



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 166

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2020

No. 59

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.

O God, our Father, we lift up our hearts in prayer because we trust in You. Lord, we know well the weakness and the insecurity of our hold upon this life.

Comfort those who have lost loved ones during this global health crisis. When we wrestle with sad memories of mortal loss, give us the glorious hope of life eternal.

Lord, provide our lawmakers with the confidence that Your all-sufficient grace and power will enable them to become more than conquerors during this time of trouble. Remind them that no one who trusts in You will ultimately be disgraced.

Mighty God, our forebears trusted in You, and You delivered them. Be not far from us, for You are the source of our hope.

We pray in Your great 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. LANKFORD). The Senator from Iowa.

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

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

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, as the chairman of the Finance Com-

mittee and the head of the Tax Task Force, I want to highlight a few areas of the bipartisan economic relief bill we will be voting on today.

Recovery checks to give Americans needed cash to provide for their families and get through our current health crisis look like this: \$1,200 for individuals, \$2,400 for married couples, and \$500 for each child. There is no minimum, no phase-in. It starts out at the lowest level.

Anyone with a Social Security number who is not a dependent of anyone else should be eligible for a check under the income caps.

We also have very strong unemployment compensation additions to the present program in this bill. We also have incentives to help charities because they play a very important role in this recovery.

My colleagues across the aisle said last week that the business tax issues were corporate bailouts. That couldn't be further from the truth, and I think my Democratic colleagues now agree. This is about helping our workers keep their jobs.

Our economic relief package to recover this economy has provisions to help businesses so that they have the cash to keep the doors open and keep making payroll. We all worked hard, along with the administration, to get this job done.

Now it is time to vote on this bill and deliver relief for the American people and to recover this economy—get the strong economy back that we had.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, it has only been 65 days since the first

American tested positive with the new coronavirus on our soil. In barely 2 months, this pandemic has upended our Nation. As of this morning, more than 175 million Americans have been advised to remain in their homes. More than half of our people are effectively sheltering in place.

Hospitals in major cities are pushing capacity. Doctors and nurses are exhausting crucial supplies.

And, if it were not enough for Americans to fight to stay healthy, they are also fighting to keep their paychecks, to keep supporting their families. Combating this disease has forced our country to put huge parts of our national life on pause and triggered layoffs at a breathtaking pace.

This strange new reality has forced our Nation onto something like a war-time footing. A fight has arrived at our shores. We did not seek it. We did not want it. But, now, we are going to win it.

Ten days ago, I laid out four urgent priorities for new Senate legislation to help our Nation through this crisis. We had to get direct—direct—financial assistance to the American people. We had to get historic aid to small businesses to keep paychecks flowing, stabilize key industries to prevent mass layoffs, and, of course, flood more resources into the frontline healthcare battle itself.

One week ago, Senate Republicans laid down an initial proposal that tackled each—each—of these emergency missions. Our Members put forward a bold plan to send cash to households, stand up historic emergency loans for Main Street, stabilize key sectors, and put the full might of Congress behind our doctors, nurses, hospitals, healthcare providers, and the race for treatments and vaccines.

I couldn't be more proud of our colleagues. Our Nation needed us to go big and go fast, and they did. The creative policies our chairmen crafted in just a couple of days' time remain the central

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S2021

building blocks of the proposal we will pass today.

But Republicans knew the Nation had no time—no time—for conventional political gamesmanship, so the instant we released our first draft, I created a series of bipartisan working groups. I asked Republicans and Democrats to work together around the clock—literally, around the clock—to make the bill even better.

By Sunday, we had an updated proposal that was even stronger and contained even more ideas, literally, from both sides—both sides. Republicans and Democrats have worked together to dramatically strengthen and rework unemployment insurance during this crisis. We have worked together to make sure lower income families could receive the full cash assistance, and on and on.

I will leave it to others to compare the bipartisan Sunday bill to the final version we will pass today and determine whether the last few changes really required or merited 3 days of delay—3 days of delay—in the face of this worsening crisis. But that Washington drama does not matter anymore. The Senate is going to stand together, act together, and pass this historic relief package today.

Struggling Americans are going to go to their mailboxes and find four-figure checks to help with their bills. Why? Because the Senate stepped up.

Many American families who have poured everything into a restaurant or a shop or a small manufacturer are going to keep making payroll and keep their businesses alive because this Senate stepped up.

Hundreds of thousands of workers in key sectors who might well have been laid off through no fault of their own will, instead, get to keep their job and continue their career because this Senate stepped up.

And, for the healthcare heroes who leave their own sleeping children and drive to the hospital for an all-night shift, who spend hour after hour healing the sick, comforting strangers, and literally battling this disease, there will be more masks in their supply closet, more funding for their hospitals, and, soon, more new treatments to administer to their patients because this Senate stepped up.

So, today, the Senate will act to help the people of this country weather this storm. Nobody thinks legislation can end this. We cannot outlaw the virus.

No economic policy could fully end the hardship so long as the public health requires that we put so much of our Nation's commerce on ice. This is not even a stimulus package. It is emergency relief—emergency relief. That is what this is.

No, this fight is not going to be won or lost in Washington. It is the American people who will beat this virus. Americans will keep making sacrifices to slow down the spread. Americans will keep pitching in and looking after each other. Americans will keep find-

ing creative ways to stand united, even if they have to stand 6 feet apart.

We will win this fight because of people like Amy Jean Tyler, a stay-at-home mom in Oldham County, KY, who is leading a drive to sew cotton masks for a local children's hospital.

We will win this fight because of people like Pastor Grant Hasty in Stearns, KY, who is gathering volunteers to distribute more than 550 home-cooked meals.

We will win this fight because of people like Peg Hays, who runs a distillery in Christian County, KY, and is temporarily converting her bourbon-making facilities to churn out hand sanitizer.

We will win this fight because national companies are switching production lines to make medical supplies because our largest high-tech companies are partnering with the government to throw supercomputing power right into the race for vaccines.

We will win this fight because of families, neighbors, and church communities that cannot even worship together in person and because of small businesses, big businesses, public health Ph.D.s, and local entrepreneurs.

It has been 18 years since every American was united in amazement and prayer as firefighters and first responders rushed into burning buildings on September 11, 2001.

In the coming days and weeks, our Nation is going to meet new heroes. Many may be police, firefighters, and EMTs once again. Many others will be truckdrivers, grocery store clerks, and pharmacists, who literally keep our supply chains running; utility workers and delivery drivers, who leave their homes so everyone else can remain in theirs; teachers, who somehow manage to keep educating their students over the internet while looking after their own kids at the very same time. And, most of all, we are going to meet a whole lot of American heroes who wear scrubs and masks and gloves—heroes who rush toward the sick and wash their hands until they bleed and work around the clock to heal our friends and our families.

When our Nation comes through this and takes flight again on the other side, it will be because American heroes won this fight. All the Senate can do is to give them the resources to do it, and that is exactly what we are going to do today.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the provision of rule XXII, the cloture motion with respect to the motion to proceed to H.R. 748 occur at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Democratic leader during today's session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

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

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MIDDLE CLASS HEALTH BENEFITS TAX REPEAL ACT OF 2019—Motion to Proceed—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 748, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 748) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to repeal the excise tax on high cost employer-sponsored health coverage.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, America has never seen anything like this before. To think that half of the people who live in the United States are under some order to either stay home or at least avoid contact with others is unheard of. This is an enemy—this virus—the likes of which we have never faced.

As strong and determined as our Nation is when it comes to these challenges, this is unique, and it calls for unique leadership. There are a lot of critics of the U.S. Congress—for good reason—but I think what we have demonstrated in the last several weeks since we have addressed this coronavirus is that there is a capacity for common sense, bipartisan work, and a timeliness that is essential.

The first two measures were passed in record time—one for \$8 billion, which opened the door for more medical resources; the second, for \$100 billion, which tried to guarantee to people they would never have to pay to be tested for coronavirus, that there would be adequate food supplies during this calamitous time, that we would have resources sent to the States for Medicaid reimbursement at new levels, that we would also engage people with family leave, as necessary, so that they could stay out of the workplace if they