

Perhaps most importantly, the legislation before us is not only designed for continued advances in areas where the U.S. energy sector has seen success, it is also meant to take a sober assessment of where we are falling short.

As my colleague Chairman MURKOWSKI noted yesterday, the United States currently relies on foreign imports to meet our demand for dozens of mineral commodities. We are talking about rare substances with critical applications in manufacturing, energy production, and national security. These are critical products, but at present, domestic production does not satisfy domestic demand. That is why this legislation provides for new survey and cataloging efforts to identify new domestic supplies of important materials. It invests in extraction technologies that would harness existing mining infrastructure in places like Appalachian coal country to help meet the demand.

As the senior Senator from Kentucky, I know the importance of these investments firsthand. The working families and job creators in my State know that clean coal technologies and longstanding mining operations can continue to add tremendous value to the security and prosperity of our Nation.

There is a reason why this legislation has earned widespread praise from the researchers and energy industry leaders who would be affected the most. It is a product of serious, good-faith, bipartisan work. That is why organizations from the National Mining Association to the Environmental Defense Fund have found common ground in endorsing it.

I will have more to say about this legislation in the coming days, but right now, I am grateful for our colleagues on the Energy Committee for their work in bringing it to the floor. I look forward to considering their important legislation in the days ahead, and I would encourage all Members to join me in supporting this excellent work.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

ADVANCED GEOTHERMAL INNOVATION LEADERSHIP ACT OF 2019—MOTION TO PROCEED—RESUMED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to

proceed to S. 2657, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to S. 2657, a bill to support innovation in advanced geothermal research and development, and for other purposes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam 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.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, the number of confirmed coronavirus cases in the United States has recently surpassed 100. As more Americans are tested in the days and weeks to come, that number is expected to increase. Just this morning, we learned that a second New Yorker, from New Rochelle in Westchester County, has contracted the virus and is in serious condition and currently in a New York hospital. Our prayers are with him and his family.

This only underlines the urgent need to respond to the coronavirus on a national scale. The only appropriate response in Congress is to come together quickly and in a bipartisan fashion to deliver the resources and authorities our Federal agencies need to track and combat the virus, treat Americans with the disease, and develop a vaccine and additional treatments. We also must aid the States and localities in their efforts to deal with the disease because they are on the frontlines.

I am glad that Congress is headed in that direction. I expect that, today, appropriators will announce an agreement on an emergency, bipartisan funding package to deal with the coronavirus. The agreement is expected to include between \$7 billion and \$8 billion of funding—very close to the \$8.5 billion that we Senate Democrats requested last week—and over four or five times the amount of new funding initially proposed by the administration.

That is good news. When it comes to Americans' health and safety, there is no reason to be penny wise and pound foolish. If the bean counters at OMB unnecessarily cut the money we need, it will cost us more in the long run. It is far better to get our public health professionals, experts, and agencies the funding they need, up front and all together, rather than be forced to pass additional appropriations in the coming months. We may have to, but we ought not skimp now. If we did skimp, the scenario would make no sense. Yet, left to its own devices, that is what the administration would have done. So I

am glad we pushed them earlier, despite the fact that President Trump didn't want to hear anything contrary to what he was proposing.

I am pleased that both parties in Congress, in both Houses of Congress, are coming together to do the responsible thing. I hope and expect that we can pass the emergency appropriations through the Senate before the end of the week.

As Congress does what is necessary to respond to the coronavirus, unfortunately, the Trump administration's efforts leave much to be desired. While the Trump administration's response is slow, halting, loose with the facts, and President Trump blames everyone but himself, Congress—Democrats and Republicans, House and Senate—are acting like the adults in the room. We are not letting President Trump's accusations and nastiness, his false statements and his inability to really grapple with the problem—and, instead, try to brush it away—get in our way of doing what America needs to have done and done immediately.

Congressional appropriators have had to include provisions in the emergency bill to prevent the administration from stealing funds from other public health and disease programs to fight the coronavirus. That is what the White House wanted to do. Test kits were not as widely available or accurate as they should have been in the early days of the coronavirus outbreak. POLITICO reported this morning that the administration was very slow to develop an accurate test for coronavirus and slow to allow hospitals and public health labs to develop that on their own.

The emergency funding bill seeks to deal with these two issues. It explicitly funds laboratory testing. We may have to do even more in the weeks to come, but that is no reason not to immediately give a generous appropriation so that testing can be done. Every day we delay testing, every time a person who needs a test doesn't get one, is a day and a time when the virus gets worse and worse and worse and can spread.

There are still major issues with the lack of testing infrastructure that is being provided by the administration. States and cities still don't have enough tests, and yesterday we heard from the National Indian Health Board that the Indian Health Service and Tribal health facilities are being left behind in the coronavirus response and have received few, if any, resources. That is unacceptable.

Meanwhile, as Congress works—Democrats and Republicans, House and Senate—to come up with a strong, comprehensive bill with the necessary dollars, President Trump continues to spread rumor, loose speculation, and happy talk. If any member of the administration tells the President something optimistic, he repeats it and exaggerates it to the point of absurdity. The President said the disease might magically “disappear” once the weather gets warmer and promised that the

vaccine would arrive “soon”—his words. Only yesterday were a group of governmental health experts and pharmaceutical executives able to convince the President that a vaccine will not be ready in a matter of months—as the President believed and said—and, in fact, could take a year to develop.

We need leadership in this country. We need serious leadership at a time of crisis like this. We don't need the facts being brushed under the rug. We don't need executives being told: Just do happy talk. Don't tell the American people the truth.

We don't need a President who doesn't know the facts and blithely states whatever pops into his head that he thinks will benefit him for the moment.

This is a crisis. There is no substitute for credibility and honesty from our political leaders. We need the President and his team to level with the American people and tell the truth, more during a health crisis than ever before. Our public health professionals must tell the President the facts, and the President and his team must tell the American public the facts—just the facts.

Now, the Vice President and Ambassador Debbie Birx will speak to both Senate caucuses at lunch today. I am disappointed that Dr. Anthony Fauci, the Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, who was originally slated to join us, is no longer coming, but Senate Democrats have many questions for the Vice President about his administration's response to the outbreak and, even more importantly, what they are doing now to help deal with the problem as it gets worse and worse.

We look forward to pressing him on the need for transparency and decisiveness and hopefully getting useful answers because the health and safety of the American people are at stake.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, Samuel Johnson was a great thinker in the 19th century and was quoted many times for things that he observed even then. He did have one statement about nothing focusing the mind like the prospect of a hanging, and I would like to use that as an analogy to my comments this morning.

I do notice that the Senator from South Dakota has taken the floor. Let me yield to him because I think, in the order of speaking, he is next, and I will follow him.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

S. 2657

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I thank the Democratic whip for yielding time. I will be short here.

We are in a pretty good place in this country right now when it comes to energy. Our energy supply is abundant, and energy prices are generally afford-

able. We can't afford to become complacent. We are in a good place right now because of American innovation, because President Trump, working with our Republican majority in the Congress, took steps to expand our domestic energy supply and to lessen our dependence upon foreign oil.

If we want to keep American energy affordable and abundant, we need to make sure we stay on the cutting edge of energy innovation and continue to invest in our domestic energy supply, from oil and natural gas to renewable energy sources like hydropower and wind. We also need to make sure we stay on top of threats to our energy grid and our energy security.

Our colleagues at the Energy and Natural Resources Committee have spent a lot of time over the past months working on these issues, and yesterday we voted to move forward on bipartisan energy legislation put forward by Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairman LISA MURKOWSKI and Ranking Member JOE MANCHIN. The bill they put together, the American Energy Innovation Act, contains measures from more than 60 Senators focused on energy innovation—particularly, clean energy innovation—workplace development, and the security of our energy grid.

The American Energy Innovation Act invests in a wide range of clean energy technologies, from wind and solar to hydropower and geothermal. It also focuses on improving energy storage. Many modern clean energy technologies are intermittent or lack the reliability of traditional electric sources. The amount of energy produced from wind, for example, is dependent on the amount of wind on any given day. So it must be backed up by a traditional plant, often powered by natural gas.

Creating new ways to store clean energy will allow us to increase our reliance on renewable energy sources. The American Energy Innovation Act also focuses on improving research into carbon capture, and it directs the establishment of a research and development program to identify ways to use captured carbon.

The bill also invests in advanced nuclear energy research so that we can regain our edge in the use of this clean energy technology.

I plan to introduce amendments to the legislation to review where we can boost hydropower in the Upper Missouri River Basin and to develop ways to recycle the windmill blades used in wind energy generation.

Nearly half of the electricity generated in South Dakota is from hydroelectric, and we should explore building off of these investments through repowering existing dams and adding power generation to those without.

In addition to clean energy and innovation, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee's legislation focuses on boosting the security of our electric grid. Our electric grid is the

subject of a steady stream of cyber attacks, some of which could have devastating consequences. It is not hard to imagine the deadly results of prolonged traffic signal outages or long-term power outages at hospitals or fire stations. That is why the American Energy Innovation Act invests in cyber security and grid modernization.

The act also focuses on improving our domestic supply of some of the key elements and minerals that we rely on for manufacturing everything from computer chips to batteries, to defense applications. Right now we have to import too much—too much—of these critical minerals from countries like China. For the sake of our national security, it is important that we find ways to identify supplies of these minerals here at home.

Finally, the American Energy Innovation Act invests in workforce development. All the innovative technologies in the world will not help us if we don't have the skilled workers to operate and maintain these technologies. We need to ensure that, while we are investing in innovation, we are also investing in the energy workforce of the future.

This legislation would help ensure that we maintain our energy independence for the long term. It will boost the security of our electric grid, strengthen our national security, and invest in American workers. It will help pave the way for a clean energy future.

This is a good bill, and I hope that my colleagues will support it and not derail this legislation with partisan amendments. I know many of my colleagues across the aisle have a keen interest in adding certain energy tax provisions to this bill. I will remind them, however, that last summer the Senate Finance Committee created a number of task forces to examine expiring and expired tax policies. I co-lead the Energy Task Force along with the senior Senator from Michigan, and many of the energy tax items that we reviewed were included in the year-end bill in December. Others were not yet ready for prime time.

I am eager to continue to work with my colleagues on advancing American energy innovation, as this bill will do, but we have to be realistic about the fact that a number of the energy tax proposals in question are not yet ready for implementation and need to be considered in the context of other reforms and corrections to the Tax Code.

As I said, I hope debate over tax provisions or other amendments will not delay passage of this important bipartisan legislation, and I look forward to working with colleagues of both parties to advance this bill and to help secure America's energy future.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, as I noted earlier, Samuel Johnson once noted that there is nothing that focuses the mind like the prospect of a

hanging. I would say there is nothing that focuses the mind on the issue of healthcare like the prospect of a pandemic, and that is what we are facing now with the coronavirus. Americans should not panic and shouldn't be pessimistic, but we need to be realistic as the numbers total up around the world and we start to take an assessment of our own vulnerabilities—personal, family, community, and State vulnerabilities—here in the United States of America.

We are also, I hope, reflecting on what we are counting on to get us through this pandemic in a positive fashion in America. The first thing is we look to two major healthcare organizations of the Federal Government: the National Institutes of Health, which is the premier health research agency in the world, and the Centers for Disease Control, which, again, leads the world when it comes to preventing the spread of disease and threats to the public health of America.

The question we should ask ourselves is, How have we treated these agencies to date? The answers are mixed. The answer, when it comes to National Institutes of Health, is a positive one.

Over the last 4 years, something dramatic has occurred. I was happy to be part of a bipartisan effort that was led by Senator PATTY MURRAY of Washington, Senator ROY BLUNT of Missouri, and Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER of Tennessee. What we have accomplished in the last 4 years is to increase the spending at the National Institutes of Health for medical research grants from \$30 billion to \$39 billion. It is a dramatic increase.

We started off with a premise we wanted to increase the NIH budget by real growth of 5 percent—that is 5 percent over inflation—each year. We held to that standard; in fact, some years were even better. We have a lot to show for it. There have been real breakthroughs when it comes to medical research. We want to continue down this line.

When it came to the Centers for Disease Control, I had the same goal in mind. We didn't quite reach it. Over the last 4 years, we have seen a 14-percent increase at the CDC. I believe this coronavirus pandemic threat is going to open the eyes of America to the need to make sure the CDC is adequately, properly funded for years to come.

At the outset, the focus of the mind is on those agencies of government which do the absolute essential work of research and the prevention of the spread of disease. The NIH and CDC need to occupy a special place when it comes to budgeting by the Federal Government.

The second thing we note is there are practical questions to be asked and answered. We are now talking about the development of a test to determine whether individuals have been affected by the coronavirus. That test is now starting to come forward. It will be released in States across the United States in the next several weeks.

Some obvious, practical questions face us: How much does this test cost? Is it covered by health insurance? If it is not covered by health insurance, can the average family afford it? These are the practical questions which those of us who have good health insurance and are not worried about the next paycheck can take care of, but for millions of Americans, it is a significant challenge. We notice that in some cases it takes more than one test to determine that a person is truly free of the coronavirus.

The obvious question is, Does our health insurance cover this kind of testing? As I stand here, I don't know the answer to it. If it turns out to be an expensive test, and it is not covered by insurance, Americans are going to be faced with that challenge right off the bat.

It brings to mind the real fundamental issue of the debate in Congress over the last 10 years about health insurance. Our friends on the other side of the aisle argue that people ought to be able to pay less for health insurance that covers even less. We on this side call that junk insurance. The Affordable Care Act said that health insurance plans had to have certain basic coverage before they could be offered in this country. We got rid of the lifetime limits that some health insurance plans had. We eliminated the discrimination against people with preexisting conditions. We said that kids could stay on their parents' health insurance plan until they reached the age of 26. We said every health insurance plan had to include those provisions. We included coverage in basic health insurance of mental illness and addiction services—basic fundamental care that every American should expect when they buy health insurance.

The Republicans on the other side of the aisle say: Well, we ought to be able to buy insurance that doesn't cover those things. It will be cheaper. Let the consumers decide.

It is OK for a consumer to decide for less coverage, I suppose, if they can be guaranteed good health for the rest of their lives. No one knows about the next accident or the next diagnosis that might really call into question the adequacy of our health insurance coverage.

I stand with the Affordable Care Act. We should have a basic standard when it comes to health insurance in America so that when you buy a plan, it covers what most Americans will need, the basics that they will need. Junk insurance has no place in America, and it is no bargain for people who truly need health insurance for reimbursement.

When it comes to the cost of dealing with the coronavirus, whether it is the initial test or followup hospitalizations, we all want the peace of mind that our health insurance plan will cover those needs.

The third issue that is clear is that there are people who are going to miss work because of this coronavirus. Some

of them are asked to stay home and work from home and things continue as usual, and they receive their regular paycheck, but for others, they have to leave the workplace because of fears they may have a flu or may be contagious or someone else at work might be. What happens when they go home when it comes to their paycheck? Are they going to be given medical leave and paid for their absences?

It is an issue which comes to the forefront in this coronavirus debate. Frankly, it is with us all of the time. Those of us on the Democratic side believe that medical leave should be extended. We have just expanded it when it comes to Federal employees. We should do it as well for people across the United States. Medical leave gives you peace of mind to make the right medical decision. Don't go to work with a fever. Don't go to school with a fever. Stay home. Protect yourself, your family, the people you work with, the people you are around during the course of a day. Medical leave gives you that option, and it is one that is a practical solution to something that we face all the time.

The fourth issue that I will raise has been brought up by this coronavirus debate is the role of pharma in the future. It is interesting that across America when you ask Americans their concern when it comes to the cost of healthcare, the cost of prescription drugs is high on the list.

It is also interesting that health insurance companies—the major companies—tell us that one of the biggest drivers in the increase in health insurance premiums is the cost of prescription drugs. Pharma is obviously a challenge to all of us. We want them to have the money to be profitable, to invest in research, but we don't want them to dramatically overcharge for the products they make. “Your money” or “your life” is not a good answer when it comes to pharma and the public health of America.

Now we are going to face it again, the prospect of a vaccine. We hope to have a vaccine quickly, but even “quickly” by medical terms is a long time.

Dr. Fauci, of NIH, has said it could be a year, a year and a half, even 2 years before a real, reliable vaccine is discovered to deal with coronavirus. It is an indication of the kind of research that has to take place—research that starts, I might add, at the Federal level, with your government doing research.

I know pharmaceutical companies will ultimately produce the product, the vaccine, but it starts with an investment by the Federal Government in the basic research to lead up to that vaccine whenever it is discovered. Then we have the question about once the vaccine is discovered, who will sell it to America and at what price? That is a debate that we went through several years ago.

We faced the swine flu. During that period of time, some 40 million Americans were actually vaccinated in 1976

for swine flu—45 million, to be exact. For several months, four pharmaceutical firms refused to sell the vaccine they had manufactured to the government until they received full liability indemnity and a guaranteed profit. The vaccine was there, but they wouldn't sell it until they received those promises. In fact, the Federal Government assumed the liability for this vaccine. According to this article that was published this morning in the New York Times, they eventually paid out over \$100 million in claims.

Are we going to face that again with pharma when it comes to a vaccine for coronavirus? Certainly, they are entitled to a profit for their own investment, whatever it may be in that vaccine, but the initial work on the research is being done by the Federal Government. That Federal Government research will lead to a product which will lead to a profit for these companies.

I am not opposed to a reasonable profit, but I do think, if they are going to hold us hostage for months over a guaranteed profit that is unreasonable, that America is going to rebel against these pharmaceutical companies. Our debate about pharma and its relationship with America in the future has really sharpened its focus by this debate on the coronavirus that we are facing today.

Madam President, there is one other aspect that I would like to raise. I was surprised at the briefing we received 2 weeks ago in Washington on the coronavirus to learn how many pharmaceuticals are actually produced in China and how many pharmaceutical ingredients are produced in China and India. It turns out we have a real dependence, when it comes to developing medicines and drugs, on these two countries and many others. When it comes to medical devices, the same is true; medical equipment, the same.

It raised a question in my mind as to whether we should do something thoughtful and perspective in terms of dealing with global dependence on medicine, medical devices, and medical supplies.

I am introducing legislation this week calling for the creation of a commission to look at this dependence, to measure it today. Today we are facing the coronavirus, the possible—I underline “possible”—interruption in the supply of pharmaceuticals and the supply of pharmaceutical ingredients from China because of the coronavirus. Did we anticipate this? Have we stockpiled enough of these drugs so we will not be caught short on something that is absolutely vital? If we haven't, we should.

We should also think about the prospect that in the future, for certain critical drugs, there should be a domestic source in the United States that we can count on if there is some interruption in global trade because of a medical crisis such as this or because of terrorism, for example. I hope we can

get some guidance on this from the agencies involved and from those we respect who can give us third-party judgment on this.

Let us, at this moment in time as we face this crisis, look ahead to what the next challenge might be and be prepared for it. As we debate this coronavirus, I urge my colleagues to do our best to try to find bipartisan ground to work on. I have found, across my State, regardless of political allegiance, the people of Illinois and in many other States are looking for us in Washington to address this problem responsibly, in a mature way, in a totally nonpolitical way.

When statements are made by political observers, even by the President himself, that are far afield from the truth, let's not be derailed by that. Let's focus on medical expertise that we can trust, public health experts who can guide us through this in the appropriate way.

In the meantime, realize we are blessed to live in a country with the best, most talented medical professionals in the world and the best medical resources on Earth. We want to make certain we give them all the room they need to lead us through this crisis and challenge in a very positive way.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. LOEFFLER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

BIPARTISAN BACKGROUND CHECKS

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, I have prepared remarks, but before I do that, I want to thank the pages who are in this class right now. They are hard at work, and they do so much for this institution. I just want it written in the RECORD of the U.S. Senate that on this day in March, the junior Senator from New Jersey recognized them for everything they do around here, even though they do not tell jokes that are very good.

Now, if I may start my prepared remarks, I rise today with other colleagues who are speaking, particularly my colleague from Connecticut, Senator MURPHY, to speak on a bill that actually passed out of the House, which was something that was extraordinary. It passed out of the House of Representatives just over a full year ago, and we are waiting here in the Senate for it to come to the floor.

I am one of these folks who really believe that we have too much unnecessary partisanship around issues when there is so much common cause in our country and when there is so much common ground in our country. Yes, indeed, debate is important. Disagreement is important. It undergirds the

ideals of democracy that we should form a national conversation and work through our differences—the idea that that actually produces a better whole and a better result.

But when we have a nation that has such extensive agreement on an issue, where 97 percent of Americans agree, where Republicans and Democrats in the House of Representatives agree, and we can't get action here, to me, that is not adding to the strength of democracy. It is weakening our Republic.

It was almost exactly a year ago that the House of Representatives passed H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019. This legislation would require a background check before any sale or transfer of a firearm. Under existing law, you can go to a gun show and purchase a gun from an unlicensed seller without having gone through a background check. Think about this. You could be on a terrorist no-fly list; you could be a convicted felon; and you could be a spousal abuser. You can be a lot of things—anything—and be able to go to an unlicensed seller at a gun show and fill up a trunk full of weapons. This is a glaring loophole that allows dangerous individuals—who we all agree are dangerous—to purchase a gun in violation of Federal law.

Again, 97 percent of Americans wanted that loophole closed. The evidence is clear. A study found last year that States that have this commonsense, widely supported, bipartisanly backed background check law—when States have it in place, they get 10 percent lower homicide rates. This isn't speculation. Folks who have that law in place on a State level have 10 percent fewer homicides.

But today, over a year out of its passage out of the House, the Senate has failed to take up this commonsense bill, which we know—which we know factually—would save lives.

What is one of the fundamental reasons our government was founded in the first place? For the common defense. We are here to defend our Nation from violence, from terror, from injury, from harm. Everyone in this body takes that commitment very seriously. So here we have something 97 percent of Americans want. We know it would save lives, protect our country and, yet, no action. The bill has not come to the floor.

I know this personally. I was the mayor of my State's largest city, and in the overwhelming majority of homicides and shootings where we captured the person and found out how they got their gun, they were not qualified to buy a gun. It was illegal for them to buy a gun in any State because many of them had criminal convictions. Yet they found easy ways to obtain a gun because we have so many loopholes in the commonsense law—loopholes that allow violence to happen that is terrorizing communities. Of course, we know that is not just anecdotal evidence. According to the Gun Violence Archive,

an estimated 15,208 people were killed with a gun in the United States in 2019.

We know that gun violence is the single leading cause of death for children and teenagers. Our greatest natural resource in this country is our children. Black children and teenagers are 14 times more likely to die of gun homicide than their White peers. There is tragic carnage going on for African-American kids. In just one city, for example, in St. Louis, MO, between April and September of last year, 13 children ranging in age from 2 to 16 were killed by a gun.

There is another kind of gun violence we don't talk about. We don't talk enough about the death of our children, but we definitely don't talk about domestic violence in our country. It is factual that when an abuser can get a gun—if that abuser has a gun, a victim of domestic violence is five times more likely to be killed. Again, with the racial disparities in communities of color like the one I live in, we know a Black woman is twice as likely to be shot and killed by an intimate partner as well.

Our duty is to protect this Nation and to protect one another. This is not controversial when you have 97 percent—97 percent. Every year in the United States of America, on average, 100,000 people are shot, and they survive. Many of them will carry with them, for their lives, mental and physical wounds. The economic cost of being a gun violence survivor is measured in the tens and tens of thousands of dollars. The community costs of folks being killed—I have seen this in my community when a shooting happened in front of the IHOP in Newark on Bergen Street. The IHOP had to close one of its shifts, and people lost jobs. It reverberates out into the community.

You see scars happening every day in America. These wounds are physical, are economic, and involve mental health. I can't tell you how many communities in America—when we celebrate the very ideas of our country on July 4, when those firecrackers go off and children hear them, they duck for cover. They hide under beds. They show signs of post-traumatic stress. That is what we are living in right now. This is an everyday reality.

I just came to the floor today to point out that a year—12 months, 365 days—from the House's passing of the bipartisan bill supported by 97 percent of Americans, which is fundamental to the reason for government, the common defense in the wake of one of the greatest killers of children in our country—all of these things, and we here are doing nothing.

What did Martin Luther King say? What we have to repent for is not just the vitriolic words and violent actions of the bad people; it is also the appalling silence and inaction of the good people.

I have stood for comprehensive gun safety reform, and a lot of things I support aren't supported by 97 percent of

Americans like background checks. Heck, I support gun licensing. The percentage of Americans who support that falls into the seventies. I support an assault weapons ban. Support for that falls as well. So maybe that is an area where we debate. I will stand for those commonsense changes because, again, I believe in the data. States that do that have seen dramatic drops in violence. We can debate that.

But when we have a bill from the House that 97 percent of Americans support, that has bipartisan support, that we know will save lives, and we don't act, what does that say about us? Every day in this country, people are being shot, and people are killed, and we do nothing when we all agree.

This week, March 7, will mark the 55th anniversary of the day that 600 civil rights activists, led by a young man named JOHN LEWIS, set out to walk from Selma to Montgomery to protest systematic racialized disenfranchisement, discrimination, and violence. Those nonviolent protesters were met with vicious beatings with billy clubs by Alabama State troopers. They had tear gas and dogs set on them. Congressman LEWIS had his skull cracked open.

By the next day, Americans all over this country—that horrific scene, we know this as Bloody Sunday—Americans all over this country saw that violence, saw that viciousness, and saw what was being done to people who were nonviolent marchers fighting for justice and equality. It motivated Americans of all backgrounds—Black, White, Christian, Jewish, Republican, and Democrat—to join in the call for change.

I love this Nation, and I love my country. I love folks who agree with me and who disagree with me. I think patriotism is love of country, and you can't love your country unless you love your fellow country men and women.

I say to the Presiding Officer, I love you, man.

My friends across the aisle, we don't agree. Heck, in our own caucus, we don't agree, but we love one another.

My faith and the other faiths represented in this body—I am excited that we have more religious diversity in this body than ever before—all of our faiths are founded on this fundamental principle: Love thy neighbor.

This is the challenge. It is, how do we manifest love into our policy? Well, as I have read, one of the great authors said: What does love look like in public? It looks like justice.

This is the great thing about our country. We don't always act right away, but throughout our history, when we were confronted with the wretchedness of our society, with the incongruences between reality and our morals and beliefs, we have seen this country rise up and make change. When four girls died in the bombing in Birmingham, it shocked the conscience of this country, and we made change. When women in a factory called the

Triangle shirtwaist factory were trapped in sweatshop-like conditions—a fire broke out—this country watched in horror, read about in horror back then, and saw in horror through the pictures of women throwing themselves out windows, dying on the pavement below, it shocked the conscience of this country, and we in this body passed laws to protect workers. I could go on throughout our entire history.

We are not always fast to get there, but we are a caring, compassionate, loving country. We are. That is the root of who we are. They are the values we profess. I know that as much as we disagree and try to vilify each other, the truth is, we are a nation founded on the ideals of love.

Again, I look at my colleague up there in that seat. I have watched him. I saw him on HBO reading our founding documents. It was moving to me to see Republicans and Democrats—I am sure you saw it—reading our founding documents. Our Declaration of Independence—I hate to say this, you might say I am a little too mushy—it ends with one of the greatest declarations of love in human history. It says, if we are going to make this Nation work, all the stuff we just talked about, if we are going to be the country that is, as the prophet Isaiah said, ultimately a light unto other nations, inspiring free peoples across the globe—we are the oldest constitutional democracy. We stepped out into the course of human events and said we are going to found a country based on virtue, not a theocracy, not a monarchy, on virtue—that we would be a nation based on ideas. And those ideas, as imperfect as the geniuses who founded this country—and, God, they didn't believe that women were equal or Blacks were equal, but they believed in those ideals and those virtues and that this Nation should always strive to make a more perfect Union, making more real those virtues and those values in people's lives. The history of our country is a glorious testimony of us getting better and better with each generation.

Susan B. Anthony stood up and said that it was we the people, not we the male citizens that made this country, not the White male citizens. It was we the people. She used the words of our founding documents to inform her moment of history to call to the conscience of our country.

Martin Luther King, right here in DC on the Mall, did he turn to some new radical treatise? No. He went back to our founding documents and quoted them in his speech at the March on Washington. That is the beauty of our Nation.

So what does it say, that testimony to love, that the founding of our Nation in the Declaration of Independence—and, yes, to all those people, I will give you deference that that declaration called Native Americans savages. I will give you deference that the men who wrote them were imperfect representatives of the values to which

they were called to, but that declaration of love at the end is unmistakable. At the end of the Declaration of Independence, they say, if we are to make it all work, we must mutually pledge—I look at my colleague in the seat because he knows these words backward and forward. It says we must mutually pledge; that is, pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

God, I think about those words more than you might realize. What does it mean to give someone your sacred honor, to pledge to them your lives and your fortunes? God, I would die for this country, as I know my colleagues would. None of the people in this body—I know many of my friends in this body have come here with great wealth, but none of them are doing it for wealth.

Our lives, our fortunes, but that last one, sacred honor, what does that mean? To me, a word that evokes that greatest of human values, love; that word that we honor each other. We believe we are people who must elevate each other and protect each other.

There is a bill in the House that passed in a bipartisan way on that fundamental ideal of being there for one another. Whether you pray like me or look like me, we are there for one another. We protect each other. We stand for each other. I may have differences with the man in that seat who is on the other side of the aisle, but, God, I give you my sacred honor that I am not going to vilify or demonize your character because we are Americans.

Now, the call of our country is people who are overlooked are dying every day in communities like mine around this country, people being felled by domestic abusers. We know from the data that this can make a difference, a bipartisan voice. Ninety percent of Americans ask: Can we pass comprehensive background checks?

We can do better. Let's leave the things we want to debate that, God, I want to debate—gun licensing, assault weapons ban, leave those aside, but we agree that someone on the terrorist no-fly list should not be able to go to a gun show and go to a casual seller and buy weapons. Those are the weapons showing up on the streets in Newark. We have traced them.

My country tis of thee
Sweet [sweet] land of liberty
Of thee I sing.

May our country be free from fear and free from violence, and may we be empathetic toward those today who are fearful of their abuser, who are fearful to walk their kids to school. May we understand that that liberty to fight for freedom from fear is still an unachieved dream in this country. That liberty that comes from safety and security is still an unrealized dream for millions of Americans. May we join together and pledge our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor. May we pledge to one another to do the work America wants—to keep each

other safe and secure and to ensure our children, disproportionately impacted by violence, grow up to carry on our culture, and our traditions, and the honor that is America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRUZ). The Senator from Missouri.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I want to talk for a few moments about where we are with the coronavirus response and the supplemental. I think all Senators will have an opportunity to be updated again today.

This is not a new place for us to be. This time last year, the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies held a hearing on emerging threats, and at that point we were experiencing the second largest outbreak of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, antibiotic resistance was a global danger, and there was a flu outbreak bigger than we had seen in a long time. So 1 year later, we are still fighting the Ebola outbreak in the DRC, antibiotic resistance continues to be a global problem, and, according to Dr. Tony Fauci, the Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, the flu we are seeing this year is shaping up to be one of the worst in decades.

Several thousand Americans die every year from the flu—usually, at least 35,000, sometimes as high as 75,000. I think about 350,000 Americans have died from the flu in the last decade.

We are now facing a new danger—the COVID-19 danger. That is the new coronavirus that we hadn't seen before. As we learned with Ebola, patient zero, who doesn't know they even have this yet, can board a plane or a cruise ship, and they can be in another country or even in another continent in a matter of hours. This lesson is, once again, reinforced.

This is like all other diseases. It doesn't know any boundaries. We are no longer living in a world where our health can be separated from the health of other countries. Last week, the number of new coronavirus infections outside of China outpaced those inside China for the first time. Maybe the good news is that China is beginning to see something headed in a different direction, but the bad news is the infections in Iran, Italy, South Korea, Japan, and other places. This has moved into Europe now, and in South America a case was just announced in Brazil.

This is kind of that moment where we have some opportunity to do everything we can to prepare for the worst, but we still have the option of hoping for the best. That is what happened with SARS. That is what happened with H1N1. To some extent, it is what happened with Zika. It turned out to be bad for the people who had it but not as bad as we anticipated at one point it might be.

It is disturbing to see the first deaths in the State of Washington, but, certainly, the message to us is to be more vigilant and be better prepared.

The Congress, in the last 5 years, has increased money—that doesn't count whatever we do this week and next week—for preparedness by 44 percent. A year ago, we created for the first time an infectious disease fund—our colleague in the House, TOM COLE, was one of the major proponents of this—to let the Health and Human Services people have access to money immediately. Because of that, they had \$105 million that they wouldn't have previously had to be able to spend immediately to help contain this problem, where it can be contained, to bring Americans back here, particularly from China, and to keep them in a known location for the 14-day incubation period to see if anything happened. All of that was possible because we had given them the flexibility that they hadn't had before.

The first-line-of-defense funding has been there. We are now moving toward a conclusion of what we can do to make more money available for a vaccine. A vaccine takes a while. We are not going to have a vaccine for a while. We are going to be continuing to talk to Dr. Fauci and his team about this. We are working with experts at what is called BARDA, or the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, to move those vaccines quickly. But even if we had a vaccine in 18 months, that would be the U.S. world record to develop a vaccine here with the safety that we would think it would need to have so that anybody could take a vaccine and, with that vaccine, this particular virus would likely be dealt with.

So there is no treatment right now. There is no cure right now. The treatment is to handle these issues in the way that we can in a public health system that has been built over decades. There are 50 States and the District of Columbia, and all have local public health providers. We are going to have new money available to work with them, but, again, the preparedness money that they have had for the last 5 years should have been used in a way—and I believe was used in a way—that gets them all more ready to deal with this than they otherwise would have been.

We need to continue so that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have what they need to improve the surveillance systems, the testing systems. I think we are going to find quickly that there will be a test that will be approved by the FDA that allows people to check, in a number of locations, and have that process in a number of locations that tests to see if, in fact, you have what you thought was a worse-than-usual cold—or maybe you thought it was a not-worse-than-usual cold. Sometimes this particular disease doesn't evidence that much happened at all. Because of that, I think there is

probably, at this point, a bigger number of people who we think would be a percentage of people who would have really negative consequences—even death—from this disease, rather than all the people who had it and didn't know they had it.

We have learned in the past, through outbreaks of a flu strain that we didn't have a vaccine for, of Ebola, of Zika, that what we do to protect people in other countries winds up protecting people here. We have to be sure that we understand that a lot of our fate in this has been determined and will continue to be determined by what we do to first try to contain this virus and, secondly, to provide the money to be sure that, when we do have an outbreak, which has already begun in our country, it is an outbreak that is really held at the lowest possible level of people impacted and, if you are infected by this disease, that you have the ability to work from home, to do other things. The hospital is not always the place to go.

We are working with State and local health officials right now to see that that happens. The money that has been used, I think, has been used effectively. Clearly, we are trying to agree—between the House and the Senate and the administration—to exactly the right number. I would say that, at this point, the administration has been the most agreeable to whatever money we want to provide but, obviously, would like to have that money provided quickly.

I feel confident we are going to have the resources to deal with this. I feel confident that this will be a problem that will not impact more people than would usually be impacted by something like the flu. Again, we need to prepare for the very worst and hope for the very best, but our job right now is to prepare for the worst things that could happen and have the funding available so that we don't have to go through a couple of weeks again where an easy determination should have been reached.

One thing we could have done is to have given the administration exactly the amount of money they asked for—we could have decided to spend it differently—2 weeks ago and then get into a discussion of what we need next. That is not the course we decided to go down.

We are trying to come up with an amount of money, it appears, that would get us through this entire incident with this virus, but it is time to get that done. Hopefully, we will see a bill filed later today and the House able to vote on that bill before they leave this week. Once that number is done, I think it will be seen as almost certain that the Senate will be able to deal with that bill and approve that number.

We are going to move forward. I think, again, we are going to move forward in a way that minimizes, as much as possible, the impact that this has on families and on individuals.

Mr. President, I look forward to you and I both having a chance to learn more about this even today and to learn more as we move forward. The big thing we need to learn now is the amount of money we need to have to spend and how we allocate that money for a vaccine and other things.

RECESS

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess under the previous order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:28 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. CAPITO).

ADVANCED GEOTHERMAL INNOVATION LEADERSHIP ACT OF 2019— Motion to Proceed—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, the bill before us supports clean energy and emerging technologies, so this is the perfect opportunity to update an outdated aspect related to a legacy energy source.

Senator UDALL of New Mexico and I have an amendment that will close a loophole in Federal energy policy. I want my colleagues to know—and I think they do—of my long support for renewable and alternative sources of energy, and so I agree with the aims of the Murkowski-Manchin Energy bill.

The amendment Senator UDALL and I have introduced is the same as the bipartisan bill we introduced last week. The title of that bill is the Fair Return for Public Lands Act. This bill was introduced 100 years to the date of the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920.

This amendment would increase the royalty rates on Federal lands from 12.5 percent to 18.75 percent. Everybody here knows that a royalty is what the oil company will pay to a mineral owner—in this case, the mineral owner is the American taxpayer—and that royalty is paid for the right to extract oil and natural gas from the lands of the United States. The legislation modernizes the public lands leasing system, and it does this for the first time since royalty rates were set in 1920.

The legislation increases both the share of royalties taxpayers receive from public lands leasing as well as the rental rates. The new rental rate we are offering in this amendment reflects the current fair market value, while the bill also establishes minimum bidding standards to lease public lands that will stay in line with inflation. This bill is a simple fix by making Federal leasing rates the same whether you are on land or offshore.

The royalty rate the bill offers is very comparable to what current leases are for oil-producing States on their State-owned land. We use the State of

Texas as an example. Texas charges a 25-percent royalty on its State lands, while States in the Rocky Mountain West charge royalties that are somewhere between 16²/₃ percent and 18³/₄ percent. The royalty rate on Federal public lands is more than one-third lower, at 12¹/₂ percent; hence our amendment—the same as our bill—updating this and bringing more parity between State rates and Federal rates and, of course, absolute parity with offshore drilling.

The current regulatory system allows companies to get a sweetheart deal on Federal public lands. Senator UDALL and I are asking our colleagues to fix this for the American people.

According to studies done by the Congressional Budget Office and the Government Accountability Office, modernizing public lands royalty rates for oil and gas could increase Federal revenues by as much as \$200 million over the next decade and do it with little to no impact on production.

It is time—hence our amendment—for my colleagues in Congress to end this oil company loophole and bring oil leasing into the 21st century.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I come to the floor today as a Senator as well as a physician. I want to do this to reassure the American people that we are doing everything possible to combat and contain the coronavirus. According to Johns Hopkins University, a well-known medical institution, we here in the United States are the most prepared Nation on the face of the Earth to protect ourselves in terms of preparation for an infectious disease like the coronavirus.

Nevertheless, this virus is a global concern and is a problem with pandemic potential. We know the outbreak started in China. It goes without saying that we are deeply saddened by the loss of life there, as well as here and around the world. We are concerned about those currently suffering from the virus. Our focus continues to be on protecting the health and the well-being and the safety of the American people. That is where we need to focus.

Notably, President Trump's early travel restrictions on China have actually helped slow the spread of the virus. He has since expanded these restrictions. The President, I believe, has acted swiftly, boldly, and decisively to contain the virus and to keep Americans safe. Still, this country is not a hermetically sealed bubble. It will never be—can't be. We are likely to see more cases here in the days and weeks ahead.