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Senate

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Our Father, we place our hope in You. May our lawmakers find wisdom in Your trustworthy precepts. Guide our Senators to live so honorably that they will bring glory to Your Name. Lord, inspire them to yield their allegiance to You, striving always to receive Your approval. Thank You for hearing and answering their prayers, as they fervently seek Your wisdom. Guide them through the challenges of these times.

Lord, remind us all that we are mere sojourners in time, heading for the better land of eternity.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Iowa.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, much has been said on the Senate floor

these past few days regarding our Nation's response to the coronavirus. But this morning, after our prayer to the Lord and after the pledge to our Nation's flag, I want to take this opportunity to send Iowans' and our Nation's parents my commendation because schools are closing, and as these schools close, the work of a parent or grandparent is more important than ever. I know many children are scared or don't understand why they can't play with their friends, and this puts an extra burden on their parents on top of all of the other challenges that these families have.

Those of you who are parents are raising America's future, and I want to recognize the importance of what you do every day.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

SENATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, yesterday, President Trump and his team announced several new actions to help contain and combat the coronavirus. The President invoked the Defense Production Act, laying groundwork to manufacture more medical equipment. The Department of Health and Human Services will let medical professionals practice across State lines. The Department of Defense will deploy hospital ships and transfer millions of respirator masks and thousands of ventilators to HHS. The FDA will deepen partnerships with commercial laboratories to expand testing. The Department of Housing and Urban Development will suspend foreclosures and evictions on FHA-insured mortgages. And the Department of Homeland Security reached a mutual agreement with Canada to close our north-

ern border to nonessential travel. These are major steps as we confront a major crisis.

Here in the Senate we are preparing to take further bold steps of our own. Yesterday, we passed legislation from the House that will provide some American workers with additional benefits during this emergency. As I explained yesterday, that legislation was hardly perfect. It imposes new costs and uncertainty on small businesses at precisely the most challenging moment for small businesses in living memory. So the Senate is even more determined that our legislation cannot leave small businesses behind.

Support for small business is one of the four key components of the much bolder proposal we are finalizing. Chairman RUBIO and Chairman COLLINS have been crafting a major plan to help small businesses survive this crisis and help workers continue to get paid.

We are talking about new federally guaranteed loans on the order of hundreds of billions of dollars to address immediate cashflow problems. This is no massive new bureaucracy. We want to let qualified small businesses get liquidity through familiar institutions—their own community banks, credit unions, or nationwide lenders.

As Chairman COLLINS explained yesterday, owners will not be able to use the funds to give themselves raises or increase their own profits. The point is to help small business endure, help workers keep their jobs, and help both businesses and workers emerge from this ready to thrive.

As Chairman RUBIO explained, the portions of these funds that small businesses use on core expenses, such as paying workers and paying their rent or mortgage, will convert into grants they will not need to pay back. This will make sure that even lower profit margin Main Street businesses get a fighting chance to stay open and continue paying workers.

This is straightforward: a rapid injection of cash to help small businesses

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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through this turmoil—not some brandnew program with a long lead time but an existing program that has been tested.

The second major pillar of our legislation will be even more straightforward: direct financial help for Americans. Senate Republicans want to put cash in the hands of the American people. Chairman GRASSLEY and a number of our colleagues are finalizing a structure that will get assistance to individuals and families as rapidly as possible. This is no Washington process with a thousand cooks in the kitchen, no piles of forms for laid-off workers or busy families to fill out—money for people from the middle class on down, period.

For laid-off Americans, this infusion would complement unemployment insurance and could be put toward immediate needs during this crisis. For Americans who are still working, the money would provide extra certainty in this uniquely uncertain time and help remind everyone that temporary shutdowns at bars and restaurants do not mean all commerce has to halt. For retirees, the money would complement Social Security and help seniors navigate the unusual routines that have suddenly become necessary for their own safety.

This is a form of additional tax relief that we want to push to taxpayers right away. It is not an ordinary policy, but this is no ordinary time. The American people need help, and they need it fast. This will deliver it.

Now, we believe this rapid assistance is crucial, but, more broadly, we need to keep as many Americans as possible on the job and connected to their employers. The small business relief will help, and so will a number of additional tax relief measures, which will be designed to help employers maintain cashflow and keep making payroll, preserving employment and protecting economic foundations.

That is also why the third pillar of our proposal involves targeted lending to industries of national importance. Chairman SHELBY, Chairman WICKER, and Senator THUNE are leading this component.

Just like small businesses, entire sectors are being crushed—crushed—by public health guidance, which is obviously through no fault of their own. For example, our Nation needs airlines. Yet they have ongoing maintenance costs that do not disappear just because the government has chased away all the customers. We cannot expect this key industry to mothball itself overnight, then dust off in weeks and months and pop right back online as the Nation will need and expect.

So let's be clear about something. From small businesses to key sectors, we are not talking about so-called bailouts for firms that made reckless decisions. Nobody is alleging a moral hazard here. None of these firms—not corner stores, not pizza parlors, not airlines—brought this on themselves. We are not talking about a taxpayer-fund-

ed cushion to companies that made mistakes. We are talking about loans, which must be repaid, for American employers whom the government itself—the government itself—is temporarily crushing for the sake of public health.

The fourth piece of our proposal goes to the heart of this crisis: the health of the American people. Chairmen ALEXANDER and GRASSLEY will be rolling out proposals to get resources on the frontlines of our fight against the virus itself because, to be clear, nothing I have laid out so far will represent a typical economic stimulus in the way that we think of that term.

Nobody—nobody—expects that employment figures or the stock market or GDP growth will bounce right back to where they were a few weeks ago. No policy and no amount of money could return things to normal overnight.

There is an underlying medical reality that is driving this disruption. In the words of one journalist, this is primarily “a health crisis—with an economic crisis strapped to its back.”

So, yes, our proposal will immediately help American workers, families, and businesses. Yes, it will help position our economy to thrive once again after this public health menace is behind us.

This may not be the last economic legislation we pursue, but, fundamentally, we have to beat back this virus. We have to beat back this virus. That is why our proposal will go even further to remove barriers to care, speed innovation, fund the hospitals and health centers that will treat patients, and expand healthcare workers' access to the tools they need, including respirator masks.

Immediately after we pass this legislation, Congress must begin a bipartisan, bicameral appropriations process to address the administration's new supplemental funding request, so we can keep funding healthcare and other priorities.

I think every American shares the sense that the last several days have felt more like several months. Just last Saturday, our Nation had fewer than 3,000 confirmed cases, and 58 Americans had lost their lives. Already, the number of cases has nearly tripled. Tragically, so has the number of deaths. The crisis is moving fast; our health system is under strain; and our economy is hurting.

The legislation I have just laid out will not be the last word. As I said, we will need to turn right away to a bipartisan appropriations process. This is not Congress's last chance to legislate, but it is critical that we move swiftly and boldly to begin to stabilize our economy, preserve Americans' jobs, get money to workers and families, and keep up our fight on the health front.

That is exactly—exactly—what our proposal will do. These are not ordinary policies. This is no ordinary time. The American people are strong. They are brave. There is no doubt the Amer-

ican people will come through this battle and then soar to new heights on the other side.

The American people will win this fight against this virus. The Senate's job is to give them the tools they need, and we are not leaving until we do our job.

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, in the space of less than 24 hours, yesterday, the number of coronavirus cases in my dear home State of New York has more than doubled. The spread of the virus has been rapid and the consequences severe. The coronavirus is slowing our economy to a near standstill, promoting widespread layoffs and the likelihood of a deep recession that will be painfully felt in households from coast to coast, from New York to California and every other State.

We are living in a time of public emergency—in our healthcare system, in our economy, and, indeed, in our society itself. Separated from one another, we are going to have to pull together in spirit. The American people have to sacrifice their routines. They don't want to, but we have no choice if we want to stay healthy and arrest the spread of the disease.

Our healthcare workers and our first responders every day are being asked to perform daunting and heroic tasks for which we all are already in their debt.

The anxiety, the fear, and the confusion that New Yorkers and Americans feel today is palpable, but I would remind them that there has never been a challenge too great for our country to overcome. I remember the dark days after 9/11. So many were prepared to write New York City off the map. They said no one would live or do business in the southern part of Manhattan. They said the whole city and its suburbs would never come back.

But we did come back, strongly, more resilient than we ever were before. We can and will do it again—in New York and throughout the Nation. But we must act urgently and boldly now, during what may still be the early days of this crisis.

Regarding the business before the Senate right now, yesterday we passed the second phase of legislation to respond to the coronavirus, which included important provisions to extend