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## House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Sunday, December 20, 2020, at 12 p.m.

## Senate

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2020

The Senate met at 11 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.

Almighty God, our souls long for You, for we find strength and joy in Your presence. The Heavens keep telling of your wonders, and the skies declare what You have done. We thank You for the star of Bethlehem.

Guide our lawmakers to put their trust in You, seeking in every undertaking to know and do Your will. Lord, when our Senators go through difficulties, may they remember that with Your help, they can accomplish the seemingly impossible. Inspire them to find strength and courage from Your guidance, as they trust You to direct their steps.

We pray in Your strong 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 (Mr. CASSIDY). The Senator from Iowa.

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

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

### 2020 ELECTION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, in this town, political arguments often change places very quickly. Actually, observers could get whiplash when that happens.

Now, just think about just a few months back. Before this election, we had elected Democrats scaring voters with irresponsible conspiracy theories that President Trump was going to somehow use his office to interfere with State elections or that he was in cahoots with the Postal Service not to deliver ballots.

Remember back after the 2016 election, the irresponsibly worded talking point was that Russia “hacked our elections,” leading to polls 2 years later showing that 67 percent of Democrats believed falsely that “Russia tampered with vote tallies in order to get Donald Trump elected.”

Now let’s turn to the 2020 election just completed. Those same people are now earnestly warning of the dangers of Americans questioning certified election results. Think just for a minute. Those who supported hashtag “resist” after Trump’s election are now lecturing others about the need for faith in elections.

It is kind of disturbing to me—the hutzpah of some of the people around here, what they said in 2016 and after versus what they are saying now.

I yield the floor.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

### CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, our Nation stands at a crossroads in our months-long battle with the new coronavirus. Tracking recent developments lately has felt like watching a split-screen television. On the one hand, Operation Warp Speed has fostered a modern medical miracle. The genius of science has brought forward safe and effective vaccines at a pace which, just months ago, many claimed would be impossible. For about 9 months now, our Nation has been treading water altogether. Now the road to victory is in sight.

But at the same time, even as we see this hopeful sunrise on the horizon, in the here and now, we are still facing an ongoing five-alarm national crisis. The virus is surging across our country. Two days ago, my home State of Kentucky set another bleak new record—the most Kentuckians lost in a single day of this pandemic so far. Nationwide, since the start of December, we have lost around 3,000 of our fellow Americans to this disease every single day.

Meanwhile, although the American people have built our economic recovery with more speed and resilience than anyone had anticipated, we have known all along that recovering prosperity would come hand-in-hand with defeating the virus. Thus, millions of working families across the Nation are still under terrible strain.

Last week, economists thought we would see a slight downward tick in new unemployment claims. Instead, the numbers shot up, logging 885,000 new claims in just 1 week—almost

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



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900,000 newly laid-off Americans in 1 week alone.

Senators on both sides know what we need to do. In the springtime, when the country needed a bridge, we passed the largest rescue package in American history on a unanimous, bipartisan basis. Now what Americans need is another bridge. Fortunately, this time we do not need a bridge over an unknown and frightening future but a bridge through the next several months, while the lifesaving vaccines can flow throughout our country.

Frontline healthcare workers are receiving the vaccine as we speak. Yesterday, Vice President PENCE, Speaker PELOSI, and I all received first doses of vaccines pursuant to preexisting plans for the continuity of our government.

These vaccines are safe. They are effective. They are our Nation's path out of this hellish chapter. So the first lines of the cavalry are already arriving. We just need to help American families hold on while reinforcements continue to pour in: more paycheck protection loans for the hardest hit businesses, more additional Federal unemployment aid, more direct assistance for families, a lot more funding for K-12 schools to reopen safely and get our kids' educations back on track, and, perhaps most important of all, a huge amount of funding for vaccine distribution so that we aren't just helping Americans endure this battle, but we are helping them win the battle as fast as possible.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, last night, we extended government funding for 2 additional days. The Senate and the House need to finalize another rescue package containing all the policies I just named and many more. We need to finalize government funding legislation for next year, and we need to pass these measures with a big, bipartisan vote and get them signed into law without further delay.

We need cooperation and focus from all sides. There is a kind of gravitational pull here in Congress, where, unless we are careful, any major negotiation can easily slide into an unending catalogue of disagreements. Let's guard against that.

The American people have already waited for more assistance longer than they could afford. In my judgment, they have waited far too long for a relief package of the same general size and scope that Senate Republicans have been proposing literally since last summer. Every one of us in the Senate and the House represent American families who simply cannot wait any longer for Congress to conclude these discussions. Every day that we delay may very well cost more small businesses their survival, cost more American workers their jobs, and, yes, cost more Americans their very lives.

We have had productive discussions this week. I appreciate the good-faith

spirit that has characterized my talks with the Democratic leader, Speaker PELOSI, Leader MCCARTHY, and Secretary Mnuchin, but the American people cannot feed their families or pay their bills with Congress's good-faith discussions. They need us to act. We need to conclude our talks, draft legislation, and land this plane.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

##### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Thompson Michael Dietz, of New Jersey, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Federal Claims for a term of fifteen years.

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 Democratic leader is recognized.

##### CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, ever since a remarkable bipartisan rescue package in March, the CARES Act, and a subsequent bill to replenish those programs, getting further aid to the American people has been a long and arduous effort. It is no secret that for much of the year, our Republican colleagues were opposed to spending any more money to help the American people during a once-in-a-century pandemic. Thankfully, the Republican leadership recently accepted the bipartisan Gang of 8's framework as the basis for negotiations for an emergency bill, which Speaker PELOSI and I have suggested, unlocking the current round of talks.

Even now, at the end of this painstaking process, there have been some final hurdles. Crafting a \$1 trillion relief package over the matter of a few days was always going to have its difficulties, but we are running out of time.

After passing yet another continuing resolution yesterday evening, we have

until Sunday at midnight to secure a final agreement, draft the legislation, and move it through both Chambers of Congress with alacrity. I agree with the Republican leader on this: We need to deliver an outcome and deliver it quickly.

We continue to make progress. I believe there is good faith from all four corners of congressional leadership to finalize an agreement very soon. Even though there are several issues that haven't been closed out yet, we continue to make good progress on all issues but one.

The No. 1 outstanding issue is a proposal by the Republican Senator from Pennsylvania. This proposal is a new entrant. It hadn't been an important feature of our negotiations over the past few weeks. Only in the past few days have Senator TOOMEY and Senator MCCONNELL introduced this specific provision and made it clear they feel strongly about it.

Senator TOOMEY's new proposal would potentially prohibit the Treasury and the Fed from setting up new emergency lending facilities moving forward, greatly reducing their ability to respond to economic crises. Again, this is something that materialized only in the past few days and would leave the Treasury and the Fed with less authority than it had even prior to the pandemic.

Quite simply, Senator TOOMEY's proposal would do more than just prevent the next Treasury Secretary and Fed Chair from using the emergency lending programs that saved our economy and stabilized markets back in March and April. It could potentially prevent them from setting up new facilities that look, or even smell like, those programs moving forward.

Democrats do not agree with it. Economists from across the political spectrum warned that Senator TOOMEY's legislation would cripple our government's ability to respond to a deteriorating economy. The Chair of the Federal Reserve, Jay Powell, hardly a flaming liberal, is likewise strongly opposed to the Toomey provision.

Senator TOOMEY's proposal goes way beyond what Leader MCCONNELL proposed in his HEALS Act. The worry that this Toomey proposal is supposed to address is the need to prevent the Treasury and Fed from using their authority willy-nilly to do whatever the new President wanted. That worry is unfounded. In order to create a new emergency facility under the present law, you would need the support of Chairman Powell, a conservative man, and the five members of the Fed Board, a conservative body.

Under current law, an emergency lending facility could get approval only in a true emergency. Senator TOOMEY's legislation creates barriers to emergency lending that go far beyond current law and tries to solve a problem that doesn't exist.

Publicly, Senator TOOMEY—I read an article in POLITICO—has expressed his