

If Congress is going to consider changes to make the bankruptcy process simpler and less painful for businesses, we ought to do the same for workers and families. That includes Americans who are currently being crushed by student loan debt and face their own economic recession even before this one. If we are talking about relieving debts that businesses and individuals cannot pay, for goodness' sake, how can we ignore the crushing student loan debt across America, which compromises the futures of the thousands of Americans? We need to take steps to forgive student debt, like for students who were defrauded by for-profit colleges—a measure we continue to fight Secretary DeVos over—and we need to restore dischargeability in bankruptcy for student loans once and for all.

In short, bold policy ideas to help families during this time are not exclusive to either political party. I look forward, as we have in the first two measures, to a bipartisan effort and a timely effort to respond. America is counting on us. Now is the time for us to produce.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

REMOTE VOTING

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I appreciate my colleague from South Dakota giving me a minute to respond to the comments of the Senator from Illinois about remote voting. I appreciate his joining me today on a bipartisan resolution to say that, during times of emergency and crisis, the U.S. Senate would be able to vote remotely in a secure manner. I think it is time for us to turn to this.

I actually supported such legislation back in the House when I was there almost two decades ago. At the time, we didn't have, frankly, the electronic communications we have today to be able to safely vote remotely; now we do. We have the ability to do it in a secure way, in an encrypted way—a way that would protect the fundamental right to vote. I think it is important that we move forward with this.

It is something that would be up to the majority leader and the minority leader to jointly agree upon. Once they agreed upon that, there would be 30 days. After 30 days, Congress would have the vote—the Senate would have the vote to continue it.

I think—not just because of COVID-19, where we have an obvious problem right now but the threat of terrorism, bioterrorism—these sorts of issues, unfortunately, are part of our 21st century life. We have to be aware of the fact that this is possible.

It is important to me and I think all my colleagues that article I be heard; that the legislative branch be heard; that we have the ability to convene for the continuity of government and not allow what we would normally do,

which is perhaps to shift over to article II—to the executive branch—or not to be addressed at all.

I thank my colleague from South Dakota. I thank Senator DURBIN from Illinois for working with me on this project. My hope is we can see a change in our Senate rules coming out of this process so that we can have the ability to do our constitutional duties regardless of what is happening with regard to the National Capital or the crisis we are currently facing with COVID-19.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, yesterday the Senate passed the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which is bipartisan legislation that will provide critical relief to American workers, families, and small businesses.

Two weeks ago, the Senate passed the first phase of Congress's COVID-19 response, and that was \$8.3 billion in funding for coronavirus research, testing, and medical care. Yesterday's bill was the second phase of that response. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act will ensure that all Americans can access coronavirus testing at no cost.

The bill also ensures expanded telehealth access for Medicare recipients during this outbreak, which I strongly support. As a resident of a rural State, I have long been a supporter of telehealth for the expanded healthcare access it can deliver for rural communities. The value of telehealth isn't limited to rural States. During an outbreak like this, for example, telehealth services can help keep patients—particularly vulnerable, elderly patients—out of doctors' offices and hospital waiting rooms. Patients can use a phone call or the internet to check in with their doctors for minor complaints or medication followups, instead of having to venture out and be exposed to possible coronavirus infection. I am very pleased that Medicare patients will have greater access to telehealth services during this outbreak.

The largest part of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act focuses on providing economic support for families during this difficult time. The bill makes provisions for paid sick leave and paid family and medical leave for American workers, particularly for those who might not otherwise have access to these benefits. It also invests additional money in unemployment insurance where benefits are available for those who need them.

I am pleased we were able to pass this bipartisan bill that the House produced, but there is more work to be done. The House bill touches on only a small part of what is needed to help Americans weather the storm, which is why Senate Republicans are currently working to develop the third phase of Congress's response.

Our legislation will address three priorities: providing direct, immediate assistance to American workers and families; giving our economy, especially our small businesses, the necessary support to weather the storm; and, of course, most importantly, providing medical professionals with the resources they need to fight this virus.

I have been working closely with colleagues on the Senate Commerce and Finance Committees to develop the parts of the legislation that will address tax relief, particularly for small businesses, and support for industries that have been directly impacted by this pandemic, including the airline industry, which has taken a devastating hit from this outbreak.

The Senate will be here as long as it takes to get this additional legislation to the President's desk.

These are difficult days. This is new territory for most of us, and there is a lot of uncertainty in the air. Americans are worried about their own health and that of their loved ones. They are worried about what this outbreak will mean for their jobs and their financial health. It is a difficult time for our country. We are going to get through this.

America has faced big challenges before, and we have come through them even stronger. This time will be no different. I see the strength of America everywhere I look—in the dedicated doctors and nurses putting their lives on the line to care for the sick and our first responders who are always at the forefront of the response to any crisis and the truckdrivers and grocery store employees and delivery workers who keep on doing their jobs in the face of the outbreak, ensuring all of us have the essentials we need. It is also in the thousands of ordinary Americans who are stepping up to help their neighbors—running to the grocery stores for elderly or sick individuals, providing childcare for those who can't telework, and looking out for those who are struggling financially. This is what will get us through.

I and my colleagues in Congress will continue to do our part to ensure that our country has everything it needs to weather this crisis and to defeat this disease.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. 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. CORNYN. Madam President, over the last few weeks, given the nature of this unprecedented virus, Members of Congress have been able to come together during divided times to support our country's response.

First, we passed an emergency funding bill to bolster our response in the critical early stages of community spread. Since it was signed into law nearly 2 weeks ago, it has provided funding for the personal protective equipment our healthcare professionals rely on and has supported our community health centers and State and local health departments. It has also bolstered our resources in the race to develop a vaccine, possible treatments, and more tests. It has been a strong start, but we have known all along that it would just be the first step. As the scope of this virus continues to grow and challenge our country in new ways, we are working as quickly as possible to respond in realtime.

As we know, more and more Americans are staying home and practicing a new term, a new phrase—social distancing. It is one that I really had not heard of before this virus. While that is a sign of progress in our fight to slow the spread of the coronavirus, it is handicapping millions of businesses and workers. As travel plans are abandoned, as public events are canceled, and as restaurants and shops are closing their doors or scaling back their operations, many people are losing their jobs and their livelihoods.

A recent poll found that nearly one in five American households has experienced a layoff or reduced work hours, and those who work in the service or hospitality industry are particularly hard hit. Think about the waiter at your favorite local restaurant, the person who cuts your hair, the individual who sweeps the aisles after a basketball game, the housekeeper who cleans rooms at a hotel. They are among the millions of workers across the country who are trying to survive this new reality.

Here in the Senate, we are working as quickly as possible to support them. Yesterday, we passed a bill to help individuals and families who face economic fallout from this outbreak. We improved paid sick leave for those who have been impacted by the coronavirus, and we have strengthened our food security for Americans of all ages. We also made coronavirus testing free for all Americans. No one should be afraid to get tested because of the cost.

For all of the benefits this legislation will deliver, it will not address every problem. We knew that it would just be the second step in a journey of undetermined length. Yet, rather than holding that bill up and doing nothing, in order to include additional measures we would like to see, we worked as quickly as possible to put that second phase into action, and we then moved on to phase 3.

In building on the first two steps we have taken, it is time to make bold moves to support our economy. We need to be sure it can survive this pandemic in the short term and thrive in the long term. The American people are resilient. We have been through national disasters, like 9/11 and the huge

economic meltdown and great recession of 2008, but in my experience, we have never had anything quite like the coronavirus pandemic. Yet the American people have always maintained their good attitudes and worked through these crises and have come out stronger and better in the end.

As I mentioned, the shift in our daily routines is having a serious impact on the businesses we are used to supporting every day in our local communities. Sadly, those small businesses that employ about half of all U.S. workers are among the hardest hit. Here is the thing. They bear no responsibility for the economic conditions they find themselves in. This is something totally beyond our control.

The restaurants, the hardware stores, the salons, the gyms, and the countless other small businesses that are operated by our neighbors are facing tough decisions. Over the last couple of days, I have talked about a number of my constituents, fellow Texans, who are experiencing hardship—one whose revenue is down about 60 percent, one who is rotating her employees so each can at least get some work, and one who is terrified that this could sink the business he has worked on for 25 years.

As we continue working on this third phase of the coronavirus response and recovery, my top priority is to support these small business owners and their employees, who have been left with no way to collect paychecks, no way to provide for their families, and no way to provide for the necessities of life.

Yesterday, Senate Republicans met with Treasury Secretary Mnuchin and discussed wide-ranging proposals to provide relief to workers and small businesses. There is one thing we all agreed on. We need to take immediate action to put money directly into the hands of these displaced workers. Work opportunities may be disappearing for some workers, but the expenses don't go away. People need money to buy groceries, to pay their bills, and to stay afloat until things normalize.

There are ongoing discussions about the most efficient and most effective way to get money into the hands of those who have been the most negatively impacted, but I want to assure all Texans we are working as quickly as possible to find the best solution. The centerpiece of the phase 3 deal will be that of direct aid to American workers who have been displaced, but it must also include additional actions to protect the integrity of our healthcare system. As more and more people are being tested and diagnosed, our hospitals and healthcare providers are needing additional support so they can continue to serve patients. We are working to get our healthcare providers the resources and equipment they need so they can continue fighting this virus on the frontlines.

I thank the majority leader, Senator McConnell, for publicly committing to keep the Senate here in session until we pass legislation that meets these

high demands—a decision that I fully support.

While the Senate's work continues, I know many Americans are feeling some helplessness and uncertainty at a time when the best thing you can do may be to just stay home. While older Americans face a higher risk if they come into contact with the virus, every one of us has a role we can play in beating this virus.

I reiterate remarks made earlier this week by Dr. Deborah Birx, who is coordinating the White House Coronavirus Task Force. She continues to stress the importance of millennials—one of the largest generation cohorts—in saying that this is the core group who will stop this virus.

We all know young people feel bulletproof and that their lives will be eternal. Many a time, they don't understand that they are just as mortal as the rest of us. Because these younger individuals are at a lower risk of contracting the virus, they think it is fine to continue with their normal routines as long as they aren't experiencing symptoms. Yet, if they are infected, they can still transmit the virus to others, especially to the older, more vulnerable people in their communities.

Dr. Birx has pointed out that we often talk about the "greatest generation," which is the World War II generation—people like my mom and dad and those who answered the call to serve and fought for our freedoms. Yet now is the time for the younger generation, the millennials, to answer a different call and take the necessary precautions to protect that "greatest generation," which is among the most vulnerable.

I am proud of the fact that, when Texas faces a crisis, whether it be hurricanes or tornadoes that have devastated our State in recent years, Texans come together and support one another. The truth is, this is also how I would describe Americans when they react to an attack, whether it be 9/11, the great recession of 2008, or now this coronavirus.

This is not a time for us to engage in business as usual. This is a time for us to come together in a new and very important but different way. Stay home, and take this seriously. We will get through this together.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. 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. BLUNT. Mr. President, the response to the coronavirus has made it clear that there are lots of things that