

felt better and doctors gave her the all-clear, she checked right back into work right on the frontlines.

I want to thank all of my Senate colleagues as we continue to perform our essential responsibilities to serve citizens like Miss Krause and so many other American heroes all across our country. Of course, much of the work before us relates to the pandemic itself. Our committees of jurisdiction are attacking COVID-19 and its effects from every angle.

This week, Chairman ALEXANDER and our colleagues on the HELP Committee will hold a major hearing on smart and safe ways for Americans to get back to work and back to school. They will hear expert testimony from the very top leaders: Dr. Fauci, Dr. Redfield, Dr. Hahn, and Admiral Giroir from HHS.

Chairman CRAPO and the Banking Committee will hear from representatives from the Federal Reserve and the FDIC on financial regulation. Obviously, that is an essential topic as the government continues to push out billions and billions of dollars in emergency liquidity following the CARES Act.

With huge numbers of Americans working, teaching, and learning from home and with telemedicine more important than ever, the Commerce Committee will hear from experts about access to broadband internet during the crisis.

The Judiciary Committee will hold an important hearing on issues of legal liability during this unprecedented time. It is crucial that as we continue to fight the pandemic itself, we ensure it is not followed up by a second job-killing epidemic of frivolous lawsuits. This would be just about the worst time in living memory to let trial lawyers line their pockets at the expense of the rest of our country. The Senate is going to play a strong role in ensuring that does not happen.

While our committees are working away, here on the floor, we will start this week by confirming two more qualified nominees to important posts that should not remain empty at this time. We will begin with Brian Montgomery of Texas, named by President Trump to serve as Deputy Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Then we will turn to Troy Edgar of California to be Chief Financial Officer at the Department of Homeland Security.

I understand some of my distinguished Democratic colleagues complain that the full Senate should not have to spend more time on these sorts of uncontroversial executive branch nominees. I agree. But as long as their own Democratic leadership continues to hold important posts open for as long as possible in order to just spite the White House, as long as the minority continues to break from longstanding Senate precedent to obstruct even the least controversial nominees, then, frankly, they will have to continue to show up and vote on them. The floor votes they say they dislike are the direct result of their own tactics.

We are also going to take up important legislation this week. While COVID-19 rightly dominates headlines around the world, the United States of America also faced many serious threats before this virus began to spread, and they are still with us today.

Later this week, we will turn back to reauthorizing important authorities under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. This is urgent because the House refused to take up the Senate's short-term extension of important counterterrorism and counterintelligence authorities before they left town. House Democrats let these tools expire, so we must act quickly to clean up their mess and renew these authorities, which our government needs to fight terrorists and check the agents of China and Russia.

The bipartisan bill we will take up was negotiated exhaustively by House Republicans and the Attorney General of the United States. Determined advocates for reform after the shameful abuses of 2016 sat down with determined defenders of the good parts of these tools, and they hammered out a strong compromise. The legislation will introduce more daylight and more accountability into the FISA process where appropriate, but it will ensure that the embarrassments of 2016 do not jeopardize these essential national security tools altogether.

I hope the Senate will be able to dispatch the amendments that we will consider and pass this important legislation on a bipartisan basis to keep the American people safe.

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.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Brian D. Montgomery, of Texas, to be Deputy Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. 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 MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the United States has well over a million confirmed cases of COVID-19. We are quickly, unfortunately, approaching 80,000 fatalities.

Alongside this great crisis of public health, this shocking and heart-breaking loss of life, there is a looming economic catastrophe. There are now more than 30 million newly unemployed Americans, over one-tenth of the population in the United States and the highest number since the Great Depression. Many believe this number underestimates the real total.

Once this crisis is over, there is no guarantee that these millions of newly unemployed Americans will be able to resume their old jobs. How many people will find new jobs? At what salary? Even the most optimistic scenarios predict a period of extended high unemployment. Others suggest we are looking at the kernels of a second Great Depression.

Here on the Senate floor, for the second week in a row, we are living in the alternative reality of Republican Leader MCCONNELL's making. He has scheduled no legislative business here on the floor related to COVID-19—none—no measures for the unemployed, no relief for renters or homeowners, no legislation to increase testing capacity, no proposals to help State and local governments retain teachers, firefighters, busdrivers, and police officers.

Looking at the Senate calendar, you would never know that we are working in the midst of a national crisis. It looks like any other session—a few executive nominations, hearings on rightwing judges, and legislation from previous months that the leader should not have delayed. It is just totally, totally divorced from reality.

Despite the obvious health risks, Senators are ready to do our jobs. Why don't we actually do our jobs and focus on COVID-19? For the sake of common sense and the good of the Nation, the Senate should be focused on COVID-19. We should be holding multiple serious oversight hearings every week. Several of my colleagues on the other side, including the Republican leader, have said they want to see how the legislation we have already passed is working before doing anything else. At the same time, the Republican majority is slow-walking the hearing process.

Finally, after a lot of Democratic pressure from myself and many others, the leader is sort of eking out, week by week, hearings. We have just heard that we will hear from Powell and Mnuchin on the 19th. That will be almost 2 months after a bill that let \$4 trillion of lending authority be released before there is a hearing.

Why didn't we hold a hearing 3 weeks ago, 5 weeks ago, or last week? It is

just outrageous. How can the Republican Senators say we want to see how this is working and not have a whole bunch of hearings to exam how it is working, instead of squeezing them out under direct pressure from us Democrats?

Now, tomorrow, in the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee there will be a hearing conducted remotely with Dr. Fauci. This is the kind of hearing we need, not once a week but several a day. The American people need to hear from experts in a fair, open, and truthful setting.

Until now, we have mostly heard from the members of the Coronavirus Task Force through the distorted lens of the White House press conference, where the President often prevents them from answering fully, interrupts their responses, or even contradicts their fact-based advice.

This will be one of the first opportunities for Dr. Fauci to tell the American people the unvarnished truth without the President lurking over his shoulder.

Dr. Fauci, let it rip.

But it shouldn't be this one committee hearing tomorrow, and it shouldn't be Dr. Fauci alone testifying, or even with the two he is testifying with. This is the routine oversight business of Congress, and we are now in a crisis. It should occur in every committee every week. There should be testimony from administration officials, ranging from Dr. Birx to Secretary Mnuchin, to Secretary DeVos and others.

We should also be debating another major emergency relief bill. As we speak, more and more businesses are going under, more and more people are losing their jobs, and more and more families don't have enough food to feed their children or are sitting for hours in car lines to get to food banks.

Speaker PELOSI and I completely agree. The new bill should be big, and it should be bold, and that is what the House is working on right now, while the Senate, under Leader MCCONNELL's leadership, dithers.

Already, however, we have heard that congressional Republicans are telling everyone they want to slow down. Leader MCCONNELL says he wants to hit the pause button. President Trump and administration officials are saying we might not need to do anything more to help the country. This would be a catastrophic mistake.

At the outset of the Great Depression, President Hoover was also reluctant to use national resources to attack the problem. He, too, was ideologically opposed to a vigorous and strong response from the Federal Government. President Hoover's failure was likely responsible for extending the length and deepening the severity of the Great Depression.

If President Trump and our Republican colleagues go the way of Herbert Hoover, if they oppose or slow-walk government intervention to save the

economy that is hurtling downward, I fear the Nation could suffer a similar fate—a second depression. We must avoid that at all costs. Now is not the time for timidity. Now is not the time for small thinking. Now is the time for action—big, bold, continued action.

There are so many issues that deserve our attention. On a daily basis, President Trump talks about the need to reopen our country. Well, President Trump, the only way we can safely reopen the country is if we have testing. To finally beat this disease, we need testing. To reopen businesses safely, we need testing. To reopen schools and sporting events, we need testing. To contain a resurgence in the fall or early next year, we need testing. Testing is, by far, the No. 1 priority from a public health standpoint and, maybe, from an economic standpoint as well.

For many countries, mastering the challenge of testing and contact tracing their population was their first priority. Here in the United States, unfortunately, the Trump administration is still trying to catch up. Three months ago—3 months ago—President Trump said: "Anybody that wants a test can get a test." That is still not even close to being true.

Americans have gotten sick, and because they could not get tested, they never knew if they contracted COVID and never knew if they passed it on to loved ones, colleagues, workers, or friends. For many who could get tested, they had to wait weeks for an answer, long after the disease had run its course and potentially spread to others.

We may never know the full extent of the human consequences that resulted from President Trump's administration's failure to rapidly develop a testing plan in the early days of coronavirus, but we do know that countries that did it successfully—such as South Korea, Germany, Australia, and New Zealand—were able to deal with the virus much better than we have. And to think the United States, which has always been the leader in public health, is lagging behind these other countries because of the President's denial and ineptitude should bother every single American, no matter what your politics.

Congress provided \$25 billion in the most recent relief legislation to increase testing capacity and contact tracing, and we are going to need to do more. If President Trump is so keen on speeding up the process of reopening the country, we should endorse what Democrats have urged him to do: Create a national testing regime immediately.

On one final matter, education, in the CARES Act, Congress provided a little over \$30 billion to help States, school districts, and higher education systems respond to the coronavirus after many schools were forced to close or to move to remote learning. We need more money than that, of course, and I think Democrats in both Houses agree.

It has come to our attention that Secretary DeVos has been using a portion of the existing funding not to help States or localities cope with the crisis but to augment her push for voucher-like programs, a prior initiative that had nothing to do with COVID-19.

We have also learned that Secretary DeVos has added restrictions to the fund that weren't included in the law, including guidance that DACA recipients cannot receive aid. Shameful—there is no other word for it. Secretary DeVos is exploiting emergency relief funding to further her own rigid ideological agenda and deprive students of desperately needed Federal assistance. The Secretary of Education should reverse course immediately.

Subsequently, DeVos should testify in Congress as soon as possible. As someone who has habitually skipped congressional hearings, Secretary DeVos has a lot to answer for. If our students had the same attendance record as Secretary DeVos, they would have flunked out of school. Secretary DeVos needs to come clean about how her Department is exploiting congressional relief efforts intended to help schools recover and reopen.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

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

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, as our Nation's war against the coronavirus has waged on, the Senate has taken decisive action to provide the resources we need to win the fight. We sent critical equipment to our frontline healthcare workers, and we have expanded testing resources nationwide. We provided loans to small businesses in order to protect jobs, and we sent direct financial assistance to the Americans who are struggling the hardest to make ends meet. These four bills—now law—passed by Congress have addressed both the public health crisis at the heart of the pandemic and the ensuing economic fallout.

Now, with the States beginning to gradually reopen their economies, we are staring down the barrel of a second epidemic, one generated by opportunistic lawsuits, crushing legal fees, and drawn-out court battles.

According to a database compiled by law firm Hunton Andrews Kurth, more than 950 such lawsuits have already been filed in the United States. We have seen suits against healthcare workers, nursing homes, colleges, governments, retailers—you name it. As our economy begins to reopen, unfortunately, so will the legal floodgates. The litigation epidemic is shaping up to be a big one.