

have been done months ago: annual appropriations bills to keep our government running. We were ready on this side of the aisle to vote on those back in June and have a couple of amendments up or down. Republicans, in the majority, if they didn't like a Democratic amendment, they could vote it down. We could have done it back then. Now the deadline is this week, months later. We have to pass these bills before Congress adjourns this year so there is no disruption in our government, in our services during this difficult time in our country. It will only exacerbate the growing problems facing many Americans today. But our annual appropriations bills are no substitute for the significant investment we need to confront this national and international emergency. We need a comprehensive COVID relief bill.

It is time to get serious. Instead of flying off every weekend back home, stay here. Vote these things up or down. Bring up amendments on both sides of the aisle. Have an agreement on the amendments and vote them up or down, because time is wasted.

How many hours have we spent racing to confirm nomination after nomination at the expense of everything else, including dealing with the emergency of this pandemic, while COVID cases soar and more and more people succumb to this virus? How much more time will the Senate waste while American families and communities suffer? It is time for us to do our job. We are elected for 6-year terms. Let's stay here for 6 days during the week, if need be. Let's get it done. The American people are suffering enough. We shouldn't be adding to that strain by playing politics with these essential priorities.

I am hearing from Vermonters every day, worried about unemployment benefits, their children's education, their health or for that of their loved ones, about food security, about keeping their homes and paying their bills.

The Senate, when it has been at its best, has been the conscience of the Nation. It is long past time that we started acting like the conscience of the Nation. It has been 256 days since the Senate took meaningful action on this COVID epidemic. We shouldn't wait a day longer. Let's set everything else aside. Let's have votes on these programs. Let's vote up or down. This Senator is ready to do that.

I see the distinguished leader on the floor.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ERNST). The majority leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, we have reached the time of year when the Senate has more important outstanding business than we have days to complete it. Delivering for the American people will take focus, dexterity, and genuine bipartisanship. On govern-

ment funding, as I have said for weeks, it is my hope that our committees' work will bear fruit and a full-year funding package will come to the floor in both Chambers.

I anticipate that the Senate will take up a 1-week extension this week so the government does not close on December 11 and work can continue through the end of next week.

The Nation needs our Democratic colleagues to resist the temptation to play brinksmanship with long-settled policy issues or push poison-pill riders that they know would tank the process.

We also expect to receive and pass a conference report on the annual Defense authorization. And we need to continue confirming nominees to vacancies in the judiciary and the executive branch.

We Senators are no strangers to the end-of-year drama, but this time the stakes are far higher. We are up against another, even steeper surge in COVID-19 than we saw back in the spring. Workers and small businesses are once again struggling to make ends meet as States and localities step up precautions.

And while the latest news on the vaccine trials suggest that victory over the virus may soon be within reach, our work in that area is far from complete. As one recent article put it, "State [and] local officials plead for vaccine distribution funds."

Our Nation's historic sprint to victory through vaccines seems poised to succeed in record time, but the critical last step—hundreds of millions of doses out to the American people—is still in front of us. Congress cannot stay on the sidelines.

Yesterday, our colleague from Illinois, the Democratic whip, gave an interview in which he named three examples of highly urgent matters that need to be addressed for our Nation right now. This is the Democratic whip of the U.S. Senate.

Here are the three things Senator DURBIN mentioned as flashing red, urgent priorities: "The millions of people who are going to . . . lose their unemployment insurance the day after Christmas"; "the businesses that are trying to decide . . . whether or not they can continue"; and "the [vaccine] logistics . . . to make sure that this vaccine is on the road and vaccinating people across America as quickly as possible."

Those are the three things he mentioned. Those are the three urgent issues he named as examples: extending unemployment insurance, helping small businesses, and funding vaccine distribution.

Well, I do not question the sincerity of our colleague, who I believe is engaged in these discussions in good faith. But these comments illustrate perfectly a point that Republicans have been making for weeks. These three urgent issues are issues where there is almost total bipartisan consensus, no real disagreement whatsoever.

In fact, the framework for a small, targeted relief package that I put forward last week—something Democrats quickly attacked—would have resolved all three of those subjects. The targeted Republican framework extends unemployment insurance programs that will otherwise expire; it creates an entire second round of the Paycheck Protection Program for the hardest hit small businesses; and it lays groundwork to distribute the vaccines that appear to be on the horizon. Check, check, and check.

The Democratic whip is right to recognize these three subjects as especially urgent because they are especially urgent. That is why Republicans have been trying over and over to get them passed. That is why Republicans have been saying for months that Speaker PELOSI and the Democratic leader should let Congress get out-comes in all of the places where we already agree rather than holding everything hostage over their most controversial, partisan demands.

But month after month after month, it has been the Democratic leaders who have said that no relief whatsoever can pass, no consensus items can become law unless multiple controversial areas where we don't agree are resolved to the Democrats' liking.

That is why the Democratic leader had every single Senate Democratic vote to filibuster a targeted COVID-19 relief package back in September and again in October. That bill would have taken care of small businesses, unemployment insurance, and vaccine distribution months ago. Senate Democrats blocked it.

I think, if the Senate Democratic leader would allow it, the three things that the Democratic whip mentioned just yesterday—small business aid, re-upping unemployment aid, and setting up vaccine distribution—would pass the Senate in a landslide.

A targeted compromise on the most urgent items would pass by a massive bipartisan margin. We could easily put together a whole slew of commonsense policies—including those three and other things, like legal protections that universities and the American Council on Education have been pleading for—bring it to the floor, and pass it.

Everyone knows why this hasn't happened. There is one reason the Speaker of the House and the Democratic leader have spent months tying the most bipartisan, most commonsense policies to their most controversial requests and saying that the country can't get the former unless they get the latter. Their strategy has been all or nothing, so struggling Americans have, of course, gotten nothing.

Well, we are down to the wire. The light at the end of the tunnel is in sight. Operation Warp Speed seems poised to deliver vaccines on a historic, almost miraculous timetable. We have seen some hopeful signs of engagement from our Democratic colleagues, but

we have no reason to think the underlying disagreements about policy are going to evaporate overnight.

Republicans and Democrats do not need to resolve every one of our differences to get badly needed relief out the door. We just need both sides to finally do what Members of Congress do when they are serious about wanting an outcome: Drop the all-or-nothing tactics; drop the hostage-taking; and make law in the many places where we have common ground. That is what the country is counting on. That is how we can do right by the American people before Christmas. Let's get it done.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 912.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Allen Dickerson, of the District of Columbia, to be a Member of the Federal Election Commission for a term expiring April 30, 2025.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill 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 Allen Dickerson, of the District of Columbia, to be a Member of the Federal Election Commission for a term expiring April 30, 2025.

Mitch McConnell, Pat Roberts, Cory Gardner, Richard Burr, John Thune, Michael B. Enzi, Steve Daines, John Boozman, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Thom Tillis, John Cornyn, Roger F. Wicker, Marco Rubio, Roy Blunt, Joni Ernst, Mike Braun, Mike Crapo.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 913.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Shana M. Broussard, of Louisiana, to be a Member of the Federal Election Commission for a term expiring April 30, 2023.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill 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 Shana M. Broussard, of Louisiana, to be a Member of the Federal Election Commission for a term expiring April 30, 2023.

Mitch McConnell, Pat Roberts, Cory Gardner, Richard Burr, John Thune, Michael B. Enzi, Steve Daines, John Boozman, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Thom Tillis, John Cornyn, Roger F. Wicker, Marco Rubio, Roy Blunt, Joni Ernst, Mike Braun, Mike Crapo.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 914.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Sean J. Cooksey, of Missouri, to be a Member of the Federal Election Commission for a term expiring April 30, 2021.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill 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 Sean J. Cooksey, of Missouri, to be a Member of the Federal Election Commission for a term expiring April 30, 2021.

Mitch McConnell, Pat Roberts, Cory Gardner, Richard Burr, John Thune, Michael B. Enzi, Steve Daines, Cindy Hyde-Smith, John Boozman, Thom Tillis, John Cornyn, Roger F. Wicker, Marco Rubio, Josh Hawley, Joni Ernst, Mike Braun, Mike Crapo.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume consideration of the Schwartz nomination.

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

Mr. McCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING PAUL SARBANES

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, last night we received the sad news that a former colleague of ours, one of our finest, Paul Sarbanes, had passed away.

While our time in the Senate only overlapped for one term, Senator Sarbanes made a deep impression. Known as the "stealth Senator," he was low-key but extremely effective. He was a leader on a wide-ranging group of issues, from environmental stewardship, to consumer privacy, to anything having to do with his home State of Maryland. He was very soft-spoken, but he had determination like iron and worked and worked and worked on issue after issue until he achieved his goals.

We mourn the passing of this beloved former colleague and this consummate Senator.

CORONAVIRUS

Madam President, now on COVID, everyone knows we are entering the worst stretch of the COVID-19 pandemic. As winter months force more Americans indoors, infections are up, hospitalizations are up, and the number of Americans dying from COVID is steadily and tragically increasing.

The economic fallout from the latest wave of the virus will also be a huge challenge. According to one study, nearly 12 million renters will owe an average of nearly \$6,000 in back rents and utilities in January. Even the conservative U.S. Chamber of Commerce is sounding the alarm about a double-dip recession if Congress does not pass another round of emergency Federal relief before the end of the year.

Unfortunately, our efforts to pass another emergency relief bill through the Senate have been stalled until now for