

high school, go through college taking the tough courses and getting good grades, get accepted to medical school, and after working hard for 4 years or more there, go through residencies which are backbreaking exercises in actually learning the clinical practice of medicine, and just before we tell them they are licensed doctors ready to practice in America, we give them bad news—the news that they must be carrying a student debt from medical school of between \$200,000 to \$240,000 on average? What are we thinking? These women and men are critical to our future and our own healthcare. Why do we burden them with this certain awesome debt that they have to carry forward and build their career around? That is why this bill really seeks to look at this from a new angle and says that we ought to reward those medical students who are willing to practice in areas of greatest need—minority students as well—and provide for them scholarships to defray the cost of medical school so they don't end up graduating with this incredible financial burden. This legislation would help provide doctors, nurses, mental health professionals, dentists, and others to communities with shortages which often contribute to health disparities as I described earlier—inner-city areas, rural America, smalltown America. Studies show that having doctors who reflect the communities they treat actually helps health outcomes. So my bill would help to expand the representation of minorities in the workforce.

Last week, in a letter to the CDC, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, I urged the agency to support global efforts to build up our community health workforce capacity. Communities of color across America are suffering at disproportionate rates across this pandemic, and we have to step up to help all Americans against the threat of coronavirus. It is unacceptable, but sadly not surprising, that communities of color are bearing the burden of this dangerous virus. I stand here to continue fighting with my colleagues in the Senate to try to solve these inequities happening in communities across the Nation.

There aren't many redlines that have been drawn publicly so far as we have considered coronavirus legislation. We passed the original CARES Act, \$2.2 trillion, with 96 votes on the floor of the Senate and with no dissenting votes. The next bill, the coronavirus 3.5, as it was characterized, passed the U.S. Senate by a voice vote, adding \$484 billion to the effort. More will obviously be needed, not just for small business loans but also for unemployment insurance and certainly to make sure that our hospitals, large and small, can survive this crisis as we all hope America will. We are certain they will, but we have to be prepared to do that.

Yet, this morning, the Republican leader came forward and said he is drawing a redline; that Republicans

will not move forward when it comes to dealing with these challenges without addressing one issue, and that was the issue of legal liability. I will not describe in detail what the Senator from Kentucky is proposing because we haven't seen it, but what he is suggesting is that our greatest fear shouldn't be the coronavirus; it should be trial lawyers—trial lawyers.

He is fearful that we are going to see COVID-19 lawsuits. Well, let me tell you, there could easily be COVID-19 lawsuits and some—and I think most Americans would agree—should be filed. Is there a COVID-19 lawsuit if someone is profiteering with protective equipment, raising the prices way beyond reach because they have this moment of opportunity with the crisis we are facing? One downstate hospital in Illinois talked about surgical gowns that cost 22 cents apiece and now cost between \$11 and \$20 apiece. Clearly, there is price gouging and profiteering. If we can, can we hold those responsible for profiteering liable? I would say yes. Is that a COVID-19 lawsuit? I think it is related to COVID-19, but it relates to it in a way that most Americans would agree there should be legal action.

If there are scams and profiteering, the people responsible for it should be held legally responsible in a lawsuit, if necessary. If people are promulgating phony tests and making representations that are a fraud on the public, should they be held accountable? Well, of course. Is that a COVID-19 lawsuit? Could be.

What about those who are talking about the protection of workers? If workers are not protected on the job, they may be turning to workers' compensation for any of the injuries and illnesses that result. Are we going to stop those as COVID-19 lawsuits going too far? Nurses are suing in some situations because they are not being given adequate or quality protective equipment. Do we want to stop that litigation as well? Is that what the Senator from Kentucky is suggesting?

There is an interesting situation with meatpacking workers right now. I know a little more than some Senators about that. When I was working my way through college, I spent 12 months working in a meatpacking plant in East St. Louis, IL. I was paid \$3.65 an hour. I thought that was pretty good, but it was hard, hard work. I saw what it was like then, many, many years ago. I have gone back to see the meatpacking and meat processors today. It is not much different. People stand literally elbow-to-elbow, shoulder-to-shoulder, as conveyor belts bring through hundreds and hundreds of pounds of meat and poultry that have to be acted on immediately to keep up with the line. It is tough, hard work, and now it turns out to be an extraordinarily dangerous line of work as well. We are learning that disproportionate numbers of workers in this industry are coming down with the

COVID virus infection. United Food and Commercial Workers, which represents many of these plant workers, estimated that at least 5,000 have already reported infected and anywhere from 10 to 20 have died. Now the President issues an Executive order mandating that these companies open for business. Well, I can say to the President, yes, they should open, but only if they dedicate themselves to the health and safety of their workforce as the highest priority. Let's make that workplace safe before we talk about making it a mandatory opening.

In fairness to the industry, in my State of Illinois, several companies that have been affected have reached out to us and are, in fact, determined to make their workplace safe. I salute them for taking that approach. They are talking about testing and making sure that workers on the job have necessary distancing and protective equipment. That is the right approach. In the meantime, those companies that ignore that responsibility, should they bear some liability for the illnesses or injuries that result? Well, under workers' compensation law, they certainly would. Is the Senator from Kentucky calling that the COVID-19 lawsuit? It could be related to COVID-19, for sure. Should they have their day in court? I certainly hope so.

As we look at the challenges before us, and there are many, this notion of drawing a redline on legal liability, unfortunately, fails to take into account that system of justice in America which we have turned to in good times and bad to make sure that justice is meted out to those who have no recourse but to consider lawsuits in court. Let's take this issue seriously, carefully. Let's not squander the opportunity of protecting the people who are risking their lives every day in essential workplaces and believe they, too, should be protected by our system of justice. I will stand with them, and I hope that other Members of the Senate will join me.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, after a few weeks of working remotely to help flatten the coronavirus curve, we are back in Washington to continue our coronavirus response and address other important issues. It has been an incredibly difficult couple of months for our country and, in fact, for most of the world. More than 1 million Americans have contracted the coronavirus, and thousands have died. Our economy has taken a huge hit. Millions of Americans are out of work, and businesses are struggling to stay afloat. Americans are worried. They are worried about their own health. They are worried about the health of their families and loved ones, and they are worried about their finances.

My colleagues and I know that Americans are suffering. Our overriding priority over the past 2 months has been

responding to the coronavirus crisis. We passed several major response bills and provided substantially more than \$2 trillion in assistance. We have funded testing, medical care, personal protective equipment for frontline medical personnel, vaccine and treatment development, paid sick leave, unemployment benefits, direct relief payments to American citizens, forgivable loans for small businesses, and much more.

Our goal has been to provide a comprehensive response, addressing not just the medical priorities but also the economic impact this virus has had on so many American families, and there is more work to be done. Right now a big part of that work is monitoring the implementation of legislation we have already passed. We provided a tremendous amount of money, and we need to make sure it is getting to where it needs to go as quickly as possible and is being spent in the most effective way.

Monitoring the implementation of the legislation we have already passed is also crucial for informing any future legislation. As I said, we have provided a tremendous amount of money for coronavirus, equal to almost 50 percent of the entire Federal budget for 2020, and it is important that any future funding be carefully targeted. We need to make sure that Federal dollars are going only to real coronavirus priorities. Our children and grandchildren will be footing the bill for the money we are adding to the national debt.

As a case in point, the debt to GDP, which was scheduled to be 79 percent this year, is now expected to be, in the Year 2020, 101 percent. That jump from 79 percent debt to GDP to 101 percent debt to GDP is the largest jump, I am told, literally, since 1943, in the middle of World War II. So it is essential that we spend wisely.

In addition to overseeing the implementation of the coronavirus legislation we passed and gathering data to inform any future bills, we also have a number of coronavirus-related nominations to consider, something that is a role that is unique to the U.S. Senate under the Constitution. When it comes to judicial nominations, nominations to the executive branch, the Senate has the responsibility to ensure that we conduct the research, investigate nominees, hold confirmation hearings, and ultimately vote to put people into key positions in the administration and on the courts.

So the question about why we are here this week I think is a fairly easy one to answer, and that is because there are lots of really important positions that are key not only to the healthcare crisis we are facing in this country but to our ongoing national security priorities as well as to the economic challenges we are facing through this crisis.

In fact, this week, the Senate Banking Committee will be holding a hearing on the nomination of Brian D. Miller to be the special inspector general

for pandemic recovery at the Treasury Department, a key role created by the legislation that we passed here in the Congress, critically important to the implementation, making sure everything is done in the right way. As we all know, inspectors general play a key oversight role in Federal departments, helping to root out waste, fraud, and other abuses of taxpayer dollars. If confirmed, Mr. Miller will be an essential part of ensuring that the trillions we provided for coronavirus relief are spent properly.

Committees are doing other essential coronavirus work this week as well. The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee is holding hearings on an initiative Senators Blunt, Alexander, and others worked to get included in the coronavirus legislation. This initiative was designed to spur innovation in private sector and public sector collaboration, with a goal of dramatically increasing our coronavirus testing capabilities. So that is going on in the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee.

The Senate Commerce Committee, of which I am a Member, is holding a hearing this week looking at the impact of COVID-19 on the airline industry, an industry we know is being profoundly impacted by what is happening with the virus.

Next week, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee will be hearing directly from the leaders of our fight against the coronavirus—Drs. Fauci, Redfield, and Hahn and Admiral Giroir. Committee work will play a key role in any future coronavirus bill, and it is good to have committees able to meet once again here in Washington, DC.

Of course, while the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to be our priority in Washington in the coming weeks and months, there is other essential work that we have to do for the American people: appropriations bills, nominations to essential administration posts, and critical national security legislation is just some of the items on our agenda over the next couple of months. This week, the Senate Armed Services Committee and the Senate Intelligence Committee are holding hearings on nominees for key national security positions, including the Director of National Intelligence and the Secretary of the Navy.

Senate Republicans are committed to getting our country through this crisis and helping American workers and businesses deal with the virus's impact. We will be discussing a lot of ideas over the next couple of weeks, from tax and regulatory relief to support farmers and ranchers to ways to spur job creation and shield responsible businesses from frivolous litigation once the economy is opened up again. As I said, we will continue to focus on making sure that the money we provided gets where it is needed as fast as possible.

The United States undoubtedly has more tough days ahead, but we are

going to get through them. We are going to come out tougher on the other side. In the meantime, we have work to do here in the U.S. Senate. People across this country are hurting and struggling, and there are many priorities that need to be addressed. So I am pleased that the Senate is open for business. We are going to be working the next few months, as I mentioned, on the national defense authorization bill, a piece of legislation that we have to do on an annual basis that deals with all of our national priorities, making sure that the men and women who defend this country, the American people, and our interests around the world have the training, equipment, and resources to do their jobs to keep Americans safe.

We have a critical water infrastructure bill that will be marked up by the Environment and Public Works Committee, also a piece of legislation that is important to the economy in this country. If you look at the long list of things and priorities that we need to deal with here in the U.S. Senate, it is important that we be about the people's business.

I know I can speak from personal experience that over the past several weeks, like my colleagues, we have worked really hard to stay connected. I worked really hard to stay in touch with people across South Dakota using technology, platforms, and apps that I never really had much experience with using in the past. From Zoom to Skype, to Google Hangouts, to Shindig, there are all kinds of interesting new apps that I think many of us became acquainted with, conducting lots of virtual meetings and staying in touch with our constituents to see what is important to them, finding out what is working and what is not working and getting feedback on what we could be doing to even better respond to the crisis that is out there. But there is no substitute, when it comes to doing the Nation's business, for being here, for committees to work, to meet, for us to be able to vote, for us to be able to deal with the important nominations I mentioned that under the Constitution, we, the Senate, have an obligation and responsibility to advise and consent on, whether that is a judicial nomination, key Cabinet post, or an important administration position that pertains to national security and the virus.

There are lots of priority items for which the U.S. Senate has a key and principal responsibility, and we need to be about that business. So I hope, in the days and weeks ahead, as we take on those challenges, that we can work together in a way that provides maximum safety for the people who work here but also gives the important priority to the items and the issues that are critical to Americans at this point, in the middle of this crisis and, hopefully, when we get on the other side of it, those important critical national security priorities, economic priorities, and other business that the American

people need us to deal with on a daily basis.

I thank the Presiding Officer for the time and look forward to working with my colleagues, albeit in different circumstances than we have had to deal with in the past but, nevertheless, to have the U.S. Senate, the people's representatives, here doing the important work the American people expect us to do.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, let me join our friend and my friend, the Senator from South Dakota, and say that I am glad to be back in this Chamber doing the work of 29 million Texans. I see the Presiding Officer and my partner, my fellow Senator from Texas, joining us as well.

I was listening closely to the Senator from South Dakota's recitation of all the things we have to do. There is no shortage of work for us to do, and there is no reason for us to continue to curl up in a fetal position in some undisclosed location and be afraid to go outdoors.

The fact is, the experts at the Centers for Disease Control, people like Dr. Fauci and Dr. Birx, whom we have seen on TV on a nightly basis, tell us what we need to do in order to function safely. It is the same thing that our grocery clerks and our doctors and nurses and, frankly, our law enforcement personnel are doing. We know how to do this and how to do it safely.

At the same time, we simply cannot hide out and not show up for work. What kind of message does that send to the American people?

We know this is an extraordinary crisis, an unprecedented crisis, and we have done some things we would never consider doing under normal times—appropriating more than \$3 trillion at warp speed. I, frankly, think it is a good time for us to tap the brakes and to consider what it is we have already done and where we need to make some corrections.

Anytime you do anything this big and this fast, you are going to make some mistakes. We have seen that, and there have been corrections both in terms of the way the Treasury is administering the program, but also we have heard about gaps. For example, I have done a number of video conferences with our chambers of commerce around the country, and they ask me: Why did you leave the chambers out of the support under the Paycheck Protection Program for nonprofits? I, frankly, don't have a good answer for that. I said that is something we need to go back and fix. If we can't do it by Treasury guidance, then we need to do it by future legislation.

I have no doubt we will continue to legislate, but we need to do it smartly. We need to be here in person so we can have the interaction and deliberation and debates that are so important to coming up with a good product.

We have done some pretty extraordinary work in the last 6 weeks or so. Both Chambers have come together and quickly passed four separate pieces of legislation to strengthen our response to the coronavirus.

We sent vital funding to our hospitals. Ironically, at a time when our hospitals were the frontline of defense dealing with people with COVID-19, many of them were laying off employees because we had asked them to forgo elective surgery, which is one of the ways that they end up paying the bills.

Then we learned, in the global competition for personal protective equipment, literally every mayor, every Governor, every President, every leader of every country around the world was in a global rush to try to come up with personal protective equipment.

One of the things I have told my constituents and friends that I think we have learned is we can't depend on China and on these uncertain supply chains for things as important as personal protective equipment—or pharmaceuticals, for that matter. So these are some of the lessons and some of the feedback we have gotten as we have interacted with our constituents.

We know that testing has gotten much more widespread, and we have made tremendous advances in terms of treatment with all the clinical trials that are underway—well over 70 of them—and now the hope of a vaccine, hopefully sooner rather than later. Once we get a vaccine, then hopefully this will be relegated to the same status as the seasonal flu, for which we typically do have a vaccine, so the particularly vulnerable individuals—the elderly, people with underlying chronic disease—can be protected first and foremost.

We also sent funding to our State and local Governors: \$150 billion. Now, we have all talked to our mayors and our county judges—in Texas, that is what we call our county leaders—and Governors. Obviously, the sales tax revenue has fallen off a cliff because there is not much business going on in our retail stores, to be sure, although there is a lot going on online with deliveries and those sorts of orders.

But we know our State and local governments provide for law enforcement and other essential services, so we felt it was important to throw them a lifeline, too, to help them meet their budgets and maintain those vital services.

Perhaps the most ambitious and the most popular thing we did is to try to help our small businesses stay afloat through the Paycheck Protection Program. Obviously, this was successful—or it is certainly popular in that \$350 billion was spent in 2 weeks. Then we had to come back and replenish that with another \$320 billion. But we know that money is flying out of our local community banks and credit unions, helping small businesses keep their employees on the payroll. And, if they do that, then this low-interest loan will turn into a grant.

The goal, of course, is, once we defeat this virus—as we will—we will then be in a position for those businesses to bring their employees back, if they have furloughed them, to help us build out of this recession in which we are currently involved.

We also provided critical funding for our farmers and ranchers and other producers so they can keep our country fed. We have taken unprecedented steps to minimize the impact of this virus on the American people and our economy and tried to provide some modicum of certainty amid so much uncertainty.

I don't think there is a single event in my lifetime that rivals the breadth and depth of the crisis that we have reached. Certainly, 9/11 was a different type of crisis. The 2008 great recession—with the meltdown of the banks on Wall Street and the great recession, those were significant events to be sure, but nothing quite has rivaled what the coronavirus has done to our public health and to our economy.

The cascading consequences of this virus have reached every community, every sector of our economy, and every corner of the globe. Every single American has experienced some sort of shift in their daily routine as a result of the virus. Maybe "shift" is too tentative a word. Actually, many of us have had our lives turned on their head.

For some, the changes were very significant. Think about those who contracted the virus, the loved ones who couldn't be at their side, the healthcare workers who were there and are helping them, those who are sick. Then there are billions of Americans who have lost their jobs, small business owners wondering whether they are going to cease to exist and whether they can survive this current crisis, and then the farmers seeing a glut of supply and reduced demand.

Now, many people have been able to safely work from home, and that is wonderful, but often they end up pulling double duty as teachers for their children with the schools having been closed, and others have continued heading out to work every day to keep the cogs of our society running—so-called essential workers.

By the way, I really don't like the designation between essential and non-essential. I think, really, what we ought to call it is safe and unsafe because all workers are, I believe, essential.

In ways big and small, this virus has affected everybody in this country. While we must continue working to slow the spread and reduce the economic impact, we cannot ignore the profound human impact it has had. Many people have been isolated under very difficult circumstances, not knowing whether they will still have a job to go back to. Many are living with the uncertainty of this pandemic, perhaps in a crowded house or apartment with children, maybe elderly parents and others, cut off from the rest of society.

It is no secret that this pandemic is taking a toll on America's mental

health. Last weekend, the family of a New York City emergency room doctor released some devastating news. Dr. Lorna Breen had been in the trenches battling this virus for weeks. She was working long hours, as many of our healthcare providers are, and told her family about the devastation that she was seeing every day.

She contracted COVID-19 and took a week and a half off to recover, but then she went back to work, eager to help where she could. Shortly after, Dr. Breen's family intervened and brought her home to Charlottesville, VA, to rest and to spend a little time with her family and for R&R.

Sadly, tragically, the struggles Dr. Breen was facing felt untenable. After overcoming COVID-19, she ultimately took her own life by suicide.

Dr. Breen was a hero who devoted her entire life to caring for others, to putting others before herself. While her tragic death cannot be reversed, it should serve as a warning signal about the broader impact of this virus.

In a recent poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation, nearly half of Americans reported that coronavirus is having a negative impact on their mental health—one-half. That is up from one-third in March. The number of texts to the Federal Disaster Distress Helpline skyrocketed in April—more than a 1,000-percent increase.

As we continue to discuss what future coronavirus legislation could look like, we cannot ignore the mental health impact. Nationwide, we rely on the community mental health centers and community behavioral health organizations to support those battling mental health and substance abuse disorders. As the need for these services has increased, resources have actually decreased. More than 90 percent of the community behavioral health organizations nationwide have been forced to reduce their operations—reduce their operations at a time of increased need and demand—and more than 60 percent of behavioral health organizations project they can't survive financially for more than 3 months under the current COVID-19 conditions.

Congress tried to do something to help. We provided \$175 billion for the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund to support healthcare providers on the frontlines of this crisis. As this funding is being distributed, mental health providers cannot be forgotten.

Along with 24 of our colleagues, Senator STABENOW and I have sent a letter to Secretary Azar and Administrator Verma, urging them to quickly allocate this funding and ensure that these mental health organizations are included. Not only do they provide vital care and support for individuals struggling with mental health issues; they also are key to fighting addiction and substance abuse.

Those struggling to overcome addiction are often living in a fragile state, fighting each day to stay the course,

but the current circumstances have made those daily battles much more difficult. They are isolated from their friends and loved ones, and they are dealing with the anxiety caused by the virus and possibly—probably—facing financial struggles.

The new stressors brought on by this virus are compounded by reduced capacity for treatment. In-person support meetings are canceled, treatment clinics and counselors are curtailing appointments, and the barriers to overcoming addiction loom even larger. For those individuals, treatment cannot simply be delayed.

Our country has made serious inroads in our battle against the opioid epidemic. In 2018, overdose deaths were down 4 percent from the previous year, the first decrease in nearly three decades. We can't let the coronavirus derail the progress we have fought so hard to make.

The CARES Act—I am glad to say—does expand access to telehealth. I think many Americans are experiencing the benefits of telehealth, and I predict at some point this will change a lot of the ways that we receive consultation by healthcare providers: not having to drive our car and make appointments, pay for parking, spend a lot of time out of our day. We can simply do it through video conference, conveniently and effectively. But more must be done to support those battling addiction and mental health challenges.

For those who are transitioning from the criminal justice system, the need for additional resources and support is especially dire. Earlier this year, Senator BLUMENTHAL and I introduced the Crisis Stabilization and Community Reentry Act to support those who have been a part of the criminal justice system and to provide stable treatment for those with mental illness.

Most prisoners who are receiving treatment for a mental health or a substance use disorder are released without a plan to keep them on their regimen. This often leads to higher recidivism rates, unsurprisingly, which could be avoided. It also means that law enforcement is, all too often, left to be the first responders for those suffering a mental health crisis, which can escalate those confrontations and put both the officer and the individual in that crisis at risk.

This bill creates grants to connect law enforcement, State and local, and community resources to help individuals who are either engaged in the criminal justice system or have been released from prison and makes it possible for them to access the resources they need to have a successful reentry into civilized society. These grants connect those services to make sure that people suffering from an acute episode can access treatment without the risk of being reincarcerated.

We are facing a battle unlike any we have seen in my lifetime, and the stress and the anxiety that come with

it are taking a tremendous toll on the American people. It is not just the virus and the threat of catching the virus that are taking the toll. We need to look at this holistically and realize, if you are a victim of domestic violence and you are forced to be confined with your abuser and have nowhere else to go and maybe have no money coming in the front door, only to have your abuser abusing alcohol and perhaps becoming even more violent—there are a whole catalog of problems associated with this virus and the virus itself, the risk of infection being just one, and we need to look at this holistically.

As our discussions continue this week on how to support the American people during this unprecedented time, resources for mental health and substance abuse treatment providers cannot fall by the wayside.

(Mr. CRUZ assumed the Chair.)

RECESS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until 2:15 p.m. today.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:18 p.m., recessed until 2:17 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. CAPITO).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, over the past few months, both parties have worked together to provide historic levels of funding to help small businesses retain employees, meet payroll, and stay afloat during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Paycheck Protection Program—the main instrument to help small businesses—received \$349 billion under the CARES Act and another \$310 billion in supplemental legislation.

The public has a right to know how this money is being spent. Oversight, transparency, and accountability are crucial because from the moment the administration began implementing these funds, it became clear that much of it wasn't going to those who needed it most.

Today, we are not taking any other action on the floor dealing with COVID. We thought we would take this opportunity to ask unanimous consent to get something real done that should have bipartisan support on both sides of the aisle. Who can be against transparency? Who can be against accountability? Who cannot want to know where close to \$700 billion of the taxpayers' money is going? Is it going to the right places?

Unfortunately, today at least 200 publicly traded companies have managed to secure PPP loans, and most of those are not very small, including some companies whose owners are large contributors to President Trump. Truly small businesses, however—the