[Rollcall Vote No. 386 Ex.]

YEAS—73

Baldwin	Grassley	Reed
Barrasso	Hassan	Risch
Bennet	Heinrich	Romney
Blackburn	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rounds
Blunt	Hoeven	Sanders
Booker	Johnson	Schatz
Brown	Kaine	Schumer
Burr	Kelly	Scott (SC)
Cantwell	King	Shaheen
Capito	Klobuchar	Sinema
Cardin	Leahy	Smith
Carper	Luján	Stabenow
Casey	Manchin	Tester
Collins	Markey	Tillis
Coons	McConnell	Toomey
Cornyn	Menendez	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warner
Cramer	Murkowski	Warnock
Crapo	Murphy	Warren
Duckworth	Murray	Whitehouse
Durbin	Ossoff	Wyden
Fischer	Padilla	Young
Gillibrand	Peters	
Graham	Portman	

NAYS—26

Boozman	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Braun	Inhofe	Sasse
Cassidy	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Cotton	Lankford	Shelby
Cruz	Lee	Sullivan
Daines	Lummis	Thune
Ernst	Marshall	Tuberville
Hagerty	Moran	Wicker
Hawley	Paul	

NOT VOTING—1

Feinstein

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). 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.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the next nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Monica P. Medina, of Maryland, to be Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:27 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. OSSOFF).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I come to the floor to offer some brief remarks today in the wake of the Armed Services Committee hearing today on the evacuation of Afghanistan and the end to U.S. troop presence there. I watched it with some interest. I watched it knowing that three out of four Americans support President Biden's decision to bring U.S. troops home from Afghanistan.

We learned some new things today in the hearing. Others were confirmed. First, we learned, once again, of the extraordinary bravery and capability of our diplomats and our soldiers, who worked under incredibly difficult conditions for a period of weeks to airlift almost 130,000 individuals out of Afghanistan. That is absolutely remarkable, especially given, as we heard today in testimony, that the goal at the outset, in the best case scenario, was to get 60 to 70 to 80,000 people out. In the end, the United States of America, our military and our diplomats, got 130,000 people out.

We heard, also, about the impossible position that President Biden inherited; that there was a commitment made to withdraw American troops by President Trump but no plan with which to do it safely. We heard about how the Doha agreement decreased the readiness of the Afghan forces, how it weakened their position internally.

We heard about the choice that faced President Biden when he came into office. We heard about the fact that, had we chosen to stay, we would have had to surge troops; that the Taliban, having gotten to the precipice of provincial capitals, would have engaged in a level of urban warfare that would have required the United States to increase our troop presence there in order to be able to stand up an effective resistance to the Taliban.

To the extent that Republicans view this as a political game and they were looking for points to be scored today, I guess the one point they feel they scored was an admission by the generals who testified that some of them had recommended staying in Afghanistan.

Now, I have tremendous respect for our generals. I think they get it right more than they get it wrong. They provide very able advice to the Commander in Chief. But for 20 years, in Afghanistan, our generals recommended staying, in the face of mounting evidence, year after year, that it was going to be impossible to be able to stand up an Afghan military that could protect the country and an Afghan Government that could govern the country. Our generals recommended staying—year after year after year, month after month after month—despite the fact that many analysts told us that as soon as we left and the Taliban took over, the Afghan Government and the military would fall.

Now, they did it because our military is bred to believe that anything is possible. It speaks, in some part, to the best of American military ethos, the idea that there is no obstacle that cannot be surmounted, that cannot be climbed by U.S. forces. But the task they were given by President after President was one that could not be carried out.

And to simply believe that because the general said ''stay another year'' or ''stay another 5 years,'' this Commander in Chief should have listened, despite the fact that it had been proven that the mission that we were given in that country was impossible, is to compound a mistake—an unnecessary mistake—that the United States engaged in for far, far too long.

And so my hope is that moving forward, this Congress and this Senate are going to engage in real oversight. There is no doubt the evacuation could have been done better. There is no doubt that, in a mission this complicated, the Biden team would have done things differently. But the real question is, Why did we stay in Afghanistan for 10 years too long? Why did we keep believing that we could train-up a military that would be capable of defending the country?

It is time that we have a deep inquiry in this Senate about the limits of American military power overseas and how badly misresourced we are when we spend 10 to 20 times as much money on military power as we do on other means of projecting American power.

It is also important for us to understand the cost of getting bogged down in places like Afghanistan and Iraq. It is not a coincidence that shortly after withdrawing from Afghanistan, we were able to announce this new partnership with Australia and Britain to better protect our mutual interests in the Pacific theater.

It is because, when the entirety of the U.S. defense and foreign policy infrastructure is so trained on unwinnable contests in far off places like Afghanistan, it doesn't allow us the capacity and the creativity to be able to design new systems and new structures with which to protect the country.

China celebrated every single year that we remain bogged down in Afghanistan. Russia celebrated every single year that we doubled down on that mistake. Now we have the ability to turn our attention to fights that truly matter.

We learned some things in the Armed Services Committee today. I think what we learned confirms that the decision that President Biden made to pull our troops out was the right one. It is a decision supported by the American people because it allows this country, finally, to focus on fights that are winnable in reality, not just on paper.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

If no one yields time, the time will be charged equally to both sides.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 2868

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, last night, Senate Republicans voted unanimously to make a default and a shutdown far more likely and in doing so, solidified themselves as the party of default, the party that says America does not pay its debts.

Now, despite yesterday's stunning display of obstruction, the fact remains

that we need to raise the debt ceiling, and in a few moments, I will offer a way forward for us to avoid causing unnecessary and catastrophic default on the debt.

Over the last 2 days, the Republican leader has repeatedly cited an instance in the mid-2000s during which Republicans held full control of the government and voted by themselves to increase the debt limit. Here is what he said: That is ''exactly the same situation we're in now.'' That is ''exactly the same situation we're in now.''

The Senate was able to raise the debt ceiling at that time because the then-Republican majority leader made a consent request to this body that cleared the way for the Senate to increase the debt limit by a majority threshold instead of requiring 60 votes to break a filibuster. The minority party, under this agreement, was able to vote no, which is what they claim they want to do, and the majority party was able to approve a debt limit extension and prevent a catastrophe.

So we are proposing the same thing today, the same thing the leader cited and said the situation is exactly the same. Simply allow for a simple majority threshold to raise the debt ceiling and avoid this needless catastrophe that Republicans have steered us toward. We are simply asking Senator MCCONNELL to live by his own example.

We have given the Republicans what they want, and now the ball is in their court. Let's see if Republicans truly want what they say they want. We are not asking them to vote yes. If Republicans want to vote to not pay the debts they helped incur, they can all vote no. We are just asking Republicans to get out of the way. Get out of the way when you are risking the full faith and credit of the United States to play a nasty political game.

We can bring this to a resolution today. Using the drawn-out and convoluted reconciliation process is far too risky—far too risky. Too many American families are at stake. Far better for us to solve this problem right here and right now.

Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that, at a time to be determined by the majority leader following consultation with the Republican leader, the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. 2868, a bill to suspend the debt limit, which was introduced earlier today; that there be 2 hours for debate equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the bill be considered read a third time and the Senate vote on the passage of the bill with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, my colleague wants to discuss precedence from a decade ago, but he and his colleagues have spent all year boasting that what Democrats are doing to the country and the economy is completely without precedent. I agree. What they are trying to do is completely without precedent. There is nothing normal—nothing normal—about Democrats using reconciliation multiple times to blow a $5.5 trillion hole in the deficit without a single vote from our side. Debt limit increases like the one we saw in 2006 were not—I repeat, not—precursors to a massive blowout reconciliation package that Republicans were just waiting to shove down Democrats' throats.

My colleague is trying hard to make this complicated. It is actually simple. I have said for more than 2 months that we will not help this unified Democratic government raise the debt ceiling. Democrats will not get bipartisan help borrowing money so they can immediately blow historic sums on a partisan taxing-and-spending spree.

The Democratic leader knew this request would fail. There is no chance—no chance—the Republican conference will go out of our way to help Democrats conserve their time and energy so they can resume ramming through partisan socialism as fast as possible. This Democratic government has spent months boasting about the radical transformation they are ramming through. They are proud of it. They have no standing whatsoever to ask 50 Republican Senators to make the process more convenient.

When the Democratic leader was recently in the minority, he made us file cloture on matters that weren't one-tenth this controversial. We had to invoke cloture on nominees who went on to be confirmed with literally zero votes in opposition. But now the Democratic leader wants us to skip that step on something this controversial? Of course, that is not going to happen.

All year long, Democrats have wanted to control government spending all on their own. They wanted to be in the position they are in right now. They requested from the Parliamentarian and won extra flexibility to redo reconciliation. So, if Democrats want to use fast-tracked, party-line processes to spend trillions of dollars and transform the country, they will have to use the same tool to raise the debt ceiling.

Now, here is what Republicans will do: For the sake of the full faith and credit of our country, I am about to propose a different consent, one that will allow Democrats to start the budget process they will need to use to raise the debt ceiling. Our Democratic colleagues will need to do this alone, but I will propose an agreement to ensure the process can begin as soon as Democrats accept that this is the path they need to take.

Therefore, Mr. President, I ask the Senate to modify the request that has been made by the majority leader so that, in lieu of this proposal, if the Budget Committee reports out a 304 budget resolution with instructions to raise the debt limit or is discharged from consideration of such resolution, the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the majority leader so modify his request?

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, the Republican leader has offered virtually nothing. He keeps the same risky process in place. He is totally doing a 180-degree turn from what he has offered time and again. The Democrats vote yes without any Republican help, but he refuses to do that. He refuses to do that. Our proposal is fair. Our proposal is not risky, the way the Republican leader's is, and his doesn't change a darned thing.

Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the original request?

Mr. MCCONNELL. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Washington.

DEBT CEILING

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, Senate Democrats just gave Republicans yet another opportunity to do the right thing—to make sure the U.S. Government pays its bills, like every working family in our country does.

Now, Senate Republicans have acknowledged that, even though default would be catastrophic for our economy, they would not vote to prevent it—no Republican votes or help to prevent an economic catastrophe. Now they have kicked their brinksmanship up another notch by blocking Democrats—Democrats only—from voting to avoid default with a purely Democratic vote.

This makes no sense if you truly care about our workers, about our families, about our hard-won economic recovery. It only makes sense if their goal is economic sabotage—if they are so willing to put politics first that you put the American economy on the line. That is, apparently, what the Republican Party stands for today until proven otherwise: economic sabotage and politics first, no matter who gets hurt.

This is a disgrace. It is an embarrassment. But it is not going to stop Democrats from fighting to protect our economy from the devastating consequences of default, because let me be clear: Republicans may think this is some obscure fight right now, but it will not be if it hits Americans' bank accounts, and they are fooling themselves if they think people won't know who is responsible.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, suspending the debt ceiling is not about generating new spending. It is about making sure the government can pay for our spending. Since 1960, Congress has done this. It has raised the debt ceiling approximately 80 times. It is not unusual; it is not uncommon; it is not unacceptable. What is unacceptable is that our colleagues won't even allow us to do it.