

that are deemed essential. One major hospital in Chicago told me that half the people who died from COVID-19 in their hospital were uninsured, many of them Hispanic. They are people who may or may not have health insurance. They are desperate to work and earn a living. Some of them are afraid that they or some member of their family may be deported if they show up to a hospital to report themselves sick, so they wait until it is literally too late, and they die.

We have seen our economy shut down and a lot of hardship as a result. Many owners of businesses, restaurants, and others have talked to me and others in the Senate about how soon we can reopen. But most of them, not all of them, most of them understand that going through this kind of shutdown of our economy and our personal lives is bad—bad if we do it one time; it is horrible to think about doing it a second time if we reopen too soon in the wrong way.

In my State, 830,000 people filed for unemployment insurance between March 1 and April 25. They are among the 30 million Americans who filed for unemployment since COVID came to America—40 million. That is the fastest, deepest loss of jobs we have ever seen. To reopen our States and Nation before we have done the hard and careful work required to open safely only risks more infection, more death, more lost jobs, and more economic hardship. Reopening before we can reopen safely risks overwhelming our hospitals and ICUs. We need to listen to public health experts, the doctors and the nurses, many of whom have worked past exhaustion. We need to be responsible and not give in to chance on the street.

What is the essential work that the Senate should be doing? Investigating why we do not have enough testing in this country that is essential to reopening the economy and working with State, local, and Tribal governments to help them hire and train the estimated 300,000 contact tracers needed to reopen America safely. Rather than forcing States to bid against each other, we have to plead with the President to use his authority under the Defense Production Act to produce here in America the respirators and other PPE that is essential for workers and their families. We have to provide oversight for the Paycheck Protection Program and make sure those loans are going to small business as we originally intended and not to wealthy hedge fund operators. We ought to be working to shore up the U.S. Postal Service, an essential public service created under the Constitution. What a reminder it has been to all of us staying at home, watching that letter carrier come by every single day. It is a bright spot, with his big smile, greeted by everybody on my street with gratitude for his continuing work day in and day out. That is what our Postal Service is. For them to be degraded and insulted

by the critics is totally unfair—totally unfair.

We ought to be making plans to ensure that every American voter can vote by mail in the November election, given the likelihood that this lethal virus will still be threatening us. If this Senate is going to gather as a body in this pandemic against the medical advice of some and the sound judgment of others, let's make sure our work is essential. We are still waiting for a report from our Republican majority leader about the agenda that brought us to Washington and that brings us here this week, ready to work, ready to address the COVID-19 crisis that faces our country.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF ROBERT J. FEITEL

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, clean and constant nuclear energy is one of the key pillars of America's energy security. Nuclear powerplants supply 20 percent of our Nation's electricity and more than 50 percent of our clean energy.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is the independent Federal agency that regulates these powerplants to protect public health and safety. It is a very important job. These independent regulatory structures and this specific one has successfully benefited the American people for decades by ensuring the safe operation of our nuclear reactors.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's inspector general is responsible for detecting and preventing waste, fraud, and abuse, as well as mismanagement at the Commission.

President Trump has nominated Mr. Robert Feitel to serve as inspector general of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. He did that last October. Mr. Feitel has been reported out of the Environment and Public Works Committee by unanimous vote in December. Today the Senate will vote to confirm him.

Mr. Feitel is well qualified. He brings a wealth of experience and expertise to this important position. Mr. Feitel has spent more than 25 years as an attorney at the Department of Justice and at the Federal Bureau of Investigation. During his long career Mr. Feitel received numerous achievement awards for his excellent service.

Mr. Feitel will be the first new inspector general at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in over 25 years. His nomination comes at a pivotal time for both the nuclear industry and the Commission. Some utilities are seeking to operate their nuclear plants for 20 more years, while others are shutting

down, and they are shutting their reactors before their licenses even expire. The Commission is also preparing to license new nuclear technologies that will be essential to our clean energy future.

This time of unprecedented activity requires a fully staffed and a fully functional agency. The Commission needs an inspector general to promote the efficiency and effectiveness of the Commission. Mr. Feitel is that individual. Mr. Feitel is a man of character whose commitment to upholding justice makes him an ideal candidate for the position.

I encourage the entire Senate to vote today to confirm Mr. Robert Feitel to serve as the inspector general of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

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. CORNYN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, the Senate was gavelled out about 6 weeks ago now. We passed the \$2.2 trillion CARES Act on March 25, and here it is May 4. Since that time, the global battle to defeat the coronavirus has only intensified.

There have been some who questioned the wisdom of the Senate coming back to Washington and convening, but I think we need to be here, and we need to do our jobs. We know how to do this safely. We know how to social distance. We know how to wash our hands and not touch our face. Those are the responsibilities each of us bear to one another not to spread this virus.

But if there is such a thing as essential and nonessential workers—and I don't think that distinction is one we should discuss because 26 million Americans are not nonessential workers; they are absolutely essential to our economy and to our way of life. But, make no mistake, self-government is essential under any construction, under any definition of that word.

Our system was not made to run on autopilot, so it is appropriate that we show up and that we do our job and we protect the American people and do everything we can to defeat this virus from a public health standpoint but also to do what is necessary to maintain a lifeline to the economy and the workers who are an essential component of it so that, when we defeat this virus, we will be prepared for people to go back to work in full and keep our economy and jobs growing again.

We know that about 3.5 million cases have been confirmed worldwide, and roughly a third of these cases are here in the United States. Tragically, we have lost 65,000 Americans to this cruel virus, but, heroically, our healthcare workers have been on the job each and

every day—like law enforcement and grocery clerks—doing their part to help provide us the healthcare, the law enforcement, and the food that is feeding our families.

We know, for weeks on end, our doctors and nurses and first responders have put themselves in harm's way to save the lives of those who have been affected by COVID-19. They are offering more than lifesaving care. These men and women are a hand to hold, a friendly voice, and a source of comfort to patients isolated from friends and family because of this cruel disease. Our heroic healthcare workers are physically and mentally exhausted from this fight. Yet they continue to serve, day in and day out.

I want to express my gratitude, and I know I speak for others when I say thank you for the heart that you have put into your job and for the sacrifices you have made, spending time away from your families so that you can help ours.

At the same time, we are seeing tremendous progress in a race to develop both treatments and a vaccine. While there are plenty of reasons to be optimistic about how this story ends, I know a lot of work remains to be done. In addition to the physical toll this virus has taken on the American people, it has wreaked economic havoc.

In order to slow the spread of the coronavirus, stores and restaurants have closed their doors, travel plans have been abandoned, events have been canceled, and millions of Americans were suddenly without a way to earn a living. In the past 6 weeks, 30 million Americans have filed for unemployment—an absolutely staggering figure.

So far, Congress has passed four separate bills to address this crisis from a public health standpoint as well as to ease its economic impact. We have provided billions of dollars in funding to support our hospitals, increase testing capacity, and ramp up the production and acquisition of the personal protective equipment our medical workers rely upon as well as the ventilators that many of the COVID-19 patients will need.

We have provided unprecedented assistance for America's small businesses, which employ about half of America's workers. The Paycheck Protection Program has enabled small businesses to keep their employees on the payroll and cover expenses until the smoke clears.

We have also sent vital funding to our State and local governments—about \$150 billion. We provided relief to student loan borrowers and sent financial assistance to the American people in the form of direct payments from the IRS.

Members of Congress came together to act quickly and decisively to address this pandemic, and I am very proud of the work that we have done together so far.

Over the past several weeks, like every Senator, I have had the privilege

of speaking with my constituents all across the State of Texas about the impact of this virus as well as Congress's response. I have spoken to doctors, nurses, and hospital administrators about the strain on the personnel and the need for personal protective equipment.

I have talked to small business owners across the State about their growing list of expenses and the lifeline that the PPE provided.

I have listened to our mayors and county judges, from our biggest cities and smallest towns, who have talked about the mounting financial burdens they are facing. I have talked with our farmers and ranchers about the impact on everything from cattle to cotton and the need to protect our food supply chain.

I am grateful for the men and women I have spoken with who have shared their perspective and feedback about Congress's response to the coronavirus.

Anytime a piece of legislation moves this quickly, as these bills did, and are this big, there are bound to be gaps that need to be filled, mistakes that need to be corrected, tweaks that need to be applied. The Texans to whom I have spoken over these past several weeks have pointed out some of those gaps and provided ideas for the discussions we are now having about what comes next.

A few weeks ago, I spoke with representatives from the Texas Council on Family Violence, the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault, and more than a dozen organizations across the State that support survivors of domestic violence.

When you think about the impact of the pandemic or any other major crisis, for that matter, domestic violence isn't typically one of the first issues that comes to mind, but the circumstances we are facing today make these cases all too common. People are spending more time isolated at home. They are dealing with a new range of stresses brought on by this virus—more time with their partner, financial struggles, teaching their children at home—and it is taking a devastating toll.

When Texas's stay-at-home order was first announced, many organizations saw a spike in their hotline calls. What is more frightening, once these orders were in place, the number of calls took a sharp decline. In Tarrant County, which is where Fort Worth is located, call numbers dropped by almost half.

With so much time isolated at home with an abuser, it may be more difficult to reach out to friends or family or contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline for assistance. When deciding whether to leave, to go to a shelter, there is also the risk of the virus itself, and many are faced with a lose-lose scenario: Do you continue living under the same roof as your abuser or do you go to a shelter where you or your children may come in contact with the virus?

These are not the only silent victims of this crisis. The fear and anxiety

brought on by this pandemic has taken a toll on America's mental health. Most of us have never gone through something like this. Maybe none of us has gone through something quite like this. Our daily routines have been turned on their head. Isolated from friends and family and between social media and a 24-hour news cycle, it can be difficult to find a way to escape the constant barrage of bad news and anxiety.

Compounding the problem even further is the financial strain on many of the providers who support these individuals. A recent survey of providers by the National Council for Behavioral Health showed that more than 60 percent of mental health providers have already been forced to close one or more programs—60 percent—and 62 percent of providers cannot survive more than 3 months without emergency financial assistance.

As we continue working to help the American people through this difficult time, we cannot forget those who are suffering in silence. We have a big job ahead of us. That is why it is so important that we are here doing our job on behalf of the 330 million people in this country.

I returned back to the Senate with a long list of ideas and feedback from the Texans who have been generous enough to spend time talking with me over the past few weeks. I know all 100 Members of the Senate are in a similar position, and I hope we can retain the same sense of bipartisanship that has guided us through the legislation we have passed so far.

If we are going to win this fight—and we will—it will not be because of a Republican idea or a Democratic one; it will be because every single person in this Chamber checked their political priorities at the door and responded together—united—to confront and defeat this virus and to help restore our economy and the jobs that go along with it.

We have done it before. Let's do it again.

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. CARPER. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF ROBERT J. FEITEL

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I rise today to speak on behalf of the nomination of Robert Feitel to serve as inspector general of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which oversees the safety and security of almost 100 nuclear powerplants throughout this country—an important job.

This is a nomination I urged the majority to take up and pass, not this week, not this month but before we went into recess on April 8. We are