

Now the wealthiest Nation on planet Earth is facing one of its biggest trials. I pray it is one of the biggest trials in my lifetime, if not the biggest trial. The wealthiest country on the planet is showing what we are called to be. I have always felt, as the prophet Elijah says in the Bible, that we are the light onto other nations—about how we pull together, stand together, fight through a storm, and fight through a crisis. We are showing what we do for each other.

It is not just the men and women sitting in these seats. It is all of us. In the greatest crisis of our lifetime, what are you doing for other people?

I pray our legislation keeps that spirit in mind. When the most common faith talks about what are you doing for the widower, what are you doing for the orphan, what are you doing for those people in prison, I hope we keep that in mind.

It is not a time for half steps or half measures. It is time for the bold spirit of America, where we stand up for each other. We don't pull apart; we come together. We don't tear down; we rise up. That is where we are right now in American history. In this great global pandemic, we are a light unto each other, as well as to the world.

And for the Senate, right now, while there still are 100 of us here doing the work, let's do it nobly and boldly and with generosity of spirit. Let's extend civic grace because this crisis is not bigger than who we are.

We will endure. We shall overcome. May God bless America, and may God bless each and every one of us.

Thank you.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, it has been so interesting talking to our Tennesseans as they have faced these issues we have with coronavirus and what is happening, our response to it, and how we are going to fight it. And yes, we are going to win this war, and we are going to defeat this, but we have to look at it as our health, food, and financial assistance.

Last night, a couple of my Tennesseans and I were discussing this—what their thoughts and their questions to me were about the relationship we have with China and how can we trust that we know what China knew, that we know when they knew it, and their lack of transparency around what happened with COVID-19.

As we have gotten a couple of months past the start of this, these questions are unanswered. As I was telling our Tennesseans on the phone last night,

even as this virus that came out of Wuhan, China—they had it in December. It has now touched six continents, and we know people are dealing with containment. They are dealing with mitigation. They are dealing with going through the process of getting the anti-virals, getting the vaccines that are necessary to deal with COVID-19.

The questions that people have around this are compounded by the growing realization of how China has chosen not to be honest and not to be transparent in their dealings with the rest of the world. The way Beijing handled its initial response to the coronavirus was nothing new. In fact, deflection and lies meant to protect the Communist Party is part of their standard operating procedure. They have defied norms governing the protection of human rights. They embrace innovation by incursion, defy property rights, and steal intellectual property as a matter of course.

We have U.S. companies that have suffered for decades from what China has done to steal their intellectual property, to infringe on their intellectual property. They defy the sovereignty of other nations and territories, and they defy what should be their role as a leader in the global economy. Certainly, they want to be a market economy or so they say, but look at their behavior. It is this act of defiance that makes them incredibly dangerous.

I have to tell you, this has been something that has been going on for quite a while, but we only need to go back a decade to place a flag marking our awareness of what has become a very familiar story. Over the decades, as China started to manufacture and started to pull U.S. manufacturers there and then started to mistreat their intellectual property rights, people became aware of what was going on. It was right at 10 years ago, when I was a Member in the House, that we were doing much of the same work that we are doing right now in the U.S. Senate; we were preparing a defense authorization bill. Even then we realized the threat that China and Chinese state-owned companies posed to our national security. We drafted amendments to that year's NDAA, blocking the purchase of Huawei-supplied equipment. Indeed, we are still hearing about the need to block the purchase of Huawei equipment not only for us but for our allies.

That action was 10 years ago, but China's influence has continued to grow. What we have done is pretty much our part in the Senate to expose those bad actions, even as the rest of the world has allowed Beijing to co-opt the trappings of capitalism to perpetuate totalitarianism.

Last year, we saw the people of Hong Kong rise up on behalf of democracy and self-determination. Indeed, to this day, that fight goes on even though the threats and fears of COVID-19 have

caused those protesters to have to protest in a different way.

I cosponsored the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act and sponsored legislation prohibiting the commercial export of covered munition items to the Hong Kong police force. But the world moves on, even as that standoff in Hong Kong continues.

The Senate was forced to pen a resolution asking the International Olympic Committee to rebid the 2022 Winter Games to a country that respects human rights. That was really quite a bold move. It leaves me to wonder, why was China given this honor in the first place? I have to tell you, nobody seems to really know the answer to that question. The aggression they display toward Taiwan and Tibet and the outright repression of the Uighurs—this is something that has gone unchecked many times due to fear of economic retaliation.

I have addressed this body several times on the subject of Huawei and China's leveraging of the impending 5G rollout to create national security vulnerabilities in our network. Their efforts to undermine our sovereignty are not limited to high-tech espionage. Indeed, their goal is to place their equipment everywhere. That is why it is so incredibly affordable to so many countries and so many of our allies. In placing this equipment, they are seeking to establish their own high-tech cyber spy network. We know what they are up to.

This month, I introduced a bill to temper the influence of China-backed Confucius Institutes on American college campuses. We all have read the stories lately of how they have infiltrated some of our institutions of higher learning and how they have co-opted some of the staff or professors.

This is something that needs our attention. It is followed on the heels of the Stop Higher Education Espionage and Theft Act—another effort to prevent Beijing from increasing its hold on the minds of our younger generations. Time and again, we have called Chinese tech companies like Tik Tok onto the carpet for their censorship, their data collection, and their privacy practices—or lack of privacy, we should say. Yet content from their popular apps still dominates social media headlines. China's hold on the global economy has never been more apparent.

Now there are reports that Beijing used the media and keyword censorship to suppress information about the coronavirus. Yet Beijing remains defiant, attacking President Trump in tweets and accusing everyday Americans of racism for daring to suggest that COVID-19 originated in Wuhan, China. They are, as many younger people like to say, gaslighting us, and it is madness.

It brings us to ask, when will enough be enough? We must not let our present concerns about the response to coronavirus deter us from thinking long term. This pandemic will change

our relationship with China in every single way. It is inevitable. Starting now, we must take advantage of this knowledge. As we think about an exit strategy from the coronavirus crisis, we have to think about this. As we think about a way forward to bring manufacturing back to the United States, we need to remember this.

SECURING AMERICA'S MEDICINE CABINET

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I have spoken several times about the vulnerabilities in our pharmaceutical supply chain and again encourage my colleagues to support the bipartisan Securing America's Medicine Cabinet Act—or SAM-C Act—which I am sponsoring alongside my colleague from New Jersey, Senator MENENDEZ.

Without intervention, the FDA expects the pharmaceutical industry will continue to rely on Chinese companies to make the active pharmaceutical ingredients—or the APIs—that are necessary for so many of our prescription and over-the-counter drugs. The threat it poses to our supply chain is real.

On February 27, 2020, the FDA announced the shortage of one drug that is used to treat patients with coronavirus. They attributed the shortage to difficulties obtaining the API from a site in China. That site has been affected by—guess what—coronavirus.

We do not need to remain vulnerable. We need to realize that we are dealing with someone who has not been transparent. They have hidden information from us. They are causing shortages of drugs and vaccines and antibiotics. It is time for us to learn from these lessons. If we ignore them, we do so at our own peril.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. JONES. Mr. President, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today in the wake of what is going on.

I appreciate my colleague from Tennessee talking about supply chains. I completely agree with her. It is something that we are going to have to seriously look at as we get through this process. We have become too dependent. I appreciate her efforts in that regard.

I want to talk today—I know we have a lot going on up here. For those who are watching and the American people, you need to understand that while this Gallery may be empty and this floor may be empty, there is a lot going on in the Senate right now. There is a lot happening to try to make sure that we save this economy, that we do those things necessary to try to make sure our businesses, our workers, and our economy from all sectors are saved.

Again, I want to go back to the thing you can do as Americans, and that is to stop the spread of this virus. Do social

distancing. Do those things we have talked about now for several weeks to try to get folks to do their part because we are trying to do our part. We are doing this in an incredibly bipartisan effort. I think you will see a lot of things coming out of the Senate and out of the House, along with the administration, to try to make sure we do those things for Americans.

Over the past few weeks, I have talked with countless business owners and local and State officials. I have heard from a lot of folks who are scared to death, working folks who are now at home. They are not telecommuting because their jobs are not like that. They are alarmed about where we are today and where we are going to be tomorrow and next week and over the coming weeks and even potentially months.

Businesses are having to lay off folks. They are having to furlough workers, sending a surge of folks to the unemployment line. We have seen that in just the last few days, which is something that, as we were moving, we thought we would not see.

Small businesses, like restaurants and Main Street retailers, will go bankrupt if we are not careful. They are going to go bankrupt without customers, as folks stay home and practice the social distancing that we know we have to do and as States start enacting forced closures of schools and events. Those businesses will shutter. Hopefully, it will only be a temporary shutting.

First and foremost, there are steps we can all take to stop the spread of the virus and begin to get the economy on the right track. It is up to us individually. In the meantime, we, as Members of Congress and public officials across this country—from local county officials and city officials to the Governors and State legislators and Members of Congress—we have to do all we can to make sure our businesses, particularly the small businesses, which make up an overwhelming amount of business in the State of Alabama in particular, can continue to meet payroll and keep workers paid so that they can then continue to meet their obligations. That is where my proposal comes in that I talked to a number of colleagues about.

In addition to providing the same kind of direct assistance payments that are being kicked around now—whether it is through checks or in some form or another that people are widely talking about right now—I would also like to see a new fund that is created to quickly get cash into the hands of small businesses so they can make their payroll and not have to lay off workers. I am calling this the small business lifeline fund. It would provide a no-interest bridge loan for up to 3 months, to be paid back over 5 years with no interest. This is a work-in-progress, so there are even proposals to make sure that this loan can be forgiven in certain circumstances. It

could be administered through the Small Business Administration. It would offer loans up to 75 percent of a business's last 3 months of payroll, with no one employee receiving more than \$5,000.

I want to repeat that because it would affect so many people in this country. It would offer loans up to 75 percent of a business's last 3 months of payroll, with no one employee receiving more than \$5,000 per month.

The key to this fund is, it would pass directly through the payroll companies. Payroll companies around this country are used by about 40 percent of American businesses. They mostly cater to the small businesses with fewer than 500 employees. Payroll companies are in the best position to do this because they already have the infrastructure in place. They are a smart choice because they have payroll history. They have the employee data that makes this quick. It makes it efficient. It uses the infrastructure and the pipelines that already exist without having to go back and reinvent or create a new whole set of dynamics that may or may not work. We know the payroll company system in this country works. Again, 40 percent of folks use it.

This process would help to alleviate the strain on our unemployment program. It would be a seamless way to continue to pay workers, while also ensuring that payroll taxes can continue to fund important programs, like Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security.

I want you to think about this. What we are talking about doing is not just a one-time \$1,000 check or two-time \$1,000 check; it is literally funding payroll the way it exists—maybe only 75 percent of it. But people who are used to getting those payroll checks through a payroll processor have their taxes deducted, they have their Social Security deducted, and they have their Medicaid and Medicare expenses deducted. Those things would still come in. It is just that we have created a fund from the Federal Government to do that. Part of what we are fronting comes right back to the Federal Government.

As part of this, we would also like to offer assistance to folks who are self-employed or run microbusinesses. According to IRS data, in 2017, there were some 26 million sole proprietorships in the United States. That is a lot of folks out there working hard, hustling every day to make their businesses—their little piece of the American dream—successful, but they don't have the cash reserves to fall back on in times like these. We could carve this out and make sure they are taken care of in the short run.

This is not the time, in my view, to shortchange the economy. This is not the time to send out just a check here and a check there—especially for those who are the most vulnerable to the cataclysmic shocks we have seen in recent weeks. We have to be bold. We have to