is a corrupt tax system to begin with, but then, on top of that, they received \$129 million as a tax rebate.

That, Senator THUNE, is socialism for the rich. In fact, this particular company is owned by the richest guy in the world, and you gave him a \$129 million rebate, but it is not just Amazon.