

finished. The struggle continues every day. Cases and deaths are mounting. The commerce that sustains small businesses is still depressed. Working families are still trying to grind through, but recently Washington has not held up its end of the bargain.

For months—literally months—both sides in Congress have known roughly what the shape of a compromise rescue package could look like. We know all the areas where we do not even disagree and should be able to make significant law. But, alas, partisan dynamics and political posturing have prevented us from getting more relief out the door, even in areas where nobody even claims to disagree.

I don't want to relitigate the last weeks and months this afternoon. Anyone who wants to dole out blame has a clear record they can analyze.

It is time for this body to collectively recognize that finger-pointing doesn't put food on the table for struggling families. Finger-pointing doesn't help people avoid having to choose between Christmas gifts and making rent. And finger-pointing does not do a darn thing to fund vaccine distribution so we can slam the door on this virus as fast as possible and maximize the number of lives we can save.

That last point is a concern that State health officials across the country have raised repeatedly. Even with vaccines on the way, many are reporting that they don't have the funds to hire enough trained workers or purchase enough PPE to safely administer them as fast as possible. As one health observer put it, "It would be a shame if all the effort on Warp Speed for development isn't warp speed for distribution." That is what we risk if Congress can't get our act together and supply the funds to deliver this literal shot in the arm to our people. This is the support that State and local governments need most urgently—not unfettered slush funds for non-COVID-related needs that predate the pandemic but incredibly urgent, targeted money to get citizens vaccinated right now and finish the fight.

That isn't the only urgent priority that Congress must not leave behind. The same business owners and working families who relied on the Paycheck Protection Program to get them through the bleakest points of the spring and summer are, once again, facing tough choices. Renewed health restrictions and decreased demand mean that some American jobs that have been sustained all this period may not survive the last home stretch.

So we can help. We can provide a second round of job-saving PPP tailored to those who need it most.

And what about Americans who have already lost their jobs in the pandemic through no fault of their own? Several key unemployment programs are set to expire at the end of the month. This is not an outcome that struggling people deserve, least of all during the holiday. So we should act. We should act.

The next several days are going to bring about one of two outcomes. Either 100 Senators will be here shaking our heads, slinging blame, and offering excuses about why we still have not been able to make a law, or we will break for the holidays having sent another huge dose of relief out the door for the people who need it.

So, look, it is up to us. It is up to us. We decide. This is entirely within our control. I can speak for the Republican side: We want to make a law to agree where we can and help people who need it. I hope and believe that my Democratic colleagues will feel the same way. It is about time to get this done.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 933.

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 legislative clerk read the nomination of Joseph Dawson III, of South Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the District of South Carolina.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. 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 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 Joseph Dawson III, of South Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the District of South Carolina.

Mitch McConnell, James E. Risch, Mike Crapo, Roy Blunt, Shelley Moore Capito, Tom Cotton, John Cornyn, Chuck Grassley, Thom Tillis, Richard Burr, Pat Roberts, Cory Gardner, Lindsey Graham, Todd Young, Marco Rubio, John Boozman, John Barrasso.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. 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. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 934.

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 legislative clerk read the nomination of Charles Edward Atchley, Jr., of Tennessee, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Tennessee.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. 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 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 Charles Edward Atchley, Jr., of Tennessee, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Tennessee.

Mitch McConnell, James E. Risch, Mike Crapo, Roy Blunt, Shelley Moore Capito, Tom Cotton, John Cornyn, Chuck Grassley, Thom Tillis, Richard Burr, Pat Roberts, Cory Gardner, Lindsey Graham, Todd Young, Marco Rubio, John Boozman, John Barrasso.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. 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. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 935.

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 legislative clerk read the nomination of Zachary N. Somers, of the District of Columbia, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Federal Claims for a term of fifteen years.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. 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 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 Zachary N. Somers, of the District of Columbia, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Federal Claims for a term of fifteen years.

Mitch McConnell, James E. Risch, Mike Crapo, Roy Blunt, Shelley Moore Capito, Tom Cotton, John Cornyn, Chuck Grassley, Thom Tillis, Richard Burr,

Pat Roberts, Cory Gardner, Lindsey Graham, Todd Young, Marco Rubio, John Boozman, John Barrasso.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 5014

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand there is a bill at the desk due a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 5014) to amend title 31, United States Code, to provide for automatic continuing resolutions.

Mr. MCCONNELL. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceedings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, this week, the Senate returns with precious little time left to finish important matters of business. Last week, both Houses of Congress passed the annual Defense bill with veto-proof majorities. If President Trump takes the rather ridiculous step of vetoing a pay raise for our troops in order to defend the honor of dead Confederate traitors—or whatever other contrived grounds he comes up with—Congress must override that veto.

On Friday, both Chambers of Congress also passed a 1-week continuing resolution, giving us until the end of this week to finish an omnibus appropriations bill to fund the government. As usual, the appropriations bill will include several important pieces of related legislation. One that doesn't get enough attention is a bipartisan energy bill.

Earlier this year, during the debate over the Energy bill, Senate Democrats

insisted that a provision to reduce HFCs—a very harmful greenhouse gas that is driving our climate change problem—must be included in the bill. Unfortunately, we had to hold up the bill until a bipartisan agreement could be reached on this critical provision, which would be the single biggest victory in the fight against climate change to pass this body in a decade.

Today, I am very happy to report that we have made very good progress toward an agreement on HFC reduction. We are about to get it done. That is one of the biggest victories to fight global warming in a very long time.

I want to thank Senators CARPER, KENNEDY, and BARRASSO. They have worked very diligently and very hard to craft a compromise.

Finally, as we all know, it is imperative we pass another round of emergency Federal relief from the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, the bipartisan group of Senators who have been diligently working toward an agreement will announce the results of their work: a package of over \$900 billion that includes an agreement on assistance to State and local government. Notably, there is no agreement on corporate immunity. We look forward to reviewing their work. Democrats remain 100 percent committed to getting another round of emergency relief to the American people before the end of the year and in a robust, bold way because America needs it so badly.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, a year that was full of bad news for the country is coming to an end with some very good news. Over the past 8 to 9 months, American scientists, biochemists, and researchers rushed to produce a safe and effective vaccine to the COVID-19 pandemic—and they have succeeded in extraordinary fashion.

We don't have just one but several candidates for a vaccine, each of which has shown to be 90 percent effective in clinical trials. One of those vaccines has been approved, authorized by the FDA for emergency use. And as we speak, an assembly line of workers in masks, gloves, and face shields are pulling doses out of the freezer, loading them into cold storage palettes, and onto trucks to be shipped to States across the country.

The discovery of a COVID-19 vaccine within the timeframe of a calendar year is a crowning scientific achievement of the 21st century. It should bring not only a feeling of relief to the country—indeed, to the entire world—but also deep admiration and pride for America's scientists and our medical workers.

I remember, in the early days of the pandemic, going to the window of our Brooklyn apartment each night to applaud our frontline workers. The whoops, claps, and metallic clang of pots and pans echoed for miles. Our

medical researchers—as well as thousands of Americans who selflessly volunteered for clinical trials—deserve the same national expression of gratitude.

We can show our gratitude here in Congress by communicating clearly that the COVID-19 vaccine is safe, effective, and that every American should inoculate themselves when it becomes available. Skepticism about vaccines was already too high before the pandemic. Several polls have shown it to be an alarming concern with respect to the COVID-19 vaccine. It is an absolute disgrace that the Republican majority on the Homeland Security Committee has invited a prominent skeptic of the COVID-19 vaccine to deliver testimony in a hearing this week. Public figures at all levels should be building up confidence in a vaccine, not giving a platform to those who undermine it.

At the moment, the vaccine is being distributed to medical personnel, doctors, nurses, frontline workers, and the most vulnerable populations. I myself will take the vaccine as soon as it is appropriate and recommended. I will not skip the line. But make no mistake, we should all lead by example, commit to taking the vaccine, and tell our constituents to take it as well.

The CDC and our States will continue to advise which populations should be inoculated based on availability, and we will follow that guidance.

ELECTORAL COLLEGE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now one other note—today, members of the electoral college are gathering in all 50 States and the District of Columbia to formally select Joe Biden as the next President of the United States of America.

Typically, the meeting of the electoral college is merely a formality. The Presidential election took place over a month ago. The result is not in doubt. In almost any other year, both major parties would have fully and publicly accepted the will of the American people by now—the peaceful passing of the torch, a hallmark of our grand democracy. But this year, it seems as if Joe Biden has had to be declared the winner of the Presidential election again and again and again—and still, our Republican colleagues have not fully come to grips with that reality. Just how many times does President Trump have to lose before rank-and-file Republicans—before most Senators—acknowledge that Joe Biden will be the next President of the United States?

Last week, more than 100 Republican Members of the House of Representatives signed their names to a lawsuit that would invalidate the results of the election in four swing States. For any serious person, much less a Member of the U.S. Congress, to sign their name to such an anti-democratic document is beyond shameful.