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 Liam P. Hardy, of Virginia, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces for the term of fifteen years to expire on the date prescribed by law.

Mitch McConnell, Shelley Moore Capito, John Hoeven, Roger F. Wicker, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Joni Ernst, Roy Blunt, Todd Young, Mike Rounds, Thom Tillis, John Cornyn, Michael B. Enzi, Lindsey Graham, Tim Scott, Mike Crapo, James E. Risch, James Lankford.

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.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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, first, I hope all of my colleagues had a good and fine Thanksgiving. We all know that across the country we celebrated a Thanksgiving—all of us, every American—unlike any in recent memory. Too many loved ones spent this holiday alone, unable to join with loved ones out of concern for their safety. As painful as it is to refrain from seeing family and friends, these are tough choices that we sometimes have to make, and we need to maintain our resolve more than ever.

While the hope of a vaccine shimmers on the near horizon, we are living through the worst stretch of the pandemic right now. Last Friday, for the first time, over 200,000 new cases of COVID were reported in a single day. The United States is averaging over 1 million new cases a week. Some 20 percent of all patients now hospitalized in the United States have COVID–19.

The worst and most unalterable part of this pandemic, of course, are the deaths. Since November 10, America has been losing more than 1,000 precious lives a day. On one day, November 24, we lost more than 2,000. The national death toll stands at a very sad 270,000 American souls. Families all across the country are experiencing the unthinkable, unbearable losses of their loved ones.

As a compassionate nation, we cannot and must not ignore or become inured to this terrible reality. We must not avert our gaze. We must acknowledge the lives we are losing. We must honor the grief of the children, parents, spouses, siblings, and friends of the increasing number of Americans who are dying from COVID–19 every single day. We must redouble our efforts to flatten the curve and protect each other by wearing masks, practicing social distancing, and complying with the guidance of health officials.

As this Chamber gavels back into session, we must redouble our efforts before the end of the calendar year. As the pandemic increases in severity, so does the economic pain felt by countless working families and small business owners. In a few short weeks, several provisions of the CARES Act—including student loan forbearance, eviction moratoriums, and jobless benefits for millions of workers—will expire.

So first and foremost on the Senate's to-do list is COVID relief. Both sides should come together and negotiate a COVID relief bill in a bipartisan way that meets the needs of our businesses, our schools, our healthcare systems, our workers, and our families.

At the start of this crisis, Democrats and Republicans came together in a flurry of negotiations—I was thickly involved with them with Secretary Mnuchin—to pass a bill that truly met the moment. Now we are about to reach a new, more difficult stage of the crisis. We need to renew that spirit, that urgency, that bipartisanship.

Leader MCCONNELL's view, stated just a few minutes ago, seems to be that the only things that should be in this bill are things Republicans approve of, even if the needs of the country—the desperate needs of the country—are beyond the small list that Republicans might support. That is not real compromise.

We need to come together. Both sides must give. We have a Democratic House, and in the Senate there is a need for Democratic votes to pass any bill, so we need a true bipartisan bill—not ''this is our bill; take it or leave it''—that can bring us together and solve the desperate needs of the American people, which we all very much want to solve.

Mr. President, the second item on our to-do list is Federal appropriations, which expire in 2 weeks. As we speak, appropriators from both sides in the relevant committees continue their negotiations. It is my hope and expectation that we can come to an agreement very soon.

Mr. President, third and finally, Congress should pass the annual Defense bill. As our country prepares for a peaceful transfer of power, the continuity of our national security is paramount. For nearly 60 years, Congress has never failed to pass the annual Defense bill, but this year it seems the normally uncontroversial legislation has hit a snag. President Trump has threatened to veto the bill over a provision that would rename military bases and installations named after Confederate military leaders, men who would rend this country in half to preserve the institution of slavery, men who literally fought against this Nation's military in pursuit of an ignoble cause.

For that—a provision to rename our military bases to honor actual heroes rather than traitors to our country—President Trump is threatening to veto a pay raise for our troops. And it seems that Republicans in Congress are slow-walking the bill in hopes of finding some way to appease the outgoing President rather than just passing the bill over his rather ridiculous objection.

The provision to rename these installations was included in both the House- and Senate-passed versions of the bill, and the larger bill passed both Chambers with broad bipartisan support. There is no reason to further delay a pay raise for our living military heroes because President Trump wants to honor dead Confederate traitors.

The other provision that is at risk, shockingly, from our Republican colleagues is an amendment to assist veterans who have long suffered from their exposure to Agent Orange in the Vietnam war. The amendment passed this Chamber with 94 votes in favor, a rare and near-unanimous demonstration of bipartisan support.

The Trump administration's own VA advisory panel recommended this policy to improve healthcare for these veterans, but for some reason, our Republican counterparts are now reportedly trying to strip it from any final agreement. It would be an affront to a group of ailing veterans, who have suffered enough already, to strip a provision that would help provide them adequate healthcare.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION NOMINEES

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now on President-Elect Biden's nominees, as President-Elect Biden prepares to assume office on January 20, he is beginning to announce a slate of qualified, experienced public servants whom he intends to nominate to his Cabinet or other key administrative positions.

This morning, the President-elect announced that he has assembled his core economic team, led by another Brooklyn native, Janet Yellen, who would be the first woman to ever hold the title of Treasury Secretary. The President-elect's economic team clearly has the experience, the knowledge, and the prowess to meet the seriousness of this moment. More than that, they understand the needs of all Americans because they represent all different kinds of Americans.

They will get to work not just on rebuilding our economy but striving to