

It does contain one of the largest pay raises in decades.

There will perhaps be more said on final passage, but I am grateful to my colleague and friend and fellow veteran, Senator REED, and I urge the passage of this vote.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first let me thank Chairman REED of the Armed Services Committee for his great leadership, Ranking Member WICKER, and all the members of the committee and the conferees for their good work in the past few weeks.

So, in a few moments, I will lay down the NDAA conference report. There was a lot of hard work on both sides, and we have reached agreement for this year's Defense authorization bill. It is never easy—harder now than ever before.

I will file cloture on the NDAA later today. Members can expect to take votes on this early next week.

At a time of huge trouble for global security, doing the Defense authorization bill is more important than ever. The annual Defense bill is a prime example of both sides cooperating on a strong bipartisan package to strengthen America's national security, to take care of our servicemembers, and to keep the United States the leader in innovation.

When we began the December session, I said the Senate faces three important tasks: ending the hold on military nominees, which we did earlier this week; getting NDAA done, which we are doing today and early next week; and, then, the biggest and hardest of all is passing the supplemental.

We want to get that done as well. It is critical. We are going to keep working.

VOTE ON MOTION TO PROCEED

I move to proceed to the conference report to accompany H.R. 2670, the National Defense Authorization Act.

And now I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to laying down the conference report.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

The result was announced—yeas 82, nays 15, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 334 Leg.]

YEAS—82

Baldwin	Britt	Cardin
Barrasso	Brown	Carper
Bennet	Budd	Casey
Blackburn	Butler	Cassidy
Blumenthal	Cantwell	Collins
Boozman	Capito	Coons

Cornyn	Kelly	Rubio
Cortez Masto	Kennedy	Schatz
Cotton	King	Schmitt
Crapo	Klobuchar	Schumer
Cruz	Lankford	Scott (FL)
Daines	Lummis	Scott (SC)
Duckworth	Manchin	Shaheen
Durbin	Marshall	Sinema
Ernst	McConnell	Smith
Fetterman	Menendez	Stabenow
Fischer	Mullin	Tester
Gillibrand	Murkowski	Thune
Graham	Murphy	Tillis
Grassley	Murray	Van Hollen
Hagerty	Ossoff	Warner
Hassan	Padilla	Warnock
Heinrich	Peters	Welch
Hickenlooper	Reed	Whitehouse
Hirono	Ricketts	Wicker
Hoeven	Risch	Young
Hyde-Smith	Romney	
Kaine	Rosen	

NAYS—15

Booker	Lujan	Sullivan
Braun	Markey	Tuberville
Hawley	Merkley	Vance
Johnson	Paul	Warren
Lee	Sanders	Wyden

NOT VOTING—3

Cramer	Moran	Rounds
--------	-------	--------

The motion was agreed to.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PETERS). The Chair lays before the Senate the conference report to accompany H.R. 2670, which will be stated by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee on conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 2670) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2024 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for Military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes, having met, have agreed that the House recede from its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate and agree to the same with an amendment and the Senate agree to the same, signed by a majority of the conferees on the part of both Houses.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the conference report.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of December 6, 2023.)

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

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 conference report to accompany H.R. 2670, a bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2024 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Charles E. Schumer, Jack Reed, Tammy Duckworth, Margaret Wood Hassan, Angus S. King, Jr., Robert P. Casey, Jr., Tim Kaine, Chris Van Hollen, Jeanne Shaheen, Mark Kelly, Christopher A. Coons, Mazie Hirono, Alex Padilla, Patty Murray, Michael F. Bennet, Catherine Cortez Masto, Raphael G. Warnock.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT WITH INSTRUCTIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. I move to recommit the conference report to conference with instructions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New York [Mr. SCHUMER] moves that the conference report with respect to H.R. 2670 be recommitted with instructions that the conferees on the part of the Senate be instructed to insert language that makes the effective date of the measure one day after the date of enactment.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask that further reading be dispensed with.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask for the yeas and nays on my motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 1373

Mr. SCHUMER. I have an amendment to the instructions at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New York [Mr. SCHUMER] proposes an amendment numbered 1373 to the instructions of the motion to recommit the conference report to accompany H.R. 2670 to the committee on conference.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To modify the effective date)

In the motion, strike "one day" and insert "two days".

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask for the yeas and nays on my amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 1374 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1373

Mr. SCHUMER. I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New York [Mr. SCHUMER] proposes an amendment numbered 1374 to amendment No. 1373.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To modify the effective date)

On page 1, line 1, strike, "two days" and insert "three days".

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask that the mandatory quorum call for the cloture motion filed today be waived.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. I move to proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Executive Calendar No. 352.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Richard E.N. Federico, of Kansas, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Tenth Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be able to speak for up to 15 minutes.

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

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, earlier this summer, millions of Americans learned about the origins of our country's nuclear program.

What, perhaps, more Americans are learning about now are the tens of thousands of brave American citizens who risked their health and, in many instances, gave their lives to make that program a success. And what many are learning now is that those Americans who risked their lives, who gave their health, did it without the knowledge that their government was exposing them to nuclear radiation, without the consent from their government, and for years and years and years without any kind of help or any kind of compensation, so much so that in 1990, this body passed a landmark piece of legislation that compensates the victims of the government's Oppenheimer-era nuclear program—those who were exposed to nuclear tests, those who were exposed to the radiation from nuclear waste without their consent and often, usually, in fact, without their knowledge.

This body passed a landmark piece of legislation that included some findings that I just want to read here. This body said: The health of those individuals who were unwitting participants in these tests and were put at risk to serve the national security interest of the United States deserve compensation.

They went on to say—this body did—that the United States should recognize and assume responsibility for the harm done to these brave Americans.

Finally, Congress actually offered an apology—something you don't see often—an apology to its people whom it had exposed to nuclear radiation. Congress apologized on behalf of the

Nation to the individuals and their families for the hardships they have endured. That was exactly the right thing to do.

But today Congress is effectively rescinding that apology because today Congress is moving forward, the Senate is moving forward with the Defense bill that strips this program out of the law, that allows this program to expire, that turns its back on the tens of thousands of good Americans who have sacrificed for their country, who have served their country, who have dutifully given their health and, in many cases, their lives to this country and have gotten nothing. And those who have depended on this compensation provided from 1990 will soon get nothing because today this body decides to allow that program to expire.

How did this happen? Just earlier this year, in July, I stood right there in the well of the Senate as this body passed, on an overwhelming bipartisan basis—61 votes on the floor of the Senate—to reauthorize the nuclear compensation program and to update it to include more Americans who we now know—we have learned since 1990, thousands of more Americans who were exposed to the government's nuclear waste and radiation, including thousands and thousands in my home State in the State of Missouri.

We voted for it. We voted for it on an overwhelming bipartisan basis. I would go so far as to say, it would be pretty hard to get 61 Senators to vote for vanilla as a good ice cream, and yet 61 Senators voted yes to renew this program, to preserve it, to keep our commitment to the good people of this country.

And yet today, the program is gone. Today, the bill before us on the floor of the Senate, it is nowhere to be found.

What happened? What happened is what so often happens in this town and in this body. A backroom deal is what happened. Yes, the leaders of Congress went to a back room, and over the last few weeks, negotiated away this compensation for these thousands and thousands of Americans—negotiated away, voted for by the Senate, relied on for 30-plus years by thousands of Americans, and now it is gone.

Why? Because it is more important to pay the defense contractors than to pay the suits. Oh, the suits will get paid. Mark that down. That is always true in Washington. The defense contractors will get paid, you can bet your bottom dollar. We have more than enough money for them.

But for the people of my State who are sick with cancer because of the government's nuclear waste, they get nothing. For the people of New Mexico or Idaho or Colorado or Arizona or Washington State or Oregon State or anywhere else in this country exposed to the government's nuclear test and radiation, they get nothing.

This is a grave injustice. This isn't an inconvenience. This isn't an oops. I wish it were different. This is an injus-

tice. This is this body turning its back on these good, proud Americans.

This is the Senate prioritizing—I don't know what. It is certainly not the national security of the United States because the greatest strength of the United States is in the people of the United States, and this bill turns its back on the people of the United States in defense of the lobbyists and the suits and the corporate entities who are going to get paid. Hand over fist, they are going to make money while the American people get left out in the cold.

I am not going to vote for this bill, to say the least. And I am going to do everything in my power to slow it and stop it if I can.

I want to introduce my colleagues and the rest of the country to some of the victims, some of the people who are going to get turned out in the cold because of the decision made by the leadership of this Congress.

Let me start with Zoey. You are looking at a picture of her here. This is Zoey from St. Louis. Zoey was born with a mass on her ovary—born with a mass on her ovary. She had surgery to remove it when she was just 3 weeks old. She is 5 now. But just last night, Zoey's parents had to rush her to the hospital for an MRI because she remains in incredible pain.

Why does Zoey have cancer? Why was she born with a mass on her ovaries? Because she grew up in an area that has known nuclear contamination from the Manhattan Project that the government has not cleaned up and has not compensated Zoey or her parents for.

Take a good look. This is whom the Senate is leaving out in the cold. This is who congressional leadership has decided is not important. It is girls like Zoey, 5 years old.

Meet Zack. This is baby Zack. He was born with a rare brain tumor, one that is known to be caused by nuclear radiation. Zack had his first surgery when he was 1 week old—1 week. He started chemo when he was 3 months old—3 months. I bet there are many people within the sound of my voice who have been on chemo and know what it is like. Can you imagine a 3-month-old baby on chemo to start his life? Zack died when he was 6.

Why was Zack sick? Zack grew up in an area of St. Louis, was born in an area of St. Louis that is known to have nuclear contamination. His mother Kim grew up along a place called Cold War Creek, which is, even as I stand here and speak, still contaminated—still contaminated—with nuclear radiation.

Why don't we meet Mary. Mary lived her entire life in St. Louis. She went to high school there. She met her husband there, got married, and raised a family there. When she decided to go to nursing school to try to give something back to her community that had done so much for her, she was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer.