

get in here and overspend without targeting, without direction, you slow the recovery. We know that. We watched it. We lived through it.

They are going to need a better answer than “because we say so,” “because this is what we are going to do,” because the people understand that the Federal deficit was historically large even before the pandemic. They know how debt works and that a big deficit means more of that Federal debt.

They also know that who holds that debt matters and that we are beholden, right now, to China, to OPEC, for trillions of dollars in that debt.

Scale that down for a minute. When that same thing happens to one of these small businesses, when they max their credit line, if they fall behind in their payroll, they can't plan for the future, they can't plan for emergencies, and they can't invest in their own success.

The same concepts apply to the Federal budget. You cannot tax and spend your way to prosperity. You have to have economic growth.

So I ask my colleagues: Why are you making decisions that are going to slow the recovery and slow the economic growth?

The Democrats' approach to planning for the future might sound good in theory, it might sound good in hypotheticals, but real-life economics is not. Future pandemics are not. The need to innovate and stay competitive in the warfighting domain is not. Those are real-life issues.

The Democrats have been so aggressive this past couple of weeks, and President Biden, in taking out the eraser and trying to erase 4 years of productive policy that benefited millions of Americans, and the people are starting to wonder what else they are going to throw away in favor of a very autocratic, authoritarian, empty vision for our Nation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be able to finish my remarks before the vote.

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

NOMINATION OF DENIS RICHARD McDONOUGH

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I rise to support the nomination of Denis McDonough to be Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Mr. McDonough brings to this position a wealth of experience as a national security professional and White House Chief of Staff. He knows how to solve problems, break down bureaucratic silos, and deliver results.

As the VA Secretary, Mr. McDonough will face a host of new challenges brought on by COVID-19. I appreciate his commitment to addressing these issues head-on, including the need to lead an aggressive effort to vaccinate veterans and their healthcare providers, ensure that claims are processed in a timely man-

ner, and review the proposed rule on VA home loans exiting COVID-19 forbearance.

In addition to the immediate challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, I know that one of Mr. McDonough's priorities is to tackle the structural needs of the VA. I am also pleased that Mr. McDonough has already promised to defend the VA healthcare system against efforts at privatization. Additionally, I am grateful for Mr. McDonough's assurances that he will act assertively to create a culture of zero tolerance toward sexual harassment and assault in the Department. This is of particular importance after a VA inspector general's report found that his predecessor engaged in active measures to discredit a congressional staffer who reported that she was sexually assaulted at a VA medical center. We must ensure that our women veterans are treated with dignity and respect at all VA facilities.

I also want to applaud Mr. McDonough's pledge to make ending veteran homelessness a national priority. My home State of Maryland has been a national leader in this effort. Montgomery County, MD, effectively ended veteran homelessness in 2015, and the Veterans Village in Perryville is creating a model for using VASH vouchers to build supportive communities that house and provide services to homeless veterans. The State is also moving forward with an aggressive effort to build a second veterans home in Sykesville. This is a moral imperative, and Maryland has been leading the way. I trust that we will have the same level of urgency from the VA under Secretary McDonough, and I look forward to continuing the partnership on these efforts.

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides crucial services, care, and peace of mind for our Nation's 18 million veterans. The VA has more to do to make sure that the care that it provides is worthy of those who served our Nation. I believe that Mr. McDonough's experience has prepared him well to continue that effort, and I support his nomination.

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I rise today in support of Denis McDonough. Denis is President Biden's choice to lead the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Though there is a great political divide in our Nation, I believe that veterans across the country and Members on both sides of the aisle are united by a very basic expectation: that the next VA Secretary be an individual of honesty, integrity, and vision. This individual must listen to veterans and put their well-being above all else.

Denis McDonough has demonstrated that he is, unequivocally, the man for this job. And to be clear, this is not an easy job. But Denis is used to making tough calls. He has shown an exemplary commitment to public service and a strong willingness to do right by those who have worn the uniform and sacrificed on behalf of our liberties.

As White House Chief of Staff, he quickly earned a reputation for getting the job done, working across Federal Agencies, and finding common ground. For the last 20 years, he has played a key role in many decisions surrounding sending our military men and women to war and knows that taking care of these folks when they return home is a cost of war and a shared responsibility.

Veterans need someone like Denis fighting in their corner, but the truth is there is simply too much at stake.

With more than 400,000 Americans dying from COVID-19 in less than a year, the VA Secretary's top responsibility will be ensuring that the Department has everything it needs—from vaccines to personal protective equipment, to additional healthcare and supportive services—to care for veterans and to protect the VA's employees.

He will be held accountable when it comes to swiftly implementing a number of historic reforms, from the John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act, a bill that is out-of-box thinking to help our veterans in the mental health challenges and suicides that have resulted, to the Deborah Sampson Act, an act to help the largest or the fastest growing group of veterans, our women veterans, have access to care, to the expansion of presumptive coverage for thousands of additional Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange and overdue coverage for our Vietnam veterans—not to mention a myriad of other critical priorities that have been in the works for years and need serious attention, such as the Caregivers Program and the electronic health record modernization effort.

But Denis is fully prepared to take on these responsibilities. He is ready to build the trust of our Nation's servicemembers, veterans, and their families, and treat them with the respect that they have earned.

Now more than ever, veterans need a strong leader who will prioritize delivering timely and quality healthcare and benefits over making political points. I am confident that, as VA Secretary, Denis will be squarely focused on serving these needs.

I ask my colleagues to join me today in confirming him to this role, where I have no doubt that he will be successful. Our Nation's veterans are counting on us.

Now, unfortunately, my friend and colleague, the ranking member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, JERRY MORAN, couldn't make it back in time for this nomination due to bad weather and flight delays. But he was planning on voting to advance this nomination today because he believes Denis McDonough is someone who shares his commitment to taking care of our veterans.

With that, I yield.

VOTE ON McDONOUGH NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the McDonough nomination?

Mr. TESTER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

Further, if present and voting, The Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) would have voted "yea."; and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY) would have voted "yea."

The result was announced—yeas 87, nays 7, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 55 Ex.]

YEAS—87

Baldwin	Hassan	Reed
Bennet	Heinrich	Risch
Blackburn	Hickenlooper	Romney
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rosen
Blunt	Hoeven	Rounds
Booker	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Boozman	Johnson	Sanders
Braun	Kaine	Sasse
Brown	Kelly	Schatz
Cantwell	Kennedy	Schumer
Capito	King	Scott (SC)
Cardin	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Carper	Lankford	Shelby
Casey	Leahy	Sinema
Cassidy	Lee	Smith
Collins	Lujan	Stabenow
Coons	Lummis	Sullivan
Cornyn	Manchin	Tester
Cortez Masto	Markey	Thune
Cramer	McConnell	Tillis
Crapo	Menendez	Tuberville
Daines	Merkley	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Murkowski	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Feinstein	Murray	Warren
Fischer	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Padilla	Wicker
Graham	Peters	Wyden
Grassley	Portman	Young

NAYS—7

Cotton	Hagerty	Scott (FL)
Cruz	Hawley	
Ernst	Marshall	

NOT VOTING—6

Barrasso	Inhofe	Paul
Burr	Moran	Toomey

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The Senator from Ohio.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

The Senator from Ohio.

(At the request of Mr. TESTER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

CONFIRMATION OF DENIS RICHARD McDONOUGH

• Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I would like to speak in support of confirming Denis McDonough to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Mr. McDonough has demonstrated his dedication to public service over the last 25 years and has assured me that he will bring that same dedication to the Department of Veterans Affairs in its mission to serve our veterans.

He has experience leading and implementing policy across the Federal Government and has earned a reputation for being able to make government work better. Although he is not a veteran, he has made his case that he is personally devoted to serving veterans and seeing them achieve success, and it is my belief that he is sincere in that assertion.

Mr. McDonough testified that he appreciates the clear roles of Congress in passing law and of the executive branch in executing them. He has committed to me and to our committee that he will faithfully implement critical VA reforms in line with congressional intent, and I intend to hold him accountable for the decisions and actions he makes as Secretary.

We have made significant progress with the VA to provide permanent veterans' choice in access to care, mental health and suicide prevention, employee accountability, and improved benefits for veterans, their dependents, and survivors. We cannot backtrack on this progress, and the next VA Secretary must be ready on day one to continue building on this success.

I will support Mr. McDonough's confirmation and hold him to his commitment to work with our committee and with our veteran stakeholders to deliver the improved benefits and services Congress has legislated. •

REMEMBERING RICHARD THORNBURGH

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, today I want to pay tribute to the late Richard L. Thornburgh, a former Pennsylvania Governor and former U.S. Attorney General. Dick Thornburgh was also a hero to the disability community for his longstanding advocacy for the rights and self-determination of people with disabilities.

Born in Pittsburgh on July 16, 1932, Dick received an undergraduate degree from Yale University and a law degree from the University of Pittsburgh Law School before going into private practice.

In 1969, President Richard Nixon appointed Dick as the U.S. attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania, and in 1975, President Gerald Ford appointed him to serve as the Assistant

Attorney General for the Justice Department's Criminal Division. Two years later, he returned to Pennsylvania.

In 1978, Dick was elected Governor of Pennsylvania and was reelected in 1982, becoming the first Republican to serve two successive terms as Governor of the Commonwealth.

During his time in office, Governor Thornburgh provided a steady hand and a calm demeanor. Most notably, he led Pennsylvania through the Three Mile Island crisis, America's worst nuclear meltdown. He took charge of the crisis and in so doing won praise from President Jimmy Carter and from Pennsylvanians for how he handled the potential disaster. At the time of the Three Mile Island Crisis, Governor Thornburgh said:

You have to reassure people. You have to go before the cameras and microphones and tell them what you know and what you don't. You have to stop the rumors and, of course, you have to make decisions. There isn't any Republican or Democratic way to deal with a nuclear crisis. Nobody has ever had to deal with this kind of accident before.

In 1988, President Ronald Reagan nominated Governor Thornburgh to be the U.S. Attorney General, a position in which he served until 1991. He resigned in 1991 to run for the U.S. Senate in Pennsylvania following the tragic death of Senator John Heinz in a plane crash. Governor Thornburgh lost the Senate election to Harris Wofford, who had been appointed to the vacancy 6 months before the 1991 election.

Following his Senate run, Governor Thornburgh served a 1-year appointment as Under-Secretary General at the United Nations at the request of President George H.W. Bush. In that role, he sought to bring reform, transparency, and accountability to the United Nations.

After his service at the United Nations, Governor Thornburgh returned to private practice but would continue to serve in advisory roles at the State and Federal level, imparting his wisdom and experience in a number of different arenas.

Of his many contributions to public life, Governor Thornburgh was especially respected in the disability rights community for his tireless advocacy for the rights and self-determination of people with disabilities.

Governor Thornburgh's son, Peter, was injured in a car accident in 1960, a tragic accident that also killed Thornburgh's wife, Ginny Hooton. The accident left Peter Thornburgh, then just 4 months of age, with a significant brain injury that caused physical and intellectual disabilities. Governor Thornburgh is quoted as saying that the accident "made him think about what he could do with his life to contribute to the world."

As Attorney General in Bush Administration, Dick Thornburgh helped to shepherd the Americans with Disabilities Act, ADA, through Congress during a most critical period in 1989. On