

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mrs. LOEFFLER), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS) is necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 260 Ex.]

YEAS—50

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

NAYS—46

Baldwin	Heinrich	Sanders
Bennet	Hirono	Schatz
Blumenthal	Jones	Schumer
Booker	Kaine	Shaheen
Brown	Kelly	Sinema
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Smith
Cardin	Leahy	Stabenow
Carper	Manchin	Tester
Casey	Markey	Udall
Coons	Menendez	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warner
Duckworth	Murphy	Warren
Durbin	Murray	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Peters	Wyden
Gillibrand	Reed	
Hassan	Rosen	

NOT VOTING—4

Harris	Perdue
Loeffler	Rounds

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the most important item on the Senate's to-do list before the end of the year is a bipartisan emergency relief package for a nation suffering the worst month of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Negotiations continue between a bipartisan group of Senate and House Members who, last week, agreed in principle on a \$900-plus billion emergency relief proposal. As the details continue to get sorted, Speaker PELOSI

and I have encouraged everyone to use this bipartisan proposal as a framework for negotiations.

Yesterday, the White House presented us an offer of similar size, around \$900 billion—an encouraging sign that Republican leadership is moving in the right direction by endorsing the size of the Gang of 8's bill. But the President's proposal must not be allowed to supersede or obstruct the bipartisan congressional talks that are underway. That is where the real action is and where bipartisan agreement on the basic concepts will ultimately be forged.

The President's proposal, for instance, completely misses the mark on unemployment benefits and aid to American families. In order to include \$600 stimulus checks, it actually cuts proposed unemployment benefits by greater than a factor of 4, from \$180 billion to just \$40 billion—an unacceptably low amount—while tens of millions of Americans remain out of work, almost all of whom have lost their jobs because of COVID.

Economists from every end of the spectrum, including the conservative U.S. Chamber of Commerce, are warning us that the United States faces the prospect of a double-dip recession without another round of emergency fiscal stimulus. A robust unemployment benefit is crucial—crucial—to that program. Earlier in the pandemic, it helped keep 12 million Americans out of poverty and propped up consumer spending. We shouldn't be cutting unemployment benefits now, as the President's team proposes; we should be extending them.

Now, the Republican leader, as usual, gave a very angry speech this morning accusing Democrats of all manner of things, including intentionally blocking aid to thwart President Trump. I don't know what evidence he has of that, but there are actual reports—honest-to-God reports—in the New York Times and the Washington Post that Leader MCCONNELL was warning the White House not to cut a deal on COVID relief before the election.

Here is the Washington Post: "McConnell warns White House against making stimulus deal as Pelosi and Mnuchin inch closer." That is from October 20—2 weeks before the election.

Meanwhile, Democrats have continually lowered our proposals, now by over \$2 trillion, to move closer to our Republican colleagues in the spirit of compromise and for the sake of getting something done for the American people. It would do a whole lot of good if the Republican leader would drop the daily tirades and diatribes, which seem to be based in some alternative reality, and join the rest of the Senate in urging the bipartisan negotiations now underway to continue.

Families all over the country are nearing a point of desperation, unable to put food on the table, a roof over their children's heads. By January, nearly 12 million renters will owe an

average of nearly \$6,000 in back rent and utilities—a shocking figure.

We need to deliver an emergency relief package to keep American families, workers, and businesses afloat until the crisis finally begins to subside. The only way to get that done is in a bipartisan fashion. The sooner the Republican leader realizes it, the better.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, on Biden nominations—President-Elect Biden continues to roll out an impressive slate of Secretaries-designate to lead Cabinet agencies in his administration.

Yesterday, he selected Lloyd Austin to be the next Secretary of Defense, another groundbreaking selection. Mr. Austin would be the first African-American to lead the largest Cabinet agency in our government. Secretary-designate Austin is a familiar face to many of us on Capitol Hill, and I am also pleased to say he is a familiar face to many in the North Country in New York. He is the former commander of the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum—the pride of Jefferson County.

Like all of President-Elect Biden's national security nominees, Senate-designate Austin is deeply experienced and familiar with our Nation's national security, as well as the many issues that face our servicemembers and their families each and every day. Lloyd Austin served our Nation for more than four decades, and his willingness to serve his country again is admirable. He will make an excellent Secretary of Defense.

Now, an hour ago, I met with President-Elect Biden's economic team by teleconference, including Secretary-designate of Treasury, Janet Yellen, to discuss priorities with the incoming administration on how to get our economy back on track. I urged them, once President-Elect Biden becomes President, to go bold. Austerity right now is not what America needs but a bold program to stimulate our economy and get things moving, to help get people jobs—good-paying jobs—because our economy is suffering. I look forward to our continued conversations.

A few weeks ago, I predicted that we would see some crocodile tears from the Republican majority about Biden's Cabinet nominees, but I didn't think it would occur this fast. It began when several Republican Senators raised some objections over Neera Tanden's Twitter feed. After 4 years of pretending that they "didn't see" President Trump's latest online outburst, it seems that Senate Republicans have rediscovered their Twitter passwords now that Joe Biden is the President-elect.

This week, after President-Elect Biden announced that Xavier Becerra is his pick to be the next Secretary of Health and Human Services, Republican Senators raised concerns, in their minds, about Mr. Becerra's qualifications. The senior Senator from Texas said:

I'm not sure what his Health and Human Services credentials are. It's not like Alex Azar who used to work for pharma.

With all due respect to the senior Senator from Texas, working for the pharmaceutical industry is not the only way to get experience in healthcare. Some might argue it is the wrong kind of experience for an HHS Secretary.

The truth is, Xavier Becerra is eminently qualified. He worked in the House of Representatives for two decades, always very involved in advancing the healthcare of his constituents, and he has a particularly long track record as an advocate of women's health. As the attorney general of California, he became one of the foremost legal experts on our Nation's healthcare laws.

I must say, it is particularly rich for this Republican majority to raise "concerns" about whether Biden Cabinet nominees have every last pristine qualification for their posts. Not so long ago, nearly every Republican in this Chamber lined up to make an oil executive the Secretary of State. I don't remember too many Republican "concerns" when President Trump nominated a retired neurosurgeon to be the Secretary of HUD or when he put Rick Perry in charge of the Department of Energy—an agency he wanted to abolish before learning it maintained the Nation's nuclear stockpile and that he would be in charge of it. If memory serves, this Senate Republican majority confirmed a Secretary of Education whose only qualification for the job was she used her inherited fortune to try to privatize American schooling.

Look, the country needs to move on from the past 4 years, but Senate Republicans can't pretend like it never happened. After the sordid caliber of nominees that this Republican majority confirmed over the past 4 years, it will be impossible to take these complaints about Biden's nominees very seriously.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROMNEY). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MOTION TO DISCHARGE—S.J. RES.

77

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, pursuant to the Arms Export Control Act of 1976, I move to discharge the Foreign Relations Committee from further consideration of S.J. Res. 77, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval of the proposed foreign military sale to the United Arab Emirates of certain defense articles and services.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is pending.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, today I am asking our colleagues to stand up for two very important principles. One is the congressional oversight over arms sales abroad and, secondly, to ensure that these sales, in fact, promote and protect the long-term national security of the United States.

Colleagues, I wish we didn't find ourselves in the position of having to discuss our concerns with this sale in this kind of forum. The United Arab Emirates has, indeed, been an important partner in the fight against terrorism and across the region and, I believe, will continue to do so. However, a sale of this magnitude requires the appropriate due diligence.

For the past few decades, the executive branch has respected the congressional oversight of the arms sales process, a critical piece of which is an informal review period during which we get answers to pressing questions. We have an opportunity to review sensitive information so that, when sales come up for the formal notification, which is what we have before us now, we have a clearer path forward. Unfortunately, in this case, the Trump administration decided to simply ignore congressional rights here and the review process, formally notifying the sales of these complex weapons systems, along with other weaponry, totaling \$23 billion.

Beyond obliterating the congressional review process, the administration also seems to have rushed through the interagency review of a sale of this magnitude. Whereas, a sale of this scope would normally merit months and months of detailed deliberations between the Departments of Defense and State, this sale was announced with more missing than a few dotted i's and crossed t's.

I will go into more detail later before we vote, but the bottom line is that there are many outstanding issues that are critical to U.S. national security that have not been addressed, including, by way of example, the United Arab Emirates' present and future military relationships with Russia and China. My understanding is that there are negotiations to have with China regarding an airstrip for the Chinese military off of the UAE. Is that in the national interest and security of the United States?

Should we not have a definitive commitment from the UAE that it will not move forward if these arms sales move forward, including with the most sophisticated stealth jet fighter that we have? How do we work to safeguard U.S. technology? the guarantees we will have in place about how U.S.-origin weapons will be used given the Emirates' history of transferring weapons to a terrorist organization and violating the U.N. arms embargo in Libya? the longer term implications of an arms race in the region? and then, yes, the impact that it could have on both our and Israel's qualitative military edge?

If we aren't going to be willing to ask these questions, then we have to think about the magnitude of the sale without caring about the consequences.

I have heard a number of my colleagues advocate in support of these sales because they believe it will help our like-minded partners better posture against Iran. Now, no one is more clear-eyed in this Chamber or has pursued Iran and its threat of nuclear weapons more than I, and we are clear-eyed about the threat Iran continues to pose to national security interests, but we have yet to understand exactly what military threat the F-35s or armed drones will be addressing vis-à-vis Iran. Furthermore, according to the Trump administration, as recently as last year, the UAE continued to host a number of companies that facilitated Iranian financial transactions in violation of various U.S. sanctions.

So Iran is a threat, but you are helping it facilitate U.S. financial transactions. It is not that I have said so but that the Trump administration has said so. Meanwhile, over the past year, Iran has ramped up its nuclear capabilities amidst American diplomatic fallout.

So, if we really want to talk about countering Iran, we need a comprehensive, diplomatic strategy. Arming partners with complex weapons systems that could take years to come online is not a serious strategy with which to confront the very real and timely threats from Iran.

I have also heard some of our colleagues argue that, if we do not sell these weapons, the UAE will turn to China and Russia. Well, let's be clear: They already do. They already do. Our own Department of Defense's inspector general recently reported that the UAE may be funding the Russian mercenary Wagner Group in Libya. U.N. reporting implicates the UAE's use of Chinese-manufactured drones, in violation of the U.N. arms embargo, also in Libya.

So, while I absolutely agree that we have to counter Chinese and Russian influence in the region, again, this requires a real strategy, not simply more arms. Isn't this a conversation and a commitment that we should get in writing from the UAE as part of such an arms sale? We don't have that. Furthermore, if we go forward with these sales, yet deny similar requests to countries like Qatar or Saudi Arabia, where will they go for their advanced weaponry to keep pace, and what reaction will Iran have to them? Do we really think we can sell this just to the UAE and not have those other countries come knocking on our door, starting a very sophisticated arms race in a tinder box of the world?

Finally, let me be very clear: I applaud the Abraham accords as a historical turning point for Israel and the Arab world. These new, formal relationships have the possibility of transforming the region much more broadly and bringing peace, stability, and prosperity to people who desperately want