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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, April 10, 2020, at 9 a.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2020

The Senate met at 10:04 and 13 seconds a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable ROY BLUNT, a Senator from the State of Missouri.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 9, 2020.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable ROY BLUNT, a Senator from the State of Missouri, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BLUNT thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent to be recognized, notwithstanding the order for a pro forma session today.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, our Nation continues to battle the coronavirus pandemic. More than 400,000 Americans have tested positive. Nearly 15,000 have lost their lives. Nurses, doctors, and EMTs are fighting this disease literally day and night, and important public health measures are creating an economic catastrophe.

This morning, we learned that 6.6 million more Americans filed for unemployment in just the last week. That means more than 16 million Americans have lost their jobs in only the last 3 weeks, a tragedy that is hard to even comprehend. As one journalist put it, we are facing a healthcare crisis with an economic crisis strapped to its back. That is why, 2 weeks ago, the Senate passed the largest rescue package in American history. The bipartisan CARES Act funneled more than \$2 trillion into bold programs to help households, fund hospitals and healthcare providers, and keep paychecks coming.

Before we adjourned, I said the Senate would stay nimble and prepare to react quickly as the legislation came online, so that why we are here today. Much of the CARES Act is still being implemented, but one key program—one key program—is already up and running. It is the Paycheck Protection Program from Chairman RUBIO, Chairman COLLINS, Senator CARDIN, and Senator SHAHEEN. It gives small businesses emergency capital so that workers can keep getting paychecks instead of pink slips. Just a few days after the program opened for business, \$100 billion in loans have already been committed.

That is 30 percent of the total funding spoken for in just the first few days. I say that is very good news. It means this job-saving program is attractive to small business. Employers can access it. But it also means we need more funding, and we need it fast.

Soon, I will ask unanimous consent to increase the funding for the Paycheck Protection Program to a new total of \$600 billion. I am not talking about changing any policy language that both sides have already negotiated together several weeks ago. I am literally talking about deleting the number 350 and writing 600 in its place. Let me say that again: We are not talking about making any policy changes; we are literally changing the number 350 to 600. That is all we are suggesting here today. That, by definition, is a clean bill.

I want to add more money to the only part of our bipartisan bill that is currently at risk of running out of money, so I was surprised to see this simple proposal met uneasily by the Democratic leadership. The distinguished Democratic leader and the Speaker of the House sought to use this crucial program to open broader negotiations on other topics, including parts of the CARES Act where literally—listen to this, Mr. President—literally no money has gone out the door yet—no money has gone out the door yet. The Democratic leadership has suggested they may hold Americans' paychecks hostage unless we passed another sweeping bill that spends a half trillion dollars, doubling down on a number of parts of the

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



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CARES Act, including parts that have not even started to work yet.

The country cannot afford unnecessary wrangling or political maneuvering. Treating this as a normal kind of partisan negotiation could literally cost Americans their jobs. We are in a situation right now where passing a bill means either unanimous consent or a voice vote. Everyone knows—everyone—there is zero chance that the sprawling proposal that our Democratic friends have gestured towards could pass either Chamber by unanimous consent this week—no chance. The President has already indicated he would not sign it. The country needs us to be nimble—nimble—to fix urgent problems as fast as we can, to be able to have focused discussions on urgent subjects without turning every conversation into a conversation about everything. We need to patch holes as we see them and keep moving forward together.

Everybody in the Senate voted to send historic funding to hospitals and healthcare providers. Everyone supports funding hospitals. I am in favor of even more funding for hospitals and providers down the line. I have been talking to a number of them, as I am sure our colleagues have, over the last couple of weeks.

But certainly, we need to see the existing funding begin to work before we know what additional resources may be needed. I have been urging Secretary Azar to push this money onto the frontlines as soon as possible. I am glad tens of billions are going to go out tomorrow. There is only one part of the CARES Act that is already—already—at risk of exhausting its funding right now—only one part of the CARES Act is at risk of exhausting its funding right now: the Paycheck Protection Program.

We are asking small business owners across America to place their faith in us. We are asking them to keep workers on payroll because Congress, the Treasury, and the SBA will have their back. We must not fail them. My colleagues must not treat working Americans as political hostages. This does not have to be, nor should it be contentious. We don't have to divide along the usual lines so soon after we came together for the country.

To my Democratic colleagues, please—please—do not block emergency aid you do not even oppose just because you want something more. Do not block emergency aid you do not oppose just because you want something more.

Nobody believes this is the Senate's last word on COVID-19. We don't have to do everything right now. In fact, our posture of needing unanimous consent does not even permit us to try to do everything right now. We cannot play games with this crisis. Let's pass more noncontroversial funding for Americans' paychecks. Let's do it today, and then let's continue to work together with speed and bipartisanship. We will get through this crisis together.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the bill at the desk. I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. CARDIN. Reserving the right to object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, let me just clarify some of the issues the majority leader pointed out. I am afraid that this unanimous consent is basically a political stunt because it will not address the immediate need of small businesses in the legislation that we have passed, and let me clarify that.

The majority leader indicated that the PPP, the Paycheck Protection Plan, is running out of money. It hasn't. Thirty percent hasn't been committed. It hasn't been yet released. But there are programs under the CARES Act that have run out of money. The EIDL program, the emergency disaster relief loan program which provides funds for businesses—we have allowed businesses that have been affected by the coronavirus to file those claims—that has run out of money, and I will give you the numbers in a few moments. And the grant program that is included in the CARES at up to \$10,000, where a small business can get a grant from the Small Business Administration, is out of funds. They need money today in order to process applications.

The SBA doesn't need money today to process the Paycheck Protection Program. The Paycheck Protection Program was negotiated in good faith by Senator RUBIO, Senator COLLINS, Senator SHAHEEN, and myself, and we are very proud of that program. It is working very well. It is a good program. We strongly support it. It is bipartisan.

But this unanimous consent request was not negotiated. There was no effort made to follow the process that we could get this done, so it won't get done. It is not going to be enacted, and the majority leader knows that. So what Democrats are prepared to make clear—every small business that is eligible to receive the Paycheck Protection Plan, we are going to support their applications being received, processed, and fully funded. We will put as much money as needed to make sure that every small business can participate that is eligible in that program. The UC does not affect that today, but what the UC leaves out is where small businesses need help today from the U.S. Congress.

Yesterday, we had an opportunity to find out the numbers—and as the majority leader pointed out, we have got to get this right. There are 6.6 million more uninsured today, as we learned

from the current numbers. We have to protect small businesses to protect their payroll, and that is what our plans do.

Yesterday, we were informed by the SBA, as the majority leader indicated, that we have about \$100 billion that has been processed. Now, that has not been distributed yesterday. It hasn't been distributed in large numbers because of documentation problems and know your customer rules have prevented some of these funds—a lot of these funds, the majority of these funds—to be released.

Today, applications are being processed. Tomorrow, applications are going to be processed. The day after that, applications are going to be processed because we provided \$350 billion. At this moment, we are at about \$100 billion. We are going to have to probably provide more money, and we are all for that.

But where is the urgency, as far as the small businesses are concerned? So let me go over those. One, the emergency grant program—this is a program where grants are offered by the Small Business Administration. You don't have to have a banking relationship with a commercial bank in order to get these loans. It is very, very popular—3.8 million requests have come in, in regards to these loans—3.8 million, representing \$372 billion of loans.

But here is the problem: We have only authorized \$7.3 billion of loans under the program. That is why we are suggesting, if you add another \$50 billion—you can authorize another \$300 billion of loans under the emergency disaster relief program. Today, if you have requested that loan today and you requested the average amount that is being requested—and you have to show need in this program—you have got to document the need that the disaster has affected your viability as a business. The average loan is \$200,000. That is what they are requesting.

Guess how much money the SBA can issue today? It is \$15,000. That is an urgent need that we should deal with today, and we are prepared to deal with it. There is a second program for small—by the way, smaller businesses participate in these programs more so than the PPP program.

There is a second program. It is a grant program up to \$10,000. Our working bipartisan group recognized that there are some businesses that are in desperate need of cash immediately. These loans are processed within 3 days. We have had—so far requests for the grant program, 3.5 million small businesses have requested funds, totaling a request for \$11 billion on a sliding scale. It doesn't even give every small business \$10,000.

How much money did we appropriate? \$10 billion. SBA cannot release those funds in 3 days because they don't have the money to do it. The UC by the majority leader does not provide that money so that those small businesses can get that cash. That is not provided.