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 the debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 9, Jennifer Mulhern Granholm, of Michigan, to be Secretary of Energy.

Charles E. Schumer, Cory A. Booker, Jon Ossoff, Richard Blumenthal, Richard J. Durbin, Alex Padilla, Christopher A. Coons, Margaret Wood Hassan, Sheldon Whitehouse, Robert Menendez, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Tim Kaine, Tammy Baldwin, Ron Wyden, Mazie K. Hirono, Tammy Duckworth.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I now ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume consideration of the Thomas-Greenfield nomination as provided under the previous order.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). The Republican leader is recognized.

KENTUCKY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, families across Kentucky are recovering from a week of punishing winter weather. As many as 154,000 Kentuckians lost heat and power, particularly across the eastern parts of the Commonwealth. Treacherous road conditions and fallen power lines made it a challenge to get help to those in need. Over the weekend, we learned that multiple lives were tragically lost in the aftermath of these storms, but as they always do, Kentuckians sprang into action.

Electric co-op linemen, first responders, and the Kentucky National Guard worked around the clock to clear debris and to restore power. Crews set up warming shelters and performed countless wellness checks. Churches, local businesses, and citizens distributed food, blankets, and other supplies.

So we are grateful for those who joined the response to help their neighbors and to help them stay safe.

Unfortunately, while temperatures are climbing above freezing, thousands remain without power. My staff and I continue to stay in close contact with local and State officials. Along with the rest of the Kentucky delegation, we are focused and ready to help in the recovery.

CORONAVIRUS

Now, on an entirely different matter, Madam President, the year just behind us will be remembered for the suffering, grief, and sacrifice it forced on our Nation.

Today, as our COVID–19 death toll passes 500,000, millions of Americans are feeling the pain of personal loss, but as we mark this terrible milestone, we stand here in early 2021 at what increasingly appears to be a crossroads. Far brighter days ahead appear to be close at hand.

So far, more than 63 million vaccine doses have been administered, and another 1.8 million Americans are now receiving a shot every day. At the same time, the rolling average of COVID-related deaths has fallen to barely half its January high, and mounting evidence suggests our economy is chomping at the bit to rebuild the prosperity we lost last year.

We reached this threshold because, in part, of the historic bipartisan work Congress built just last year—from the job-saving Paycheck Protection Program to Operation Warp Speed and its historically successful sprint toward vaccines, to cushioning the blow for unemployed Americans, and so much more.

We spent roughly $4 trillion last year—the largest peacetime fiscal expansion in American history by far. And the five bills that passed the Senate passed 96 to 1, 90 to 8, 96 to 0, by voice vote, and 92 to 6.

That got us to the crossroads, with a truly terrible 12 months behind us but in a better position to move forward than many experts had predicted. Now the policies that Washington puts forward will help determine what kind of year 2021 will be for American families.

So are we destined to spend a second year in a national defensive crouch? Are we going to surrender another school year to the pandemic, another year of elevated unemployment, another year of diminished social and community life or—or are we going to plant a flag and say this is the year that America comes roaring back? Are we going to make this the year we reclaim our lives and retake our country in a way that is safe and smart but determined?

Washington gets a major say on this, but, unfortunately, there seems to be some impulse on the Democratic side to act as though we are still stuck back in April of 2020, and we are going to be stuck there for all of 2021.

The partisan legislation Democrats are preparing to ram through looks like something you would pass to blunt another year of shutdowns, not to help guide a smart and proactive recovery. It looks more like another big bandage for a mostly shutdown country rather than a launching pad to help us get back on offense.

Look at schools. All the facts and hard evidence show that, with simple safety precautions, K–12 schools can and should be reopening safely right now. Yet the Biden administration is going out of its way to avoid getting kids back in school. They have their own experts contradicting their own recent statements and their own CDC backpedaling from the hard science, all to accommodate Big Labor's goalpost-moving.

Just look at the proposed money in their new partisan bill for K–12 schools. They call it an emergency relief fund, but just 5 percent of the money they want would be spent in fiscal year 2021. Ninety-five percent of this so-called emergency relief for schools would go out in fiscal 2022 and beyond.

Take the economy, experts across the spectrum say that incomes, savings, job opportunities, and industry outlooks are already rebounding. Further aid needs to be smartly targeted so government doesn't get in the way.

But Democrats want to double down on bandaid policies like they are planning for another year of stagnation, instead of trying to set up success.

Almost every part of their draft reads like Democrats took the things they ideologically wanted to spend money on and worked backward, instead of starting with the actual state of the country, the actual needs of American families, and working toward that—not terribly surprising. Remember, one senior House Democrat told everybody last spring the pandemic would be ''a tremendous opportunity to restructure things to fit our vision.''

So I guess that is why they have gone heavy on non-COVID-related, liberal wish list items, like the job-killing minimum wage policy, the environmental justice grants, the wheelbarrows of cash for State and local governments, multiple times any serious estimate of remaining need, the attempts to expand taxpayer funding for abortions.

They go heavy on all of that but light on practical solutions to get kids back in school, workers safely back on the job, and help the American people reclaim their lives from this microscopic foreign invader.

The American people do not deserve policies that presume 2021 will be just like 2020. Our Nation needs this year to be different.

If the administration were interested in policies to make that happen, they would find the same kind of bipartisan support that every historic COVID–19 package has received so far.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The senior Senator from Illinois.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, yesterday would have been John Lewis's 81st birthday. That a fearless young man, who was threatened, jailed, beaten half to death so many times for the cause of love and justice, actually lived to reach the age of 80 seems like a miracle.

Now, as America celebrates our first Black History Month since his passing, we miss him, but we still have the moral force of his message. John made sure of that. Two days before he died, he wrote an essay for the New York Times. He asked the paper to print his words on the day of his funeral—of his ''homegoing,'' as he said. It was his last message to America.