



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 166

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2020

No. 209

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Have compassion upon us, Mighty God, for we are weak. We strive to do good but too often miss the mark. Without Your strength, we would surely stumble and fall.

Rescue our lawmakers from those things that aren't contributing to Your glory. Give them the good sense to listen to Your guidance and obey Your precepts.

Lord, use our Senators to plant and water seeds that will bring a harvest of healing, hope, and humility to our Nation and world.

Thank You for hearing and answering our prayers, for You are always our refuge and strength.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 1 minute in morning business.

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

BIDEN INVESTIGATION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I want to remind people of how Senator JOHNSON and I have been attacked over the months of 2020 for some investigation we have been doing, and I want to speak to that now.

For over a year, Senator JOHNSON and I investigated the Biden financial family dealings. We found that they engaged in potential criminal financial deals across the globe, including China, which created counterintelligence concerns.

We showed our work, and we made our findings very public, but the liberal media and members of the other political party chose to dismiss our work. They even falsely claimed that our work was Russian disinformation. I think they did this in order to protect leaders of the other party. Those same liberal outlets that disparaged our investigation now report that Hunter Biden's financial deals in China raised counterintelligence concerns.

Yesterday, the Biden transition team confirmed that Hunter Biden is under criminal investigation for his taxes and financial dealings.

So you can understand why I think it is very outrageous that the Fourth Estate would choose to ignore facts when they are uncovered by Republicans.

Senator JOHNSON and I don't do oversight work just for the fun of it. Oversight work is serious business. It shouldn't take subpoenas and confirmation from Hunter Biden himself to get the rest of the press to pay attention.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, we learned a few minutes ago that new unemployment claims just hit their highest weekly total since mid-September. It is the largest 1-week jump since back in March, and the number of continuing claims—people struggling with joblessness on an ongoing basis—

which had plateaued for months but at least not increased, just ticked back up as well.

Our economic recovery thus far has been faster than expected. Americans are tough and resilient, but our people need another dose of support as we hope to close out our battle with this virus. We should be doing everything we can to prevent layoffs, create jobs where possible, and race toward the vaccines that will end this nightmare.

While Democrats hold the Paycheck Protection Program hostage over controversial State government bailouts, family businesses are closing their doors. While Democrats resist the kinds of commonsense legal protections that we put in place during past emergencies, our reopening and recovery is threatened by, according to one estimate—now, listen to this: So far, 6,500 lawsuits have been filed and counting—6,500 lawsuits filed and counting.

Here is what one litigator told one reporter a couple of days ago. These lawsuits are “pretty common these days. I have seen 10 like this over the last 30 days.”

The American Council on Education told Congress in May—in May—that colleges and universities need temporary but strong legal protections.

Now, our Democratic colleagues want to pretend they are bravely fighting big corporations, but they are really bullying small business owners and college presidents who have been pleading for these protections for months.

Our Democratic colleagues have not even let us pass noncontroversial money to invest in vaccine distribution—not unless the two parties settle a whole list of issues that are controversial the way that they want to settle.

So I hope our colleagues let Congress deliver more help soon. A lot of Americans simply cannot afford to wait.

● This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, now, in the meantime, yesterday, we began moving the conference report on the National Defense Authorization Act toward the floor.

For the information of all Senators, we should expect the potential for a late night tonight and the possibility of votes tomorrow.

Back in July, the Senate passed our version of this crucial annual bill. Now our colleagues on the conference committee have done their tough job and reconciled two different approaches so we do not leave our military in the lurch.

On Tuesday, the House passed the conference report with overwhelming bipartisan support. Now it is the Senate's turn to make it an unbroken 60-year streak of passing this legislation to keep our military strong and our homeland safe.

This NDAA will unlock more than \$740 billion for the training, tools, and cutting-edge equipment that our servicemembers and civilian employees need to defend American lives and American interests. It will give our troops the 3 percent pay raise they richly deserve. It will keep our forces ready to deter China and stand strong in the Indo-Pacific, and it will secure President Trump's major progress at modernizing our capabilities, our technologies, and our strategic nuclear deterrent.

This legislation will secure wins on priorities that all of us share. It does not contain every policy that either side would like to pass, but a huge number of crucial policies are included, and a lot of bad ideas were kept out. So I would encourage all our colleagues to vote to advance this must-pass bill.

TRIBUTE TO CORY GARDNER

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, now, on one final matter, it is my honor today to pay tribute to a truly exceptional U.S. Senator, someone who arrived in this body with a full head of steam and a determination to cram as much service as possible into every day he got to wake up and serve his neighbors who sent him here.

Our good friend, CORY GARDNER, the junior Senator from Colorado, has been a man on a mission from the day he arrived. He already knew the institution. He was already one of the highest energy high-achievers that anybody who knew him had ever met. So he got to work, and he spent 6 years delivering a dizzying list of accomplishments.

If you have heard about CORY GARDNER's early days, you know that his high-speed, can-do attitude is nothing new. Case in point, one evening, when CORY was a boy, he and his friends got tired of their hoop sessions ending at sundown because the public basketball court lacked sufficient lighting. The group of friends considered how to rem-

edy this. CORY's dad happened to be a town councilman. So a little government relations took place right around the dinner table.

Well, no Senator who CORY ever pressed for a vote will be surprised to hear that the lighting infrastructure was soon adjusted, and the kids could take their pickup games into prime time.

So young CORY was no stranger to persistence or public service, but it was in high school that he scored an opportunity to taste a level beyond Yuma's local government. He won admission to the U.S. Senate Youth Program. It is a scholarship that brings promising students from around the country to these halls for a quick immersion experience.

Teenaged CORY GARDNER liked the looks of this place. He made a mental note. By the way, to this day, CORY, along with his fellow alumna, Senator COLLINS, continue to make sure that special experience is paid forward.

It didn't take CORY long to come back and begin strolling these hallways for real. After earning honors at Colorado State and a law degree from CU Boulder, he wound up working for our former colleague Senator Wayne Allard—and rising quickly through the ranks.

In short order, he developed a reputation as a highly effective advocate for Coloradans. In fact, he was so well liked, so effective, and so thoroughly the proud son of Yuma that folks started to wonder if it wasn't time for CORY to put his own name on a door somewhere. So it wasn't long before the men and women of Colorado's State House District 63 found out firsthand what happens when you hire CORY GARDNER to fight on your behalf. You get results big time.

Not much later, his neighbors then gave CORY a new assignment here in Congress. Again, Congressman GARDNER didn't just meet the bar as one out of 435. He excelled as a powerful, energetic voice on the most consequential issues. He brought home one win after another when it really mattered.

It didn't take long before another promotion came calling, and so, appropriately enough, the Senate's freshman class of 2014 included a new member from the land of "14ers"—what Coloradans call their peaks higher than 14,000 feet. CORY was already accustomed to altitude.

So here in this upper Chamber, Senator GARDNER hit the ground sprinting. I believe he has authored 11 standalone bills that have been signed into law in just 6 years. Without CORY's tireless work and his travels to the four corners of Colorado and beyond, the biggest conservation bill in a generation—the Great American Outdoors Act—would not have become law.

There has been his key role in the Supreme Court confirmation of fellow Coloradan Neil Gorsuch, his mission to move the Bureau of Land Management to Grand Junction, and, of course, the nuts-and-bolts constituent work that

CORY and his staff are famous for mastering.

This not-so-junior Senator has used Colorado values to improve Washington and Washington influence to advance his home State.

He dived head first into his leadership role on the East Asia Subcommittee on Foreign Relations. His work with regional allies helped drive the Senate to approve meaningful sanctions against North Korea, and the impact of the Asia Reassurance Initiative should echo long after all of us here today have left this scene.

The litany of CORY's work just simply does not end. There is the new, nationwide three-digit suicide prevention hotline. There is the fact that this freshman not only scrapped over a national defense issue with our late colleague Chairman John McCain—talk about fearlessness—but that he somehow emerged mostly unscathed and with a win on space launch vehicles to show for it.

But, like I said, one of the best aspects of CORY's operation is his almost obsessive focus on looking out for his people—one family and one story at a time.

That is why it is impossible to give a speech on Senator GARDNER without working your way to another name, Don Stratton.

When Don was first met with our colleague, the 95-year-old Navy veteran was living with his wife in Colorado Springs. But the story began 76 years earlier, when he was among the fortunate few sailors to survive the bombing of the USS *Arizona* at Pearl Harbor.

At 19, Don had survived severe burns but insisted on returning to combat with the fleet. After the war, he raised a family and wrote a book about his experiences. But Don's request to Senator GARDNER wasn't anything for himself. It concerned a comrade who had saved his life that day 79 years ago this very week.

At risk to himself, a sailor named Joe George had literally thrown the lifeline that brought Don and five shipmates to safety. But Joe's lifesaving efforts had gone unrecognized before his death.

For years, Don didn't even know who had saved him. So once he found out, Don Stratton made it his mission to ensure our Nation formalized our gratitude for his guardian angel.

Let's just say that the Strattons picked the right State to retire in. Colorado's junior Senator was on the case. CORY and his staff waded through tangles of bureaucracy. They appealed decisions all the way to the Secretary of Defense. And you better believe they secured that Bronze Star for PO1 Joe George, with the "V" device for valor to boot.

Don passed away earlier this year. By all accounts, he and his family had come to regard Senator GARDNER not just as an incredible advocate but as a true friend.

Now, in fairness, this same eagerness and almost maniacal problem-solving