

So the bottom line is Congress needs to act. The American people want Democrats and Republicans to come to an agreement on the things our country actually needs to make it through this crisis.

It won't be the last piece of legislation we pass, but we do need to do this next step, and we need to do it soon—as soon as possible.

It is time for our Democratic colleagues to realize the election is over and the only real people being hurt by their intransigence are the people they represent in their various States.

So it is time to start getting back to work for all the American people on a bipartisan piece of legislation and to quit the partisan games. I can't say it any more directly than that.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, this week, as we return to DC, we are going to resume consideration of the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act. Around DC we call it the NDAA. And before I get into discussing some of my priorities in this legislation, I want to encourage each and every one of my colleagues to carefully consider why we go through the lengthy process of drafting and reconciling this authorization. And we do this every single year.

The easy answer, of course, is that we have a duty to provide for our common defense and that of our allies and partners. But every year the media devotes most of their attention to how much money we have agreed to spend on the tools of war—the Chinook helicopters, the Virginia-class submarines, and the Reapers. They want to know about the flashy hardware and end up ignoring the people who are in the driver's seat.

Thousands of service men and women call Tennessee home, and when I accepted the role of Senator, I took on a special responsibility to look after and to take care of each and every one of them.

Their decision to serve came with necessary and serious lifestyle changes, both for themselves and for their families. Anyone who knows a servicemember knows that their lives are not their own. They go where they are told to go. They do the job they are told to do. They do it without hesitation because they have accepted that serving their country is more important than the autonomy they sacrificed when they put on that uniform and took their oath.

"Sacrifice" is the key word here because it applies not only to the servicemember, but it also applies to their family. This is why we spend so much time focusing on programs that make their lives as seamless as possible.

For example, this year, I continued work on military spouse license portability to make it easier for spouses who wish to continue working in their chosen field after they have changed locations, moved from one State to another, because they were told this was going to be their new duty station. We hope these spouses are able to continue their careers, to be fulfilled in their jobs and responsibilities. Last year, we established a pilot program for licensure reciprocity, and this year, we worked to increase funding for this very important program.

With my remaining time, I want to focus on our special operations community, especially the 5th Special Forces Group and the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment. They each call Fort Campbell their home.

For those who serve in these elite units, uncommon bravery is an everyday occurrence. They go to some of the worst places on the face of the Earth, to be surrounded by the most dangerous people alive, to do work that no one can ever know about and at a higher occupational tempo than any other aspect of our forces. Their operational tempo is unbelievable. The physical, spiritual, and psychological toll of that work and the stigma attached to it by those who do not understand its importance cannot be overstated. It is not a unique burden, but it is an especially heavy burden.

U.S. Special Operations Command knows this and has made taking care of the people behind this mission a priority. They created the Preservation of the Force and Families Program to support these warriors and their families, but, like any program of this nature, it requires continuous innovation and evolution to stay effective.

This year's Senate-passed NDAA reaffirms the importance of this initiative to both servicemembers and their families and improves human, psychological, spiritual, and social performance programs. It also requires a deeper study on new opportunities for special and incentive pay parity in order to increase retention of our valuable special operators.

This is only one aspect of an expansive piece of legislation, but it provides a useful reminder that every dollar—every single taxpayer dollar that we spend to defend the cause of freedom is gone to waste if we ignore the unique needs of the people fighting our battles for us. We have to put the emphasis on this human capital—on the individual, on their family.

This is one of those moments where it would be in everyone's best interest and our Nation's best interest to avoid playing politics with a very important policy—protecting these men and women in uniform, providing for the

common defense, providing the tools, the training, and the services they need in order to be ready to deploy, in order to take care of their families, in order to treat their wounds when they return—to care for the whole of the soldier.

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, delay isn't an inconvenience when it comes to the NDAA. It is not a bump in the road. When it comes to our Nation's defense spending, delay is dangerous. It is dangerous for our national defense, it is dangerous for the allies and the partners who depend on us, and it is dangerous for our troops and their families. It is my hope that we will be able to proceed with consideration of the final 2021 NDAA with that above all else at the forefront of our minds.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Taylor B. McNeel, of Mississippi, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Mississippi.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent now that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The 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 Taylor B. McNeel, of Mississippi, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Mississippi.

Mitch McConnell, Mike Crapo, Tom Cotton, David Perdue, Mike Rounds, Pat Roberts, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Kevin Cramer, Lindsey Graham, Thom Tillis, Tim Scott, James E. Risch, Michael B. Enzi, John Cornyn, Roger F. Wicker, John Thune, John Boozman.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Taylor B. McNeel, of Mississippi, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Mississippi, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Georgia (Mrs. LOEFFLER), the Senator from Arizona (Ms. MCSALLY), and the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH), the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ), the Senator from Arizona (Ms. SINEMA), the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN), and the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 52, nays 36, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 240 Ex.]

YEAS—52

Alexander	Ernst	Perdue
Barrasso	Fischer	Portman
Blackburn	Gardner	Risch
Blunt	Graham	Roberts
Boozman	Grassley	Romney
Braun	Hawley	Rounds
Burr	Hoeben	Sasse
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Scott (FL)
Cardin	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Cassidy	Jones	Shelby
Collins	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cornyn	Lankford	Thune
Cotton	Lee	Tillis
Cramer	Manchin	Toomey
Crapo	McConnell	Wicker
Cruz	Moran	Young
Daines	Murkowski	
Enzi	Paul	

NAYS—36

Baldwin	Feinstein	Peters
Bennet	Gillibrand	Reed
Blumenthal	Hassan	Rosen
Booker	Hirono	Schumer
Brown	Kaine	Shaheen
Cantwell	King	Smith
Carper	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Casey	Leahy	Tester
Coons	Markey	Udall
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Wyden

NOT VOTING—12

Harris	McSally	Schatz
Heinrich	Murray	Sinema
Inhofe	Rubio	Warren
Loeffler	Sanders	Whitehouse

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 52, the nays are 36.

The motion is agreed to.

The majority leader.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that, notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII,

the postcloture time on the McNeel nomination expire at 11 a.m. tomorrow and the Senate vote on confirmation of the nomination. I further ask that, if cloture is invoked on the Calabrese nomination, the postcloture time expire at 2:15 p.m. tomorrow and the Senate vote on confirmation of the nomination; finally, if any of the nominations are confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 905 and 906.

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

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that, if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nominations of Mark C. Christie, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for a term expiring June 30, 2025, and Allison Clements, of Ohio, to be a Member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for a term expiring June 30, 2024, en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. 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.

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

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Ms. HARRIS. Mr. President, I was absent, but had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 234, the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 862, Toby Crouse, of Kansas, to be United States District Judge for the District of Kansas.

I was absent, but had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 35, the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 862, Toby Crouse, of Kansas, to be United States District Judge for the District of Kansas.●

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO MADISON ALEXANDER

• Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I would like to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to Madison for her hard work as an intern in the Senate Republican Conference. I recognize her efforts and contributions to my office as well as to the State of Wyoming.

Madison is a native of Florida. She is a graduate of Samford University, where she studied journalism mass communications. She has demonstrated a strong work ethic, which has made her an invaluable asset to our office. The quality of her work is reflected in her great efforts over the last several months.

I want to thank Madison for the dedication she has shown while working for me and my staff. It was a pleasure to have her as part of our team. I know she will have continued success with all of her future endeavors. I wish her all my best on her next journey.●

TRIBUTE TO NICHOLAS GUTOWSKI

• Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I would like to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to Nicholas for his hard work as an intern in my Washington, DC, office. I recognize his efforts and contributions to my office as well as to the State of Wyoming.

Nicholas is a native of New Jersey. He is a student at American University, where he is studying international studies. He has demonstrated a strong work ethic, which has made him an invaluable asset to our office. The quality of his work is reflected in his great efforts over the last several months.

I want to thank Nicholas for the dedication he has shown while working for me and my staff. It is a pleasure to have him as part of our team. I know he will have continued success with all of his future endeavors. I wish him all my best on his journey.●

TRIBUTE TO PAYTON LANG

• Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I would like to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to Payton for her hard work as an intern in my Washington, DC, office. I recognize her efforts and contributions to my office as well as to the State of Wyoming.

Payton is a native of South Carolina. She is a graduate of Clemson University, where she studied political science and women's leadership. She