

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BRAUN). The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 141, H.R. 3055, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Commerce and Justice, Science, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2020, and for other purposes.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for the motion to proceed.

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 motion to proceed to Calendar No. 141, H.R. 3055, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Commerce and Justice, Science, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2020, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, David Perdue, John Cornyn, John Thune, John Hoeven, John Boozman, Thom Tillis, Steve Daines, Roger F. Wicker, Pat Roberts, John Barrasso, Richard Burr, Shelley Moore Capito, Roy Blunt, Mike Rounds, Mike Crapo, James E. Risch.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I withdraw the motion to proceed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2020—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 140, H.R. 2740.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 140, H.R. 2740, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2020.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for the motion to proceed.

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 motion to proceed to Calendar No. 140, H.R.

2740, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2020, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, David Perdue, John Cornyn, John Thune, John Hoeven, John Boozman, Thom Tillis, Steve Daines, Roger F. Wicker, Pat Roberts, John Barrasso, Richard Burr, Shelley Moore Capito, Roy Blunt, Mike Rounds, Mike Crapo, James E. Risch.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

TURKEY AND SYRIA

Mr. ROMNEY. Mr. President, I rise today to address the current situation in Syria.

First, I welcome the Vice President's announcement of a cease-fire, which will prevent further loss of life. I hope the agreement is honored. But at the heart of this matter is a central question of why these terms and assurances were not negotiated before the President consented to withdraw our troops.

Let me briefly recount what has happened in the past 7 days since the United States announced our withdrawal. The Kurds, suffering loss of life and property, have allied with Assad. Russia has assumed control of our previous military positions, and the United States has been forced in many cases to bomb our own facilities to prevent their appropriation by Russia and Turkey.

The announcement today is being portrayed as a victory. It is far from a victory. Serious questions remain about how the decision was reached precipitously to withdraw from Syria and why that decision was reached.

Given the initial details of the cease-fire agreement, the administration must also explain what America's future role will be in the region, what happens now to the Kurds, and why Turkey will face no apparent consequences. Further, the cease-fire does not change the fact that America has abandoned an ally. Adding insult to dishonor, the administration speaks cavalierly, even flippantly, as our ally has suffered death and casualty. Their homes have been burned, and their families have been torn apart.

We know the truth about our Kurd allies. They lost 11,000 combatants in our joint effort to defeat ISIS. We dropped bombs from the air and provided intelligence and logistics behind the lines. The Kurds lost thousands of lives, and 86 brave Americans also lost their lives so tragically.

It is argued that the Kurds were fighting for themselves. Of course they were. That is the nature of an alliance. We fight together, each pursuing our own vital interests. America leaves no soldier behind, often at great cost in blood and treasure. We recover our

dead and our wounded, and we free our men and women who are held captive. This is a matter of American honor and promise. So, too, is the principle that we stand by our allies, that we do not abandon our friends.

The decision to abandon the Kurds violates one of our most sacred duties. It strikes at American honor. What we have done to the Kurds will stand as a blood stain in the annals of American history.

There are broad strategic implications of our decision, as well. Iranian and Russian interests in the Middle East have been advanced by our decision at a time when we were applying maximum pressure on Iran. By giving them a stronger hand in Syria, we have actually weakened that pressure. Russia's objective to play a greater role in the Middle East has also been greatly enhanced. The Kurds, out of desperation, have now aligned with Assad. So America is diminished, and Russia, Iran, and Assad are strengthened.

So I ask how and why this decision was reached. I serve on the Foreign Relations Committee, and given the Syria decision taken by the administration, I might be forgiven for wondering why our committee even exists. I say this because apparently the decision to leave Syria was made without consultation with the committee or even with the committee chairman and ranking member.

Just 3 weeks ago, our subcommittee held hearings to receive an extensive analysis of the conditions and the way forward in Syria. It was presented to us by the Syria Study Group, a bipartisan, congressionally mandated commission tasked with providing an in-depth assessment of the conditions in Syria and to provide recommendations for American strategy going forward. So far as I am aware, the administration made no effort to contact those who attended that hearing or to speak with the Syria Study Group to be able to understand the content in their extensive published report.

I ask whether it is the position of the administration that the Senate—a body of 100 people representing both political parties—is to be entirely absent from decisions of the magnitude just taken in Syria.

Some argue that we should not have been in Syria in the first place because there was not a vote taken by the Senate to engage in war there. I disagree. Congress has given the President legal authority and funding to fight against terrorists in Syria.

However, for purposes of argument, even if one believed that no authorization had been given, that is really irrelevant to the decision as to the withdrawal once we have allied with a people—the Kurds—committed to defend them, and together defeated ISIS. Once you jump in the ocean to save a drowning soul, you don't turn around with the excuse that you didn't have to jump in in the first place. It is a matter of commitment.