

if only half of those hospitalized require ventilation, our supply would be wholly inadequate to fill the demand.

Healthcare workers also need protective gear to do their lifesaving work without risking infection to themselves. Unfortunately, there have been multiple reports of shortages of personal protective equipment even during the opening days of this outbreak. Failure to protect our healthcare workers and support staff would cause a cascading effect that would cause our entire response to collapse.

Simply put, we need the Federal Government to step in and provide real leadership. In the midst of a pandemic, State and local governments should not be left on their own, scrambling to find or purchase ventilators for patients, personal protective gear for healthcare workers, and other critical medical supplies. The Federal Government has a tremendous obligation and an opportunity to help save lives by assisting State and local governments in locating resources, using existing authorities to increase manufacturing of ventilators and other critical equipment, and preparing for the staging of temporary hospitals and beds, and more.

Let's look at military facilities that have been closed. There is one in my State. Let's open them up. Let's construct MASH units. Let's not wait. Let's rent out hotels that are closing. These are some of the many actions that can be taken if we are decisive in our work. That is why I am calling on the President to immediately exercise the powers authorized by the Defense Production Act to defend the health and safety of the American people in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

While the administration's response has so far lacked the energy this crisis calls for, invoking the powers vested in the Defense Production Act will enable the Federal Government to step up and take the types of aggressive steps needed in this time of uncertainty. It is that act that can give the Federal Government the power to say: We are going to become your partner. We want to infuse massive amounts of money to create the ventilators that we need, the personal protective gear that we need, and if we can't get you to produce it, we are going to produce it.

We need to use the power of the Federal Government to have the type of response that this moment calls for, that this crisis calls for. That is what government in its most significant moment is supposed to be all about. That is really what the Federal Government is supposed to be all about. What States cannot individually do or individual communities cannot do, it is the power of the Federal Government that can do it. We must be willing to mobilize that power.

It is time the United States of America live up to its history of defeating extraordinary challenges and prevailing in the face of great uncertainty. It is time to harness the inge-

nuity of our people, the might of our manufacturing base, and the wisdom of our healthcare experts to confront COVID-19 to protect our families and our communities, to slow the spread of the virus so we don't overwhelm our hospitals so that we can save lives.

I have seen some of the projections. I hope, for God's sake, they are wrong. But we will lose many people unless we all take this seriously and unless we act. This is a moment for action and to show the world once again that there is no challenge too great for the American people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. JONES. Madam President, today I want to talk just briefly about all that we can do. I know we are facing an emergency in this country. We are facing a healthcare crisis.

Instead of talking about all that is going on here in Congress—and there is a lot going on that the people of America need to understand. You see empty Chambers right now, but the fact is, we are trying to do those things necessary to stop the spread of this virus as well.

I want to talk a little bit about what we can do as Americans to protect ourselves and our country. In doing so, I am thinking back to an old friend of mine from my younger days.

Back when I was a kid, the National Park Service and others were concerned about the forest fires around the country, and they came up with what is now an old friend of mine: Smokey Bear. Everybody remembers Smokey Bear. You still see Smokey on occasion because only you can prevent forest fires.

Well, folks, we have forest fires raging around this country right now in the form of COVID-19, and only you can prevent the spread of that forest fire, the COVID-19 virus—only you. We have healthcare responders out there. We have emergency responders, people who are doing amazing work right now responding to this virus. But it is up to us. It is up to you. Only you can prevent the spread by doing those things necessary to try to protect your communities. The social distancing that people are talking about, the hand washing—all of those things are so important that we have to do as individuals to make sure we flatten that curve.

You don't need to be going on spring break or vacation right now—none of this. With shutting down these businesses and things and people being at home, this is not vacation time. You can use it, but it is not a time to go out on vacation, to do those kinds of things. It is a time to try to protect yourself and your communities.

Don't go out and try to get tested unless you have symptoms and have talked to your healthcare provider. In Alabama right now, we are seeing long

lines of folks who are lined up at a private testing facility to try to get tested. I don't know all the protocols that they have, but I know my friends at the University of Alabama in Birmingham—in the infectious disease center—with whom I have met and talked on a regular basis, say that the odds are that a number of those people in those lines don't need to test right now. They are concerned. Everybody is worried. Everybody wants to know. But the fact is, there are not enough tests out there for everyone just yet. We are getting there. More and more tests are coming online.

We also have to be concerned about the equipment—the swabs that are used, the test tubes that have to be used. Those are the things we are running in short supply of as well.

So unless you have those symptoms, unless you see that you are getting sick, stay home. Stay with your families. We are going to be inconvenienced for some time, but I think we need to do all we can to make those inconveniences as short-lived as possible. The short-term pain will mean long-term gain for all of us, but only if we follow the best practices that the CDC and all our departments of public health are talking about right now.

We have legislative packages that are coming over from the House. We have more. I can tell you, for my folks in Alabama and the folks across the United States, your U.S. Senators on both sides of the aisle are working very hard to try to minimize this impact. There are things we can do now, and we are trying to get those done. There are things we can do to take care of small businesses and families, and we are working very hard to make sure those things get done now.

Also, keep this in mind: This is going to be a work in progress. This is not something we know the long-term implications of just yet. Our goal is to blunt that curve, as you have seen Dr. Fauci and others talking about, to try to stem the tide of this virus, to make it to where it is going to be manageable in our healthcare systems. If we can do that, we can better assess how we can protect small businesses and how we can protect working families and make sure they have the income they need to get by on a daily basis, knowing that when this crisis does subside, they can get back to work and we can get this economy popping, as the President said earlier today. That is our goal. That is what we are trying to do.

We also have to take a deep look at ourselves, I believe. Folks across the country need to take a deep look and see what we can do as States, as Members of Congress, and as American people to do better on our healthcare system, which right now is under increasing strain and stresses with this pandemic virus. We need to see, structurally, those kinds of things that can help stem the tide of this virus but also put in place things that are going to

help our healthcare delivery system that we have in this country. Those are the kinds of things I hope we will take a look at as we go forward and we better understand the problems we are facing in the United States.

For me, ever since I started running for this office, I have talked about the need to expand Medicaid in Alabama. Right now, I am concerned about all Alabamans, but there are some 326,000 people below the poverty line who do not qualify for Medicaid and are wondering right now: What is going to happen to me? What is going to happen because I don't have health insurance? I can't go get in that line in Birmingham that requires a Medicaid or a Medicare card or an insurance card. I don't know what to do.

We are working on things to try to help to do that, but I think expanding Medicaid is an important part of this. Those Alabamans who are at most risk from the COVID-19 virus are those in rural areas where hospitals are closing and who cannot get to a doctor—the community health centers are sparsely situated throughout the State—our seniors and people of all ages who have preexisting conditions.

I want folks in Alabama to really think about this. We have now heard for a month or so that it is not just the elderly but it is people with certain preexisting conditions who are at most risk for the COVID-19 virus and significant complications from the virus. Those are people who are diabetic; people with cardiovascular disease; people with kidney disease; people who are, in fact, so much of the demographics of the State of Alabama.

I have said it so many times: We are a relatively poor State. We are an unhealthy State. We have more people at risk for this virus than probably most because of the preexisting conditions that exist among the populace in the State of Alabama. Those are the ones about whom we are concerned.

There are consequences to Alabama's not expanding Medicaid, and there are going to be consequences if we don't do things in the future to try to make sure we get relief to all people.

There are going to be consequences if the administration continues to fight in court to eliminate the Affordable Care Act and all of its protections for those with preexisting conditions. Why in the world, in this time of healthcare crisis, would the administration continue to do this just now? Now is the time that we need to be putting lawsuits aside, taking those lawsuits and putting them away and working together to try to do those things within the ACA to get coverage for so many more people. We can do that. We are seeing people rallying now here on the Hill and with the administration. That is what we need to be doing, not trying to work through lawsuits to get rid of the ACA.

Now is the time that we need to be working together to make sure everyone in this country gets the healthcare

they need. We need to expand Medicaid, work together to keep rural hospitals open, and not dismantle the ACA but improve the flaws in the existing ACA, making sure that everyone with a preexisting condition is protected.

So I am once again calling on this administration, calling on the 20 attorneys general from around the country—including my own in the State of Alabama—let's get rid of this, and let's work together to try to figure out how we can get healthcare into all ZIP Codes in America, including all the ZIP Codes in the State of Alabama.

Folks, we have amazing opportunities here. It is a challenging time, but challenges also give us opportunities. We need to take those opportunities. We have that opportunity here in the Senate and the Congress and the Government of the United States, but we have these opportunities as a country. We have these opportunities for individuals.

We have to act quickly and without regard to politics or party. The American people are looking to us—they are looking to this Congress, they are looking to the administration—to do those things necessary, to take the steps necessary to protect their families, their communities, their livelihoods, and our economy. We can do this, but we need to rise to the occasion. We need to work quickly. We need to put the American people first. It is the American people's interests who have to come first.

As individuals, we have to review the responses to the COVID crisis as an act of citizenship. Every response has to be seen, in my view, as an act of citizenship, not only for this country but for citizens of the world, to do the things that need to be done for yourself, for your family, but also for each other in the greater beloved community. We have to recognize that we all must make sacrifices. We are in this together.

Our doctors, our nurses, and our healthcare professionals are already doing that. They are fighting with everything they have to minimize the suffering and to save as many as they can, often putting themselves in jeopardy. One of the things we have to do is give them more tools to do their jobs. We are working on that. But these folks are those frontline folks.

It is just like the first responders of 9/11, who were running toward the danger to try to help others flee from it. That is what our healthcare professionals and our first responders are doing today. They are running toward the danger to try to minimize the suffering and to save lives.

Folks, everybody in America needs to hear all of this. We need to be thanking those people. We need to be thanking the folks who are still putting food on the shelves at the grocery stores, the people who are still stocking the sanitizer at the drug stores, the people who are still doing those routine things to help all Americans.

We need to hear this as well: Staying at home for the next few weeks may be a hardship, but it is the right thing to do. It is the right thing to do not just for the obvious reasons of protecting yourself. You do it for your neighbors. You do it for your fellow citizens in your community. You do it for your grandparents. You do it for all of those close to you. That is how we stop this virus. That is how Smokey puts out the forest fires. It is each one of us. Only you can do this, and none of it will be easy.

Financial hardships will be faced by far too many Americans already living on the edge. It is in our local communities that we have to respond to the heroic efforts to bridge these hardships for as many as possible and to make this period of disruption as short as possible.

The truth is, it is you, Mr. and Mrs. America. It is you, the American people, who are the best defense now. You are the frontline. You are the foot soldiers of trying to stem this crisis. Don't shake hands as some sign of strength. Stopping that simple contact is not only going to keep you safer but it is going to strengthen the fight to stop these fires. Do those little things.

The American people have to rally to this challenge not just for themselves but for each other, for the sick and the elderly and the most vulnerable in our society, for the doctors and the nurses who are on the frontlines, for the children who will need those school lunch programs they can't get because schools are out all across this country. We do it for those who can't afford 1 day—let alone 1 week or 2 weeks or a couple of months—of lost wages. That is who we have to do this for.

Let me mention something. I want to talk a little bit directly to the younger folks in Alabama and the younger folks in our country. You are perhaps the most powerful voices and examples in this fight. You know that it is not likely that you are going to personally suffer the hardest of these hardships in the sense of getting this virus. It is not going to cause the incredible complications of so many others, but that makes you the most powerful weapon that we have in this fight. You can lead this country's war against this disease. You can lead the State of Alabama and all of your States and your communities, and you do so by example, just like young people have done in the history of this country. Whether it was with the Vietnam war, whether it was through civil rights, whether it was through little things like buckling seatbelts, it is the younger folks in this country who have led the way and shown the examples. You are the most connected generation or couple of generations in the history of the world.

By having those connections to each other, you have connections to your communities and to your grandparents and to your parents and your aunts and your uncles and those living down the street who might be shut in at this

point—sick and shut in—whom you can help and get the word out to.

This is the moment in time where we can come together as a people. We can come together, and you as young people, who get so maligned in so many different ways—and I see that—you are the prime examples, and you can lead this country at a time when we desperately need all people in this country to lead by example and by information. I know you will step up to do it. I know you will make sure that your kids are protected, but I know you will also make sure that you do those things and do what Smokey the Bear says, because it is only you that can prevent the forest fire of this virus from spreading.

So that is our challenge today. That is the challenge for America and the individuals.

As a body, I can assure folks that the Senate and the Congress are going to do everything we can to do our part to minimize the damage that this is inflicting, to help repair the damage, to make sure that we get back on our feet at the right time when this fire is stemmed. What we know and what is demanded of us as a U.S. Senate, what is demanded of us as a government, is nothing short of the same kind of government response—overwhelming response—the same kind of commitment and response worthy of the sacrifices we are asking all American citizens to make in this fight. I believe that this Senate, I believe that the House, and I believe that the administration are up to that challenge, but we have to remember whom we are fighting for, and that is each of you—the American people.

We will do our part. We will make sure what we do as a response to this is worthy of the sacrifices that we are asking each one of you to make every day for an unknown foreseeable time.

I yield the floor.

(Ms. MCSALLY assumed the Chair.)

(Mr. SASSE assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MCSALLY). The Senator from Nebraska.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SASSE. Madam President, we are in the midst of two crises at once—one health-related and one economic. I tend to think that the prudent path forward on the health front is that even as we hope for the best, we should continue planning for the worst. If this nasty disease continues to ramp in roughly the same proportions as it has in Italy and Spain, it will overwhelm our hospitals. So I think the social distancing recommendations from the President and from the CDC over the last 4 days are a prudent action.

At the same time, we are also in the midst of a genuine economic crisis. Lots of moms and dads are worried that they might be laid off, and lots of businesses are evaluating whether they are going to make payroll and whether they are still going to be in business

months down the line. They are scared, and DC needs to act more urgently than we usually do, but just saying we need to act urgently is not a substitute for actually having good ideas and actually advancing good policies.

There is a herd mentality around this building right now where a lot of normally smart people are literally saying things like: The most important thing is to be fast, even if the ideas that are being advocated for are not really ready for prime time and can't really withstand the scrutiny of debate. That is a really dumb idea. It is a ready-fire-aim approach. We do indeed need to work fast, but working fast is no substitute for working smart.

Again, I agree that this virus and the strategies necessary to contain it are producing some of the worst economic upheavals we have seen in a generation.

Further, we need to be preparing for these unexpected economic hardships to last for 6 months or even longer. But that fact is a reason to prepare; it is not a reason to panic. That fact is a reason to debate hard and fast but still to debate what good policy looks like; it is not a reason to allow garbage policies to get by because someone simply says: No, no, no, we have to go faster. You can't ask questions about the policy.

Over the next 48 to 72 hours, this body will be making some crucial decisions about somewhere between one and four spending packages. I agree with the President that this is an unprecedented economic situation and that the Federal Government, at the health level, obviously has a fundamentally crucial role to play in helping us get through this pandemic, which recognizes no borders or boundaries; thus, the Federal Government has to spend real money. As the third or fourth most conservative Member of the Senate by voting record, that is not language I use a lot, saying that we are going to have to spend real, significant amounts of money, but that is clearly true in this moment. But saying we should spend real money is not the same as saying we should spend like idiots.

Unfortunately, Washington, DC, so far has been handling our responsibilities exactly as a lot of voters fear. Right now, the proposal on the table, which just came over from the House of Representatives, is for Washington, DC, to pull out its checkbook—which is really your checkbook—and just start firing. If you are an industry with a good lobbying team, you are told to line up at the door of the Treasury Department and get in line because bailout after bailout is probably in the offing.

Right now, the plan around here is basically just to start shoveling money out of a helicopter, and the most important debate is whether Democrats or Republicans get to shovel the money first. This is a bad idea, and Washington should know better because 12

years ago something just like this was tried, and the consequences were really significant and lasting. They are still with us.

I want to be clear. I am not talking primarily about the total price tag. The price tag matters, but the point I am trying to debate today is whether we are going to spend the American people's money wisely or foolishly, and we are not having a lot of debate about that. We are hearing a lot of people saying that the only important question is whether we can act fast enough. If you act fast but you spend money that is ineffective, you didn't effectively act fast.

The Congress 12 years ago shoveled lots and lots of money into supposedly shovel-ready projects which still can't be found today. One trillion dollars in spending, and you can go to your Governor and you can go to your State legislature and go to your business roundtables and you try to find people who know where the \$1 trillion of shovel-ready money went—I challenge you, that is not an easy thing to achieve.

More than just the spending and the debt, though, it also produced serious backlashes of national political movements on both the right and the left. The Occupy Wall Street movement, some of which became the Bernie Sanders constituency, and the tea party were both spawned out of 2008 and 2009 and are still with us in lots of ways that are not ultimately constructive for our body politic.

We don't need a policy where Washington, DC, handpicks winners and losers. There is no one here in this Chamber who is actually competent to do that. We are indeed in a period of extraordinary uncertainty, but no politician actually knows what happens next week, let alone 6 months from now, and humility would require us to admit that a bit more.

The proposal currently on the table from Speaker NANCY PELOSI is to blow through a massive amount of money on a policy core that isn't actually well thought out. When you ask hard questions about the bill that has come over from the House, there is nobody who actually defends it as really good, well-thought-out policy. That is why the first version of their bill, which passed so urgently last week at 120 pages, last night required over 90 pages—we are right at 90 pages—of technical corrections. Think about that. Imagine your kid does homework and—you say you wrote a 12-page essay, and after you turn it in, you say that 9 of the 12 pages actually have to be thrown away and rewritten. That is what happened last night in the House of Representatives. They tried to pass a 90-page fix to a 120-page bill that was supposedly really urgent last week.

By the way, when you talk to the architects of that legislation in private, when the cameras aren't rolling, and you ask them hard questions about how their policy actually works, everyone starts pointing at everyone else,