

our States that are high and dry because of the cost of dealing with this public health crisis and the additional claims on their unemployment benefits.

We need the National Guard and the Defense Department pushing assistance to every level of government during the pandemic. That means supplying masks and ventilators and beds to communities that need them.

I am also, with Senator DUCKWORTH—my colleague of Illinois—reaching out directly to the Department of Defense. I want to find out if we can start building field hospitals in the parking lots of major hospitals across our State. We have done it before when we had to—particularly when dealing with the Ebola crisis overseas—and we need to do that right here at home and take the expertise of the Army Corps of Engineers and other professionals at the Pentagon. They are ready to move at a moment's notice to build a field hospital, if needed, for our men and women in uniform. Let's take that same willingness and expertise and translate it into more bed capacity and room capacity at the hospitals most in need.

The protective equipment across this country still is not at the level it should be for the men and women in the military as well as those in civilian life.

The proposal before us ignores the desperation we are hearing from cities and town and States. Without tax revenues coming in, they are running out of cash to keep operating services and meeting payroll. We need a surge of Federal funding through current programs with flexibility for States and localities to allow them to keep paying their workers and ensuring things like transit, airports, schools, and housing.

The McConnell plan also does not provide much needed education assistance to deal with the increased expenses related to closing schools and moving to online learning. We have to make sure that this new technology keeps our kids learning, even though they may be home in the process. It provides nothing for these emergency needs. That bill, I hope, will be improved today as the Democrats get a chance to sit down with Republicans for the first time and talk about compromises.

The Republican majority leader himself said this is a public health crisis with an economic crisis strapped to its back. I couldn't agree more. Where are the test kits? Where is the protective equipment? Where is the assistance for working families? Let's get it done.

The Senator from Kentucky is giving us a deadline to do it by tomorrow. I think that is ambitious, but let's try to meet it and do it on a bipartisan basis.

I couldn't agree more that some affected industries—like the airlines and hospitality, along with small and midsized businesses—need to be assisted. We can also take care of American workers and families at the same time. I think it is incumbent on us to do both.

In short, the Senate needs to act now to fix the major flaws pointed out by both Republicans and Democrats in this third package. I stand ready to work on these fixes.

Just a few minutes ago, I left one of the working groups, and it was a very positive atmosphere and attitude in which the two sides were sitting down and trying to work out their differences.

For the dark time ahead, we need to continue reminding American people that we can rise to the challenge—both political parties—not to politically fight but to find political answers and compromises that solve these problems I have outlined here today.

The bottom line is, people are sitting at home. Some are even following C-SPAN in their absolute boredom, trying to figure out what to do with their lives, and they are listening to our speeches.

My report is this: We passed two major pieces of legislation involving billions of dollars. We have done it in record time. We have done it on a bipartisan basis. Both have been signed by the President. This third measure that may reach a trillion dollars in cost is a challenge, for sure, but one we can meet again on a bipartisan basis. We owe America, at this moment in our history, nothing less.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the coronavirus continues to challenge our Nation in extraordinary ways that were unimaginable a few weeks ago. Our public health systems are coming under enormous strain. Our hospitals and other medical facilities lack the necessary supplies and resources. As measures to isolate the public broaden, workers are filing for unemployment at unprecedented rates. Small businesses are on the brink of collapse. American families are desperately in need of support until they can resume their normal lives.

I have heard from these people and the people who are isolated. I have heard from people who have sick loved ones in nursing homes and can't enter to see them. I have heard from small business people who struggled their

whole lives to build a small business, and it finally looks like it is beginning to succeed, and they may be wiped out.

The urgency of doing something now is so important. Both parties in Congress must work together as swiftly as possible to get something done that is as big and bold as possible. This is one of the worst crises America has faced. The American people need help fast.

Senator MCCONNELL has proposed what is now the third phase of legislation to confront the coronavirus. We are all eager to work in a bipartisan way to quickly get another bill to the President's desk. But at the moment, the McConnell bill is inadequate. Leader MCCONNELL's proposal does not do nearly enough to address the public health crisis in terms of hospitals, medical supplies, beds, doctors, nurses, and measures to ensure that Americans can access and afford coronavirus treatment.

The bottom line is very simple: If we don't deal with the health crisis, nothing we do will make the economy any better. So that is No. 1.

If we don't have help for our hospitals, many small ones are going to close. Rural ones will close. Big ones will have real trouble. We must do something. Yet there is nothing in Leader MCCONNELL's bill to help hospitals. Now we are told we may do it later in a supplemental. Later is no good. We need a Marshall Plan for hospitals right now.

Local governments that are also on the frontlines need to get dollars in their pockets. Many of them will go broke.

Leader MCCONNELL's proposal is also skewed in favor of corporations rather than the workers and families who urgently and much more acutely feel the pain of reduced hours and unemployment. Leader MCCONNELL's proposal includes a few ideas that shouldn't be included at all, such as tax cuts for multinational corporations and restrictions on paid sick leave that Congress just expanded.

This morning, Democratic ranking members of six committees met with the Republican chairs of corresponding committees to hear the rationale behind the McConnell bill and to begin a bipartisan dialogue. Democrats will soon respond with policies we believe must be included in the legislation and things that we don't think belong in this legislation.

Our goal is twofold: Address the public health crisis now, and put workers first as we do it.

Democrats want to do as much as possible to prepare our healthcare system for the growing storm it faces, and we want to help the working Americans who are most immediately affected by the economic slowdown and help them in real and significant ways. In that respect, Democrats have five important priorities that I will speak about now, among others. We have many other priorities as well. We are sending all of our priorities over to the Republicans soon enough.

No. 1, America needs a Marshall Plan for hospitals and our public health infrastructure. In a few weeks, hospitals could be overrun with patients, and there will still be a great shortage of gloves, masks, ICU beds, ventilators, and especially testing. To cite just one example, the two biggest hospitals in Albany—Albany Medical Center and St. Peter's Health Partners—announced they are suspending testing in order to conserve the few they have for healthcare workers and high-risk patients. Access to tests continues to be a problem in other places throughout my State as well.

There is great shortage of equipment. The story that rings in my ear is that certain places that have the tests don't have the swabs so they can undertake the tests. We are short of supplies up and down the line. It is masks. It is protective clothing and gear. It is beds. It is doctors and nurses themselves. We have to do more. We need a Marshall Plan right now for our healthcare system.

Two weeks ago, 3, 4 weeks ago, many of us were talking about the problem that testing—the lack of good testing was about to occur. Many of us said 3 weeks ago, 4 weeks ago, that if we don't have these tests, everything is going to go down the drain. No one listened—at least no one in the administration—until recently. Well, we are saying now that in 2, 3 weeks, our hospital situation will be the same. It will be massive and deeply in trouble. That is why we need to act now—not later with a supplemental but now.

We also need to dramatically increase unemployment insurance—what we are calling employment insurance. It is really unemployment insurance on steroids. But it helps people furloughed from their jobs, so we call it employment insurance. Why do we need it? Because so many workers have been forced home and are prevented from working regular hours. If you work in a restaurant and there are no customers, you are not going to work. The boss you worked for and worked so well with for years can't afford to pay you.

To go on existing unemployment insurance won't work. It is hard to access. It doesn't cover a whole lot of people. Furthermore, it does not pay back workers the full wages they were earning. We need to change all three of those things so that, No. 1, every worker who is unemployed gets a paycheck equal to what they were earning before this crisis, paid for by the Federal Government. That way, the business—small, medium, large—can put them on furlough, and then, when the crisis is over, they are back. There is money in their pockets. No workers, no family, no one should lose a paycheck or go into financial ruin as a result of the coronavirus. This is a very important provision.

I talk to people all across my State and the country, and when they hear about it, they love it. It is not giving money to everybody. There are some

people, thank God, who are still employed, but there are many, many people who have lost their jobs, and one check, when they may be out of their jobs for 3, 4, 5 months, isn't going to be enough. Unemployment insurance gives money the whole period of time the crisis exists at your present salary level and covers just about everyone. It makes the most sense of any program that I have heard in dealing with those who are losing their jobs, and it helps in terms of dealing with stimulating the economy because we will bring the economy back to where it was. All these unemployed people will be getting paid the same amount of money.

Third, paid sick leave is a must. We need to be expanding paid sick leave, not restricting it, as this current proposal suggests. Senators MURRAY and GILLIBRAND, working in conjunction with their colleague Congresswoman DELAURO in the House, put together a good bill. It should be in this big proposal.

Fourth, we need to put our workers first. If we are going to consider bailing out industries, they cannot then be allowed to turn around and cut jobs, cut wages, cut benefits. They cannot be allowed to use the money for stock buybacks. They cannot be allowed to give salary increases to executives. Phase 3 needs to put workers first, period. These are our values.

Finally, we need to rescue small businesses. Many of them have been asked to close their doors for the sake of public safety. We need to help businesses access the necessary liquidity to pay their insurance bills, to pay their rent or mortgage, to pay their expenses so that when this crisis ends, they can rebound stronger than ever.

Democratic ranking members are already discussing these priorities with their Republican counterparts. Of course, there are many other priorities as well. It would take too long to highlight all of them, but they are all in white paper we have sent to Leader MCCONNELL and to the Republican chairs. In almost all these cases, Democrats already have prepared and drafted the legislative language on these priorities. We are ready to go.

About 2 hours ago, I spoke with President Trump about these five priorities. I mentioned them all, and President Trump told me he was open to these ideas. In fact, the President explicitly told me he would oppose companies using bailout money on buybacks, even though such a prohibition is not in MCCONNELL's bill.

I also urged the President to immediately employ the Defense Production Act and harness industry to get ventilators and other critically needed medical equipment to those who need it. He told me he would do so and then said to someone who must have been in the Oval Office—or wherever he was—to get it done. So I think we are on the road, because we can't waste a day in terms of getting the DPA going. Congress will make available very quickly

whatever resources are needed to the Defense Department in order to implement this act.

More broadly, I told the President we need to come together and cooperate in this time of national crisis. He agreed. We need to work with uncommon speed and make this next bill what it needs to be. We need it to be workers first, with a Marshall Plan for hospitals. The Democrats are already at work with our Republican colleagues to get this done.

Now, it has been 20 days since the first case of COVID-19 was detected in New York. Today, 20 days later, there are 7,000 cases—more than a third of the total number in our country. In a time of public emergency, New Yorkers have been asked to make extraordinary sacrifices. The Governor has just mandated that, excepting essential services, 100 percent of New York's workforce must stay home. The city that never sleeps is, for the moment, dormant.

To all of my fellow New Yorkers, stay strong. We will beat this back, and on the other side, we will come back stronger.

To the thousands of New Yorkers and more across the country who have volunteered to join our medical reserves to help sick patients, thank you. God bless you. The Nation owes you a debt for your courage and willingness to answer the call to serve.

Our medical workers are already performing a herculean task, and it will only get more daunting in the days to come.

Know this, workers: The country is with you. We support you; we respect you; we love you; and we are already working on policies that will ease your burden, as much as that can be achieved.

Finally, to my Senate colleagues, what we must do in the next few days is unlike anything any of us has ever done in our time in Congress. This is a crisis without modern precedent. We are going to have to flex some muscles that may have atrophied. We are going to have to cooperate in ways that we may not be accustomed to. We are going to have to work across the aisle and across the span of this Capitol to produce momentous legislation in the span of a few days. We will do it because we must do it. The American people are suffering. Our businesses are shuttered. Our factories lay idle. Our workers are without work. Let us come together and do whatever is necessary to protect the American people in this time of historic challenge.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, this past week, we have seen that the spread of COVID-19 has really become a crisis not just for our Nation but a crisis for every American. Today, millions of Americans are asking themselves how they will endure this crisis, how long will the crisis last, how will it affect their families, their communities, and their Nation as a whole.

We have many people who are now trying to do the dollars-and-cents of this crisis, literally sitting down to try to calculate how many weeks they can stretch the last 2 weeks of pay.

We see people who have been furloughed, had their hours reduced, been laid off.

We have seen that small businesses—from the mom-and-pop pizza joints, to small interior design shops, to barber shops—are all trying to determine how they can keep themselves afloat when their doors are closed and how they can deal with their fixed costs.

I have been on the phone with so many employers in my own State who have spoken to me about the challenges they have trying to continue to cover the health insurance of their employees even with the fact that no revenue is being brought in by their businesses.

Over and over again, restaurants, bars, coffee shops, our sports arenas, hotels—all of them have been emptied, and millions of workers have been let go and had their hours slashed.

On top of that, schools across this country, from colleges to kindergartens, have been closed, and millions of families are now scrambling to try to find childcare. College students are displaced and moving back in with families.

This is, on so many levels, a true crisis like none of us have ever faced before in our Nation. The emotions are running the gamut. People are angry. People are afraid. People are fearful for their own physical safety, as well as their economic well-being.

This is something that is challenging because we do not know how long it will last. The one thing we do know is that this crisis is a shared one, but many people face their own privately painful challenges. I will give one example.

There is a single mother in my State—a mother of two—who works at a nursing home and is also raising her granddaughter. At work, she cares for elderly patients, and because family members can no longer visit, she is rising to the challenge of not just being a professional there, but she also feels she is serving as a surrogate family member. Now, for weeks, the basic personal protective equipment she needs to keep herself safe is in short supply and is literally dwindling.

For all of this incredible work, this incredible dedication literally on the frontlines, she makes \$14 an hour. With schools now closing, her teenage children will be responsible for caring for

her granddaughter while she works because she can't afford childcare. She doesn't know what she would do if she got sick and actually had to miss work. She is living every day afraid of getting the coronavirus.

There are millions of families in a similar situation and millions of Americans who are getting up every day knowing that their going to work is essential for the well-being of others. Yet they still don't know how they will take care of their families.

The most recent bipartisan relief package that came out of Congress, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, is a very important step in helping those families and combating the spread of the virus and its effects. It will help to increase testing, ensure the availability of emergency paid family and sick leave for many workers, increase food assistance programs, and make emergency unemployment insurance available for more workers who really, really need it.

Now, as we turn to the next package of policies and funding to help Americans who are suffering now, we know this is a moment that demands bold, decisive action and doesn't leave anybody behind. We know we are a nation born out of crisis. We know that our founding ideals—you have to understand that this government was formed to protect people and to defend people. We, in our Declaration of Independence, talk about mutually pledging to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor. The spirit of this Nation is about being there for each other and coming together to be stronger despite the crisis, despite the challenge.

I am so grateful at this time that we are seeing bipartisan work on both sides of the aisle, as we are all seeing—from our personal lives to our States as a whole—we are all seeing the urgency.

I am worried now that the first proposal that we have seen, though, falls short of addressing the needs of our healthcare workers and first responders—those Americans who are really putting themselves out there. I am confident, though, that we are going to come together in the coming hours to try to create a package that rises above or rises to meet the moment we are in.

Right now, our Nation's first responders, our firefighters, and our healthcare professionals are being asked to respond to situations where they don't have the personal protective equipment they need to stay safe. In my own city, I talked to the head of public safety, who talked to me about the courage of these folks who, no matter what, are going to go to work, even without that protective gear. But, dear God, shouldn't we be doing everything we can, because if they get sick, if they can't show up, we will see a cascading crisis. It would be disgraceful. It would be dangerous.

It is not an exaggeration to say that if we don't move quickly to get personal protective equipment to our

frontline responders, we are going to be ill-equipped not just to fight COVID-19, but we could see widespread interruptions in the delivery of all lifesaving emergencies in America. Also, this bill we have seen now, which we must make better, must address not just this issue but also do more for healthcare workers and first responders to get them the equipment they need.

There are a lot of things that I feel strongly about that I know will be in these negotiations.

We should all be able to agree on supporting our veterans and VA facilities as they prepare to fight this virus. There are gaping holes in that in this bill.

We should all agree on funding for our transit systems—like Amtrak—that are going to make sure to keep our country connected, that those systems don't fail and fall, especially when we will need them switched on and running vibrantly when our economy gets going. We should all agree that this is a time to deal with some of the massive shortfalls that we have now more than ever.

While places like South Korea have universal broadband penetration, we should all agree that broadband access in devices for our students is critical if we are going to continue to educate our children for the months ahead.

We should all agree on providing tests for our troops that are still serving in high-risk areas like Afghanistan. We need to make sure these bills address these holes.

We should all agree on strengthening our community colleges and our minority-serving institutions so they, too, can continue to educate their students digitally. These are holes that must be filled.

We should all agree that we need to be providing funding and flexibility for our schools and food banks to continue to serve meals to children in our country so that, crisis or no crisis, the next generation can grow healthy and strong.

We should all agree that the utilities in our Nation should not be shut off during this crisis—we need to address that in this bill—so that families, regardless of income, who are already now struggling to make ends meet don't see themselves without light, power, and gas. These holes in this bill should be addressed.

We should all agree that everyone must have coverage for testing and access to healthcare services that keep them and their families safe, and that includes the people who are in our country, whether they are documented or not, because our health is directly interrelated with their health. And to make sure that the only people who can get treatment are citizens of the United States—ignoring the millions of people who are not—means that the citizens of the United States are at risk.

We should also think about those folks whom we don't think about