The Army Secretary and the Army Chief of Staff released a joint statement clarifying, based on these dangerous actions proposed by the President's team, that ''there is no role for the U.S. military in determining the outcome of an American election.''

It is hard to believe that those officials in our government who help defend our country would even have to say that based upon what the reporting indicates.

So I hope that, even in this holiday season, it is made very clear by every Member of the U.S. Senate that this will not be tolerated and has to be condemned. We can't just say: Oh, well, it is another outrage, another insult. It should be condemned, just like the actions of the Russian Government should be condemned as well.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I just want to make a couple of brief comments about the legislation we are going to be voting on, we hope, tonight.

I will talk about, for purposes of time, not the spending bill or the spending portion, the so-called omnibus. I will talk about the COVID–19 relief provisions. I won't go through all of them, obviously, but there is a lot of good news for many Americans in this legislation.

The consensus on unemployment benefits will help a lot of Americans: $300 per week for all Americans receiving unemployment benefits through March 14. The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program is extended to help self-employed individuals, gig workers, and others in nontraditional employment.

The economic impact payments for Americans across the country: $600 for individuals making up to $75,000 a year and $1,200 for couples making up to $150,000 per year, as well as a $600 payment for each dependent child. That means a family of four would receive $2,400 in direct payments.

The Paycheck Protection Program, so-called PPP: $284 billion for the first and second PPP forgivable loans.

There is more money for transportation, more money for health, and, in particular, money for the procurement of vaccines and therapeutics, as well as money for vaccine distribution.

Education is funded for more than $80 billion; emergency rental assistance, $25 billion; the Postal Service, $10 billion; childcare, $10 billion—both very important.

The ones I am especially grateful for, even though on a lot of these I would vote for higher numbers—a lot of us would—are the nutrition provisions: $26 billion in agriculture and nutrition funding. Half of that will be used for direct payments to farmers who have suffered losses due to the impact of the pandemic. The remaining 13, the other half of the 26—$13 billion will be used to combat food insecurity, which is on the rise due to the economic impact of the pandemic.

There is a lot in here that is positive for American families, for workers, for small businesses, and for so many other needs. It took way too long. This is months overdue. There are gaps in it.

I think this is a 3-month bill to help folks get through January, February, and March. I think we will need another bill after that. And, obviously, I am very disappointed we don't have dollars in here to help nursing homes, which I fought very hard for. We will keep up that fight.

It doesn't have the direct help to State and local governments, even though there are provisions that will help States but not nearly enough.

So it is far, far from perfect, but I think it is important that we pass it to provide direct help to people who have challenges, whether it is with employment or running a small business or supporting their families.

The last point I will make on this is that we gather here today—and we hope the vote will be tonight before midnight, but we don't know. But it is just ironic that today is the 21st of December, the winter solstice, the darkest day of the year.

I was noting this weekend Elizabeth Dias wrote an op-ed, a very thoughtful op-ed, in the New York Times about winter and all of the ways different cultures have dealt with the darkness and the severity of winter. But here is what she says, and I hope it provides a context for what we are about to pass and what we must do in the months ahead when the virus is still raging and the death number keeps climbing. Here is what Elizabeth Dias says:

> The great irony of winter is that the moment darkness is greatest is also the moment light is about to return. Each year the winter solstice comes with the promise that the next day will be brighter.

In this season of hope and this holiday season, we hope and we pray that this legislation will bring some light to people's lives, that it will give them a sense, in addition to having a vaccine available now, that brighter days are ahead.

We can't underestimate the darkness that has engulfed so many families, but we hope tonight that we provide at least a measure of light to all the darkness that so many families have faced.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to engage in a colloquy with my friend and colleague from the State of Delaware, TOM CARPER.

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

ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I have just recently been talking about a number of pieces of legislation that have come through the Environment and Public Works Committee: the water resources act, the USE IT Act, the act called DERA to eliminate and reduce emissions from diesels, as well as additional legislation on HFCs.

My partner in all of those is here on the floor now, and I would just like to ask him if he would—since he has been such a great partner for the last 4 years that I have chaired the committee—talk about this as an accomplishment for the environment, for the committee, and for the Senate and for the country.

So I am just kind of curious, from his standpoint, where he sees things as a sign of success.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, if my colleague will yield.

As Senator CASEY leaves, I thought his point about longest night and every day that follows will be brighter, and some of the provisions that Senator BARRASSO and I, along with JOHN NEELY KENNEDY, have included in the Nation's major budget piece of legislation ensure that it will be brighter.

One of the pieces of legislation, as Senator BARRASSO knows, deals with the phasedown of HFCs, hydrofluorocarbons. They are 1,000 times worse for climate change than carbon dioxide. Under the legislation that we have offered, it will phase down their utilization over the next 15 years by 85 percent. What is that worth? It is worth a half a degree Celsius—just this one thing, just this one provision.

A lot of people on this planet think the biggest challenge that we face on this planet right now, an existential threat, is the fact that our planet is getting warmer and that we need to do something about it. In this legislation, we do take a big bite out of it.

And my hope is what it will be is that it will serve as a source of encouragement for other Democrats and Republicans, maybe an Independent or two, to take other steps as we come back into the new year with the new administration and make further progress.

One of the great things that I love about our HFC legislation—thanks, colleague.

One of the great things, Mr. Chairman, that I love about our HFC legislation is that it shows that you can do good things for our planet and create jobs. That is what I said: do good things for our planet in the battle against climate change and create jobs. How many jobs? Tens of thousands of jobs—in this country, in this country; billions of dollars' worth of economic growth—in this country—and at the same time doing good things with respect to climate change.

Interestingly, it is not every day you find legislation supported by the National Association of Manufacturers, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, most major environmental groups, and cosponsored by, gosh, two-thirds of the Senate—Democrats and Republicans alike.