LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 312.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert Luis Santos, of Texas, to be Director of the Census for a term expiring December 31, 2026. (Reappointment).

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 312, Robert Luis Santos, of Texas, to be Director of the Census for a term expiring December 31, 2026. (Reappointment).

Charles E. Schumer, Chris Van Hollen, John Hickenlooper, Brian Schatz, Tina Smith, Jeff Merkley, Tammy Duckworth, Patrick J. Leahy, Christopher A. Coons, Sheldon Whitehouse, Ben Ray Luján, Christopher Murphy, Martin Heinrich, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Michael F. Bennet, Ron Wyden, Raphael Warnock.

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, since the earliest days of COVID–19, Washington Democrats have admitted they want to use the pandemic as the pretext to permanently transform our country. They hope to use the temporary crisis as a Trojan horse for permanent radical change. One of their massive, ideological goals is a huge series of disruptive changes to American families' childcare.

The story is like Democrats' long march toward socialized medicine: take an intimate area of American life, pile on a maze of new mandates, regulations, cost increases and subsidies, and push families out of the driver's seat so Washington can run their lives.

Not too long ago, the Democrats' promise that ''if you liked your healthcare plan, you could keep it'' was awarded the ''lie of the year.''

Now they want a sequel: If you like your childcare, you can keep your childcare.

Democrats want to sweep the first 5 years of children's lives into a new set of top-down, one-size-fits-all, Washington-knows-best regulations.

Their Big Government scheme would make childcare more expensive and use taxpayer money to subsidize only some families—those who structure their arrangements in ways that Democrats like. Other families would be left to fend for themselves, now in an even more inflated market.

Their bill would give Democrats and bureaucrats massive new authority they could use to shape curriculum and standards nationwide. If providers don't play along, they could be left out in the cold.

The Biden administration wants to insert itself into the most intimate family decisions and tell parents how to care for their toddlers. The entire scheme violates the basic principle of family fairness.

Speaker PELOSI suggested last week that she approves of one kind of family structure: ''Parents earning and children learning.''

She said Democrats want government programs to ''liberat[e]'' families so that both parents work full time.

Well, there are lots of families like that model, but other families prefer other models. Not everybody defines ''liberation'' the same way, yet Washington Democrats want Big Government to bless certain family arrangements and not others.

Has your family made a different set of sacrifices so a father or mother can parent full time?

Sorry, Democrats want to redistribute money away from your family to other households that may earn even more money.

Has your family built its whole life around a plan for a grandparent to provide in-home care?

Too bad. Grandma or Grandpa would have to fill out paperwork and apply for the bureaucrats' blessing or that family could be denied help also.

Democrats could easily end up taxing working-class families with a full-time parent in order to subsidize the arrangements of wealthier two-income households. They are steamrolling over family fairness, over families' choices and options, over the diversity of American families and their aspirations.

By the way, Democrats appear to want to change the law in ways that could force faith-based providers to put aside sincerely held religious beliefs.

Just look at who would be administering all this. One key player would be HHS Secretary Becerra—the partisan California lawyer who got famous by suing Catholic nuns for being too Catholic and crisis pregnancy centers for being pro-life—a hardcore culture warrior.

And this person is going to be the new national czar for early childhood?

Another key figure would be Secretary Cardona. You may recall, a few months back, Senate Republicans had to stop our Education Secretary from diverting funding for civics education towards woke propaganda that had been debunked by historians.

And this is the same Biden administration whose Attorney General just wrote an entire memo singling out concerned parents who speak up at their local school board meetings. Now they want to extend their Federal control over babies and toddlers as well.

Finally—get this—this tangled new entitlement would be so mind-bogglingly expensive that Democrats can't even put a long-term dollar amount on it. The estimate is that all this government meddling will cost $400 billion over just the first several years. After that, nobody really knows what the blank check will add up to.

Taxpayers are supposed to pony up a blank check for the privilege of having less control over family choices. I think the American people will take a pass.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. President, now, on another matter, each year, the National Defense Authorization Act represents the Senate's most consequential opportunity to help steer the course of defense and security policy. It is our chance to lay out our priorities for keeping America safe.

For the past 60 years, without exception, Senate majorities have done the job and passed this crucial bill on a bipartisan vote, but, this year, our Democratic majority is sleepwalking toward yet another preventable problem.

The process began with earnest deliberation among our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee. Chairman REED and Ranking Member INHOFE presided over extensive discussions. They adopted 143 bipartisan amendments, and the committee reported out a final bill by a margin of 23 to 3.

Our colleagues began a process that should end with broad support for clear, bipartisan priorities, like equipping us to keep up with China's military modernization and combat a new generation of terrorist threats, but the Democratic leader has left the NDAA trapped in limbo while Democrats toy with another reckless taxing-and-spending spree.

Neglecting the NDAA denies our Armed Forces the certainty they need, and it denies the Senate a debate about the most consequential national security issues. This is especially misguided in light of the Biden administration's erratic, rudderless approach to foreign policy.