

right to see how he has dealt with his taxes. President Trump has an obligation to show them. Why has President Trump fought so hard to deny the American people this information?

If this Court wants to prove, at least in one step, that they are not highly political and don't always side with President Trump, I hope they will step up to the plate and rule that the President does not have the unilateral power to shield his tax returns from the American people. On this issue, like so many others, the American people deserve the truth—not what the President wants us to believe but the truth.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, there was a meeting last week—a telephone conference call—of the leaders of a dozen major nations around the world. It was a meeting to discuss something we are all thinking about, the answer to the question everyone in America asks every day: How will this end? When will this end? In this telephone conference, leaders from other nations talked about the ending that most of us envision—the discovery of a safe and effective vaccine that can protect people around the world from the scourge of this coronavirus.

I am not sure when that vaccine will be discovered—the sooner the better—but the big question we need to ask ourselves at this point is, Where will it be discovered, and what benefit will it provide for the United States?

You see, there was one major nation that boycotted this international telephone conference about discovering a vaccine. It was the United States. President Trump decided not to participate with the leaders of nations from around the world in this global conversation about finding a safe and effective vaccine to fight coronavirus. I am not sure what his motive was. But we know that at least 94 other vaccines are being explored and worked on in nations around the world—in England, for example, and in Germany and so many other countries. They are looking for the same safe and effective vaccine as we in the United States are looking for.

I have great faith and confidence in the men and women in medical research in the United States and the production facilities in our country, but I am not so proud or so vain as to believe that no other country could find that safe and effective vaccine.

And if they did—and if they did—would we hesitate for a moment to turn to a country and say that the United States wants to be part of producing that vaccine and receiving that vaccine for the people who live here?

Why would the President of the United States decide we are going to boycott that conference, stay away from it? Oh, I am sure he has a dozen reasons, but they don't seem very convincing to me. We should be at the table wherever there is a serious, credible effort to discover a vaccine. The United States should be participating.

They were trying to raise \$8 billion. That is a lot of money, but remember, we are dealing with an effort to rescue our economy from coronavirus, which is now in the range of \$2.8 trillion. They are asking the participants to put in money. Norway said it would pledge \$1 billion—Norway. The European Union said it would pledge \$1 billion toward this global vaccine effort. The United States should have been at that table. We should be all in for any credible effort to find this vaccine as quickly as possible. I have introduced a resolution calling on the administration to reverse its position and to join in this effort.

I want to commend Bill and Melinda Gates, who participated in that telephone conference and pledged millions of dollars of their own funds on behalf of the United States. Thank you to the Gates family for caring.

Now, Mr. President, you should join them.

This morning, the Republican leader came to the floor to talk about the problems and challenges that we face and the fact that there is another bill that is going to be offered publicly this week by Speaker NANCY PELOSI—the next in a succession of legislation that we have considered over the last several weeks.

We have seen dramatic investments in unemployment insurance for a record number of unemployed people in this country. We have seen dramatic investments in the small businesses of America, to give them a fighting chance to reopen and to prosper in the future. I have joined in all of these on a bipartisan basis, and I will continue to.

I don't know the specifics of Speaker PELOSI's proposal. Senator MCCONNELL came to the floor and warned us not to think big and not to think about transformational things. Then, of course, he went back to his time-honored course about the question of liability.

Senator MCCONNELL has come to the floor repeatedly—repeatedly—and said that before he would consider another COVID-19 rescue bill, he would need to see what he calls a redline honored when it comes to immunity from lawsuits.

What is being proposed by Speaker PELOSI when it comes to State and local governments is really an affirmation of what has been said by every one of us when it comes to our first re-

sponders, the police, the firefighters, the paramedics, the healthcare workers, and the teachers. What she says in the bill is that they have been hit and been hit hard at the State and local government levels by this COVID-19. She is proposing, as I understand it, a substantial commitment to help those units of government that have truly been hurt by this coronavirus. What she is asking for, really, is whether or not all of our speeches about healthcare workers, police, first responders, firefighters, and teachers are really credible and whether, in fact, we will come up with the resources that are needed.

Senator MCCONNELL has said that he will not support that legislation unless—as he calls it—his redline of liability immunity is honored. What he is saying is that he refuses to fund our police, firefighters, paramedics, and teachers unless we provide guaranteed business immunity for corporations. This is, sadly, an invitation for irresponsible corporations and businesses to cut corners when it comes to protecting workers and those customers and such who would be threatened by coronavirus.

The McConnell redline threat would result in more people being infected by the coronavirus and more people getting sick. That is not what we want. There is a better way. We should be talking about how to do this properly.

This afternoon there will be a hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee. One of the witnesses being called by the Republicans is a man named Kevin Smartt. He is the chief executive officer and president of Kwik Chek food stores in Bonham, TX. He is testifying on behalf of the National Association of Convenience Stores on this question of liability.

I read his statement this morning in preparation for the hearing, and I commend it to my colleagues because I want them to listen carefully to what Mr. Smartt says he believes businesses need. Here is what he says. He talks about his own company Kwik Chek.

Kwik Chek's first priority is the safety of our employees and customers. Beginning in early March, we adjusted our daily protocols to mitigate the spread of the virus. This was a challenge—

Listen to what Mr. Smartt says—because the guidance provided by the CDC, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, as well as State and local governments, often conflicted with one another in addition to being vague and difficult to follow. Yet despite many uncertainties, including the constantly fluctuating public health guidelines, we began to adjust to the pandemic.

Mr. Smartt is not saying that businesses don't have a responsibility here. He is accepting that responsibility to create a safe environment for workers and customers, but he is saying to us: When are you going to establish the standards? Why do you keep changing the standards?

Here we are with Senator MCCONNELL threatening to derail the next rescue

bill for police, firefighters, and teachers across America, unless there is guaranteed immunity from lawsuits, and here is one of the leading companies, the No. 1 primary witness of the Republicans in the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, saying to the Federal and governments: Establish standards, reasonable standards, for us to live up to when it comes to conducting business, and we will do it.

I think that is a reasonable request by his business. Why aren't we doing it? Why hasn't OSHA established standards for the safety of workers?

One of our other witnesses here is this gentleman who is the head of the United Food and Commercial Workers, Marc Perrone. I have a special fondness for this union because when I was a college kid, I spent 12 months working in a slaughterhouse in East St. Louis, IL, and it was this union that I belonged to back in those days.

It was tough, dirty, and dangerous work. I look to it as an important chapter in my life, when I saw how real people go to work every day and many times risk their safety and their health in doing it.

Marc Perrone tells us there are literally thousands of his meat processing workers who have been affected by this virus and 95 of his members who have died as a result of it. What he is looking for—what we are looking for—is for those companies to establish standards of safety for their workers so that they can go back to work in this important business.

Some are doing just that. I commend them. Some are working with the union to find safe ways to test their workers and to bring them back to a job site that is safe for them to work in. But they don't have a national standard to live up to. We haven't established a national standard, as we should. Whether through OSHA or through CDC, we ought to establish standards for businesses across this country to live up to. I believe many—Mr. Smartt with Kwik Chek and Marc Perrone with the United Food and Commercial Workers—would applaud that. They would say: At least we know what social distancing standards are to be used in the workplace. At least we know what protective equipment is required in the workplace to protect our employees. At least we know going into this exactly what the standards are that we need to live up to.

Senator MCCONNELL's approach is immunity from lawsuits; don't establish any standards and don't hold anybody to any standards at all. That is wrong. The net result of that is that more people would be in danger, more people would be infected, and more people would die. That is not the right approach.

What we need to do is to make certain that when this is all said and done, we have a smart approach to this; that a business that is conscientious, cares for its customers, and cares for its workers has standards to

live by and that they can meet reasonable standards that have been thought through from a public health viewpoint.

It is no wonder that there is uncertainty when you look at the situation today. The Centers for Disease Control suggests voluntary standards, suggestions. The White House accepts some, publishes some, scoffs at others, and ignores others. There is just no clear message to businesses and people across America on what the standards of safety will be.

So I would say that this hearing this afternoon is important to hear from Mr. Smartt and his willingness to look for standards that he can live by, and to hear from Marc Perrone about the dangers to his workers across the workplace. And don't believe for a minute that this caravan of lawsuits threat that we hear over and over tells the whole story.

When you take a look at the lawsuits that have been filed, it is not just the so-called caravan of trial lawyers that are coming in and jumping on this. There are businesses suing businesses. There are lots of lawsuits that have little or nothing to do with personal injury. There are also lawsuits involving workers' compensation.

Senator MCCONNELL's suggestion is that we overturn the State laws that give workers the right to recover in the workplace if their injuries and or their health is impaired because of the COVID-19 virus. What a terrible outcome that would be to walk away from decades of established protection for workers in every State in the Union, for Senator MCCONNELL's so-called red-line threat when it comes to the COVID virus No. 4 bill that Speaker PELOSI is proposing.

There is a reasonable answer here. We can say to these businesses across America: Join us in the fight. Let's stand together. You protect your workers, you protect your customers, and we will stand by you. We will establish a reasonable standard of conduct for you, which will protect you from frivolous lawsuits. But to take the approach by Senator MCCONNELL, saying that we just are going to guarantee immunity from lawsuits, is exactly the wrong thing to do. We need a standard of safety that businesses can be proud of, that workers can respect, and that customers can count on so that they can go into places, do their business, buy the products, and know that there is a standard of good health that is being established for everyone.

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. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PAYCHECK PROTECTION PROGRAM

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, my home State of Texas is a great place to do business. We keep taxes, government spending, and regulations at a rational minimum in order to give people and businesses the freedom to pursue their dreams and prosper. Texas is consistently ranked on the list of the "Best States for Business," the "Best States to Start a Business," and the "Best States for Female Entrepreneurs."

According to the Small Business Administration, there are more than 2.6 million small businesses throughout the State, accounting for 99.8 percent of all Texas businesses. Those businesses employ nearly half of our State's workforce and account for the massive portion of our Texas economy.

To say that the small businesses are an economic force in Texas would only paint half the picture. In big cities and in small towns alike, these businesses play a critical role in our communities—the locally owned restaurants and bars we visit, the gyms that are part of our regular routine, the dry cleaners, the pharmacies and the hardware stores we stop at when we run errands. But our small businesses aren't just employers or generators of sales tax. They are owned by our friends and our neighbors and are part of the very fabric of our community.

Right now, they are under severe stress and in real jeopardy. The coronavirus has kept Texans at home and put our small businesses into serious financial trouble. When stay-at-home orders were put in place, many were forced to close their doors overnight. Over the last several weeks, like many of my colleagues, I have held innumerable video conferences with chambers of commerce, small business owners, and others who have told me about the difficult decisions they have been forced to make in the wake of this virus.

Without any demand, without an opportunity to sell their services or the food or other material they provide, they had to lay off employees or reduce their pay, and some were more concerned that they couldn't survive more than a few weeks because they still had to pay the rent and their overhead.

Those struggles are familiar for businesses across the country, and that is why we, together—literally, unanimously, in the Senate—created the Paycheck Protection Program. This new loan program was designed to help America's small businesses and their employees manage these uncharted waters by providing 8 weeks of cash flow assistance to cover payroll and other business-related expenses.

As we now know, it was so popular and so needed that the initial \$350 billion we funded ran out in less than 2 weeks. From that batch of funding bill, Texas received more loans than any other State. Nearly 135,000 small businesses benefited from the Paycheck Protection Program—a sum total of