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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, March 23, 2020, at 11:30 a.m.

Senate

SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 2020

The Senate met at 2 p.m. 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.

Almighty God, open our eyes to Your movements in our midst. Remind our lawmakers that You have brought us through times more challenging than what we now face. Keep them from being intimidated by this global pandemic, as they cling to Your promises and trust the unfolding of Your triumphant providence.

Lord, continue to protect them and to order their steps. Clothe them with the honor of integrity. Shield them with Your truth and guide them with Your power.

We pray in Your strong 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BRAUN). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 1 minute in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I bet all of our fellow Senators have been hearing from businesses, hospitals, nursing homes, and local civic business and political leaders about the issues they are facing right now due to the coronavirus health crisis.

Likewise, I have been talking to family and friends back home in Iowa. I find that they are banding together to support one another. In times of strife, Iowans can count on each other.

We have to give special attention to the hard work of our medical professionals and first responders. They are under immense pressure and going above and beyond to serve their communities. I believe they are doing God's work, keeping the American people safe and healthy. So I thank our medical professionals and first responders for their dedication to their communities and send my encouragement to keep up their essential work in the days and weeks ahead, as we see ourselves through this virus pandemic we are in.

I yield the floor.

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. McCONNELL. Mr. 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 MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

SENATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, Senators have now spent days engaged in vigorous bipartisan discussions among ourselves and with the administration.

Earlier today, I hosted a productive meeting in my office with the Democratic leader, the Speaker of the House, the House Republican leader, and the Secretary of the Treasury. These intense conversations have built a piece of legislation that is as bold and as big as the American people deserve and as thoroughly bipartisan as our process demands.

Now what we need to do is to move forward. This national crisis is not going to wait around if Congress slips back into conventional politics or haggles endlessly over the finer points.

Every day, more Americans' jobs are disappearing or coming ever closer to the brink. Every day, more small businesses are faced with hard decisions that could change local communities, literally, forever. Every day, major American companies that employ countless people are seeing their commerce crushed by their own government for the sake of public health. Every day, doctors, nurses, and healthcare professionals will keep reporting to work and treating patients, whether or not Congress has their back.

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



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The risks to our country grow every single day that we do not act. The needs of hospitals and healthcare providers grow every day that we do not act.

That is why we have worked around the clock to craft a major bipartisan relief package. That is why we are going to hold our first procedural vote in just a few minutes. It is so that we can keep moving forward, because this virus is not going to wait for politics as usual.

These past few days have brought unity and bipartisan energy here to the Senate. I think Members on both sides agree that it has been very encouraging.

Since Senate Republicans released our initial framework to give some structure to these discussions, both sides have worked hard to create something that can pass the Senate, pass the House, and be signed into law by the President.

The bipartisan product delivers strongly on each of the core priorities we identified at the outset. It puts urgently needed cash in the hands of American workers and families. It delivers historic and rapid relief to small businesses so they can make payroll and keep people employed. It helps stabilize key industries to avoid layoffs wherever possible and preserve the greatest economy in the world for when we come out on the other side of this. And, of course, it sends a massive—massive—new infusion of resources to the frontlines of the medical response.

That is what we have to do: inject a significant amount of money as quickly as possible into households, small businesses, key sectors, and our Nation's hospitals and health centers.

This bill would do that, and it would do it fast. The comprise product also contains many ideas that our Democratic colleagues brought to the table. It balances the administration's focus on sending direct cash to Americans as quickly as possible with our Democratic colleagues' focus on bolstering State unemployment insurance programs. It places conditions which our Democratic colleagues have sought on the loans that would flow to major businesses, conditions which the President has also endorsed. And both parties have made sure to keep strengthening the resources that will be pushed out to the frontlines.

The bill includes \$75 billion in a new fund for hospitals and health providers, and more than three-quarters of the funds in the appropriations section—nearly \$200 billion—will not stay in Washington but will go straight to State and local priorities.

So what we have is a comprise product which contains ideas, contributions, and priorities from both sides and which can become law as soon as tomorrow—as soon as tomorrow. In other words, it is just about time to take yes for an answer.

We are now at a point which every American who has ever negotiated any-

thing would recognize, whether they have purchased a home, bought a car, or negotiated for their small business. We are at the point where both sides have come a long way toward each other, and each side has to decide whether to continue elbowing and arguing over the last several inches and risk the whole thing or whether to shake hands and get it done.

Thus far, throughout this crisis, the Senate has risen to the occasion. It was just a few days ago when the Senate Republican majority moved expeditiously to pass the House Democrats' phase 2 legislation, even though many of my colleagues on this side of the aisle and I had serious reservations and would have written it very differently. We passed it anyway. It was basically written on the House side. Nevertheless, as I just said, I pushed the Speaker's legislation through the Senate because urgency and results matter during a national crisis; because, imperfections notwithstanding, it was the right thing to do for our country.

So, look—look—I hope and anticipate that a similar degree of bipartisanship and urgency will be reciprocated now. I understand the Speaker said following our meeting this morning that she may simply give up on these bipartisan talks and begin writing her own separate bill. Perhaps that is related to the remarks of one of her senior House Democratic leaders who reportedly told colleagues a few days ago: "This is a tremendous opportunity to restructure things to fit our vision."

"... a tremendous opportunity to restructure things to fit our vision."

Well, I sincerely hope that nobody actually views this crisis in such a cynical manner. This is not a political opportunity. It is a national emergency. That is why we have engaged in days of bipartisan talks to get to this point. It is why it is time to move forward.

Americans don't need to see us haggling endlessly. They don't need us to jeopardize all the progress we have made over the past several days for the sake of some eleventh-hour brinkmanship. The American people need an outcome, and they need it tomorrow. They need us to vote to advance this legislation today and pass it tomorrow.

As I said yesterday, Congress should take inspiration from our own constituents. We should be inspired by our own constituents. Look at what they are doing. Even during this pandemic, the American people are showing the world the soul of our country.

In my home State of Kentucky, the official motto is "United we stand, divided we fall." And every day I hear about new ways Kentuckians are standing united, even if they have to stand 6 feet apart.

I recently heard about a resident of Campbell County in Northern Kentucky named Debbie Buckley. In her day job, Debbie works for the local government, but recently she heard about some students at a nearby university who were still living in the dorms even

though in-person classes have been canceled. Some had to remain in the area for work. Others were international students who couldn't get home. Their situations were completely uncertain.

The local shelves were not fully stocked, so Debbie decided to do something. She put out a call for help, and Kentuckians answered the call. Churches, restaurants, and neighbors all pitched in with food and supplies. Debbie drove all over Northern Kentucky collecting those donations and then delivering them to these young people.

She has found everything a college student could need: canned goods, microwavable meals, and even Airheads candy, which I am proud to say are made right there in Kentucky.

There are so many stories like this pouring in from all over our country. Americans are stepping up to the plate. Americans realize this is no time for selfishness and no time for division but a time for solidarity, generosity, and, yes, courage.

Americans are rising to the occasion. The Senate must do the same. Let's move this legislation forward this afternoon, as the last few discussions begin to wind down, and then let's get this done tomorrow.

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. THUNE. 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. THUNE. Mr. President, before I begin, we just learned that our colleague Senator RAND PAUL has tested positive for the coronavirus. Our thoughts and prayers are with him for a speedy recovery. We will consult with the attending physician at the Capitol about appropriate measures for those of us who have been in contact with the Senator.

This is the kind of situation that Americans across the country are dealing with right now, and it underscores the importance of acting immediately to deliver more relief for the American people.

The Senate has been working around the clock over the past few days to put together a third round of coronavirus legislation. We are very close to moving forward with a major bill that will deliver much needed relief to American families, workers, and businesses and put more resources into the hands of medical professionals.

This is a big bill, but this situation requires a big and bold response. Across our country, American workers and American businesses are struggling. Families are scared. Businesses have been forced to drastically curtail