

before Senate Republicans is this: Are you willing to spend an amount equal to just half of that windfall to America's billionaires in order to help 160 million Americans?

Right now, the 52 Senate Republicans serving in this Chamber are the only thing standing in the way of \$2,000 being sent to 160 million of our neediest citizens.

The House passed the bill authorizing the checks in a big, bipartisan vote. It is hard to get two-thirds of the House of Representatives to agree on what time it is, but two-thirds of the House of Representatives voted for the \$2,000 checks. President Trump supports the \$2,000 checks, so he will sign the bill if the Senate sends it to him. We can vote on the House bill today in a matter of hours if Senate Republicans agree.

So why isn't this happening? Why didn't Senator MCCONNELL announce the schedule for the vote on the \$2,000 checks bill? Why didn't he agree to Senator SCHUMER's request to bring it up for an immediate vote?

Now, a lot of Republicans are saying they object to the payments because they cost too much and they are going to add too much to the deficit. Well, frankly, spare me the fake righteous indignation about the deficit all of a sudden.

Three years ago, these same deficit hawk Republicans passed a tax cut bill that, before the pandemic hit, had already added over \$200 billion to the annual deficit, and that was a tax cut where 80 percent of the benefits went to the richest 1 percent of Americans.

Warren Buffet wrote in his note to investors last year that the deficit-financed tax cuts earned his empire \$29 billion overnight. That windfall, Buffet noted, "did not come from anything we accomplished at Berkshire." So it is funny: Deficits just didn't matter to the 52 when it was tax cuts to the 600 richest people in America.

But even if this Congress weren't ending in 5 days and we had time to figure out how to pay for it, do you know how we can't pay for it? Cutting foreign aid.

President Trump has been talking a lot about foreign aid in the last week. Now, the money we spend on foreign aid, all supported by Democrats and Republicans over the years, all of it smart investments in our Nation's security—that actually wasn't in the COVID relief package. It was in the annual budget, as it always is. It just so happens that this year the COVID relief package and the annual budget were passed together.

But just for argument's sake, let's say Trump got his way and every single dollar of foreign aid was cut out of the budget. Would that pay for the \$2,000 checks? Not even close. President Trump apparently has an oversized impression of how much money we spend on foreign aid, because our annual foreign aid spending doesn't even equal 10 percent of the cost of a one-time \$2,000 payment to low- and middle-income citizens.

There is also some speculation that Senator MCCONNELL is going to join together the \$2,000 payments with other, much more controversial measures, much more complicated measures, like the reform of our internet liability laws. That is an invitation for this entire effort to fall apart.

The House has finished voting. They have passed the \$2,000 payment bill and sent it to us. They are not interested in taking up anything else. If we start adding poison pills to the \$2,000 payment bill, that is just another way of telling the American people that this body doesn't support \$2,000 payments.

Listen, being a billionaire must be crazy. I make a lot of money as a Senator, but even I would have to work 7,500 years before my earnings equaled \$1 billion. You know what was happening 7,500 years ago? The Stone Age.

There isn't a good reason to oppose giving Americans who aren't billionaires a measly \$2,000 check to help them put food on the table for their kids in the middle of this once-in-a-lifetime crisis.

There isn't a good reason to choose to make moms and dads all across this country decide which two meals they will feed their kids each day because three meals are not an option. Two thousand dollars doesn't put dinner on the table every night, but, man, going to bed hungry when you are 11—it sucks. And even dealing with it every other night instead of every single night, no kid is going to turn that down.

There are 52 of you, and in the next 24 to 48 hours, you get to decide: Do you protect the billionaires or do you choose to feed that 11-year-old kid? The only thing that stands between the American people and a \$2,000 emergency survival check is 52 Senate Republicans. Got it? Understand?

There is a bill pending right now before the Senate that gives \$2,000 to ordinary Americans. Yes, it costs a lot of money, and maybe down the line we will have to ask the billionaires to pay for it, but the bill is here right now. The legislative session expires in 5 days. President Trump says he will sign it, and all that matters right now is what these 52 people decide.

The House passed the bill with lots of Democratic and Republican support. The President supports the idea. The only thing that can stop \$2,000 payments to struggling Americans right now is 52 Senate Republicans.

Some things in Washington aren't that simple—but this is.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. COLLINS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, we didn't expect to be in session this week, but we are. And, of course, as we all know, the theme for this entire year has been "COVID-19 writ large."

More than 330,000 Americans have died from the novel coronavirus. Tens of millions have lost their jobs, and every community across the country has felt the devastating blow dealt by this pandemic, but, as we know, the threats that existed long before this virus still are with us. Even though most of the world hit pause to battle COVID-19, our adversaries did not, and our brave servicemembers didn't pack their bags and not show up for work when everybody else shut down.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, over the last several months, as the Senate has worked to support our country through this pandemic, we have kept an eagle eye on the other threats on the horizon, and we passed the National Defense Authorization Act to ensure that we are prepared for whatever comes at us.

For our forces to continue fighting and defeating our adversaries in every corner of the world, they need funding. They need stability. They need to be able to plan, and they need the unwavering support of the U.S. Congress and all 330 million Americans.

The 2021 NDAA provides that support from Congress. It will prepare our military and servicemembers to address the threats that exist today, while preparing for those that we will inevitably face tomorrow.

Earlier this month, this legislation passed the House by a vote of 335 to 78 and the Senate by a vote of 84 to 13. Those are rare vote margins in Congress these days, and that alone is a testament to the importance of this legislation and its bipartisan support.

We know the President has the constitutional authority to veto any bill for virtually any reason, and he has exercised that power with this legislation. The reasons the President has given I don't think are frivolous at all, but they just shouldn't be tagged to this particular piece of legislation. His concerns about section 230 under the Communication Decency Act and the power of these social media platforms that censor speech is troubling indeed. This is something we really haven't confronted before. We know that under the First Amendment, the government can't censor speech, but with smalltown newspapers and media outlets and other alternatives fading away, more and more the American people rely on Facebook and Google and other internet platforms to get their information, and they have, I believe, become de facto public forums. So I agree that we do need to address section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, as the President has pointed out.

The President also has a point about the Commission to rename military bases that are part of the Defense Authorization Act. Unfortunately, the amendment that was adopted in the Armed Services Committee undermines the role of Congress, once the Commission makes its report, to do as Congress believes should be done. But the truth is, as we have learned from our friends across the pond in the UK, no Parliament can bind a future Parliament, and indeed no Congress can bind a future Congress. That is true. So if these are things the President believes we should address and that Members of Congress and the new administration believe we should address, we will address them, and we have an opportunity to do that, but we should not try to do that on this bill and risk the loss of this important piece of legislation now in its 60th year of adoption.

The Defense Department is hands down the largest employer in the United States, with nearly 2.9 million employees, including both servicemembers and civilians. These men and women can be found in more than 160 countries around the world and on all seven continents. Supporting them is a Herculean task, and the NDAA is a significant way in which we do that.

The Defense authorization bill also includes a 3-percent pay raise for our troops and additional support for their families, such as career support for military spouses and quality childcare on military bases. Given the fact that we have an All-Volunteer military, it is important we not only support our servicemembers who wear the uniform but the families who support them as well. I have heard it said, you can recruit a member of the U.S. military, but if you want to retain them, you have to take care of their family, and I believe that is absolutely true.

This bill also ensures previous reforms to improve the quality of military housing and healthcare are implemented appropriately. Those who serve in our military have made tremendous sacrifices in order to safeguard our freedoms and our way of life. I regard our support for them and for our national defense the No. 1 priority of the Federal Government. Everything else pales in significance. So we should do everything in our power to ensure that they and their families are appropriately taken care of.

Beyond pay and benefits, that means giving the military members the training, the facilities, and the equipment they need not only to succeed on the job but to return home safely.

The NDAA authorizes military construction projects across the country, including \$183 million in Texas, which will bring serious updates and improvements to our military bases. At Joint Base San Antonio, this funding will provide for a range of new facilities, including a barracks, a flight simulation system, and an F-16 Mission Training Center.

At Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth, it will support an F-35 operations and

maintenance facility, vehicle maintenance shop, and an aircraft maintenance hangar. It will also support fuel facilities at Fort Hood and provide additional funding for the Pantex Plant in Amarillo, which maintains a large portion of our nuclear stockpile. Maintained and modernized facilities are a critical component to military readiness, and this legislation makes tremendous investments in our facilities around the world. It will authorize 93 new F-35 Joint Strike Fighters that will be built by Texans in Fort Worth. As we work to counter increasingly sophisticated adversaries around the world, this investment in our military readiness could not be more important.

In addition to supporting our members in uniform and ensuring they are ready for action when called upon, the NDAA helps our military take stock of the evolving threat landscape and ensures that our country is taking active steps to counter threats on the horizon.

In recent years, China and Russia have risen to the top of the threats to our country and to world order, with China now assuming the No. 1 role. We remember the Cold War after World War II, where we sought to contain and counter Soviet expansionism, and, actually, the mutual deterrents that we have established during that time has worked. But China is a unique challenge, and none of the old rules apply to China.

They are increasingly belligerent and well resourced and continue to demonstrate a lack of respect not only for the United States and our closest allies but for basic human rights.

The Chinese Government continues its disturbing and unacceptable genocide against the Uighur people. The so-called political reeducation camps are nothing more than concentration camps where Uighurs are tortured. Recent reporting has found that the treatment in these camps often includes forced abortions, birth control, and sterilization. And China continues to chip away at the freedoms and autonomy of Hong Kong, notwithstanding its promises to the contrary, using a so-called national security law to extinguish opposition to the Chinese Communist Party and to deny the people of Hong Kong the freedoms that they were promised.

As I mentioned, though, China doesn't stand alone as a threat to the world. Russia has become increasingly aggressive around the world in its effort to wreak chaos and sow discord. Since their attempts to interfere with the 2016 election, we have witnessed aggression after aggression from Russia, not just here in the cyber space but around the world.

From Russia-backed mercenaries fighting in the Middle East to its attempt to steal the coronavirus vaccine research and, in the last few weeks, a massive cyber attack on U.S. Government agencies, Russia continues to undermine the United States and our allies and shows no signs of stopping.

It has become increasingly clear, if it wasn't already, that China and Russia adhere to no rules and no principles but their own. As the national defense strategy outlined, the threats posed by these two countries are increasingly dangerous, and countering these growing threats requires a clear and concentrated effort from Congress. That is exactly why passing the NDAA—the National Defense Authorization Act—is so important.

This legislation prioritizes strategic competition with China and Russia and takes a strong approach to counter the threats posed by adversaries around the world. It will build on the progress we have made in recent years to strengthen our military after the draconian cuts during the Obama-Biden administration and achieve peace through strength.

Over the last several decades, the NDAA has provided an annual opportunity for us to take stock of the evolving threat landscape and ensure that our national defense is prepared to meet the challenges not only of today but of tomorrow, and this year's Defense Authorization Act is no exception.

It takes a strong approach to counter the threats posed by our adversaries around the world. It invests in modernized national defense that is critical to maintaining peace through strength, and it provides support for our servicemembers and their families. Above all, it sends a message to the world that our country is and will remain the global military leader.

I have supported this legislation on the Senate floor many times, and I will do so once again when the opportunity to vote to override the veto presents itself.

One of Congress's most critical responsibilities is to provide for the common defense, and the NDAA—the National Defense Authorization Act—is how we will deliver.

I yield the floor.

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

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I was disappointed last week when President Trump vetoed the NDAA.

This will be the 60th year that we have had the NDAA. The NDAA is the National Defense Authorization Act, and I have said so many times, countless times—on the floor of the House and on the floor of the Senate—that this is the most important bill that we have. Some people don't agree with that, but I do.