

Mr. Powell went on to encourage policymakers to provide greater assistance to families and implement measures to keep workers in their homes. He also pointed out if State and local governments don't receive additional aid, they will be forced to lay off public employees and cut back on public services at the worst possible time.

Mr. Powell is spot-on, and tomorrow, in the Senate Banking Committee, my Republican colleagues will have a chance to hear this critical message straight from the horse's mouth, with Mr. Mnuchin and Mr. Powell set to testify only after Senate Democrats had to push and push and push for such a hearing. We asked for it 3 weeks ago. It should have happened 2 weeks ago because the country is calling out for action. Trump appointees are calling out for action. Governors across the country—Democratic and Republican Governors—are calling out for action. When will my Republican colleagues hear the message? After all, there is no shortage of action the Senate could take.

Millions of Americans are having difficulty receiving the expanded unemployment insurance benefits that Congress recently passed. Why aren't Senate Republicans holding a hearing on why millions of our citizens aren't getting the aid we intended to provide instead of these sham political show trial "gotcha" hearings?

Testing continues to be a major problem. A blockbuster report in the Washington Post last night says we are "far short of the [testing] number that most independent analysts say will be needed to avoid another wave of death and illness." The report described a concerning shortage of PPE, nasal swabs, and reagents in nursing homes and other frontline settings. The report outlined another problem: There is a startling lack of awareness in many communities about the need to get tested.

Why aren't Senate Republicans focusing on these issues? These are life-and-death issues. They relate to people's health and people's lives, and they relate to our economy getting well. Why isn't President Trump leading a nationwide push to increase testing capacity and frequency and awareness?

President Trump is so desperate to reopen the country as quickly as possible, but he refuses to roll up his sleeves and do the work that would allow us to do it safely. There is an anomaly here. He demands that people get back to work but doesn't do his work to make sure we have testing, to make sure there are guidelines, to make sure this works correctly so that we don't have a crisis a few months from now.

House Democrats have put together a major bill that would provide urgent and necessary relief to the American people. My colleagues on the Republican side don't have to like everything in it. They could easily say: Let's sit down and negotiate. Let's find some common ground.

Instead, Leader McCONNELL has said that Republicans have yet to feel "the urgency of acting immediately"—Herbert Hoover redux. Instead, his party is slowly preparing legislation to give legal immunity to big corporations that put workers in dangerous situations. Is that the No. 1 problem on every American's mind? Is that the No. 1 problem of people who are losing their jobs, people who have small businesses that are going bankrupt, people who can't feed their kids—protecting corporations from liability?

This Republican Party is so, so out of touch with America. It is so off-kilter, so in obeisance to the hard right that they can't even focus on a crisis when it is right before their eyes.

We are confronted with a period of prolonged economic misery for millions of American workers and families—Americans who, for the first time, are waiting in staggering lines at food banks, Americans who, for the first time, don't know if they will be able to keep a roof over their heads, put food on the table or pay the rent. How long will it take—how long? How much economic hardship—how much before Republicans feel the urgency to act?

STATE DEPARTMENT IG

Mr. President, on another matter, last Friday night, in the dark of night, President Trump fired the inspector general of the State Department, Mr. Steve Linick. Mr. Linick, according to reports, had been investigating the misuse of public resources by Secretary Pompeo and the Trump administration's arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Linick is now the fifth—yes, the fifth—inspector general to be fired by President Trump from his or her post in the last few months. They all shared one thing in common. They had the audacity to do their jobs and speak the truth. They had the audacity to try and drain the swamp.

What is Donald Trump's reaction when he hears the truth? He fires the people who have spoken it. What kind of President is that?

During normal times it is bad enough, but during a crisis, it is more awful. The Inspector General of the Intelligence Committee delivered a whistleblower report to Congress as required by law. For this, it seems, he was fired.

It was through the work of the HHS inspector general the public learned the extent of the Trump administration's failure to provide hospitals and medical workers with testing, PPE, and necessary personnel in the early days of the pandemic. She has been fired too.

The inspector general for the Defense Department and the Transportation Department have been fired, as well, just as they were about to oversee parts of the administration's response to COVID.

Now it is Mr. Linick who was looking into potential wrongdoing at the State Department.

The inspectors general are the watchdogs for our Federal agencies, making

sure our government is working for the people. That is what they are there to do: Hold government accountable for waste and fraud and abuse. But if they actually do their jobs and say that the President is doing something wrong, he fires them.

The President can't handle the truth and will not tolerate oversight of his administration when truth speakers speak out. No other administration has come close to doing this. This President is so different, running almost a rogue administration that defies truth, that defies facts. Now five inspectors general have been fired all because they were doing their job, telling the truth, and trying to clean up the mess in Washington.

We know this about President Trump, but where the heck are my Republican colleagues in the Senate? My friends on the other side, especially the senior Senator from Iowa, have long defended and even sought to pass legislation to further empower inspectors general. Well, the President has just fired a parade of independent watchdogs and given no legitimate explanation for their dismissals.

Is a mild rebuke the most my Republican colleagues can muster—a tweet? Some concerned statements?

This is not the first time the President has fired an IG and failed to provide a sufficient explanation. So what are our Republican colleagues going to do about it? Nothing, it seems. Nothing. They are so afraid of President Trump. They so cling—almost to his ankles—that when they know he is doing wrong, when they know he is hiding the truth, they are afraid to say it. They shudder.

I have never seen anything like it: a President who is so out of control with his party so in line behind him, marching in lockstep. But when history looks back on this chapter, on President Trump's purge of independent watchdogs during a time of national crisis, it will not give credit to Senate Republicans who let the President off the hook with at most and only, at times, a polite slap on the wrist.

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

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

HEROES ACT

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to discuss the House Democrats' \$3 trillion spending spree.

The American people are at a point where they need a life preserver. Instead, Speaker PELOSI has just thrown them an anvil.

It is absurd. Her COVID-19 proposal is pricey, partisan, and it is a pipe dream. It is a bloated bonanza of all of

her leftwing socialist projects. It weighs in at over 1,800 pages, but there is one glaring omission: House Democrats forgot to help fight the coronavirus.

This bill is NANCY PELOSI's socialist Democratic dream, but it is a nightmare for the American people. NANCY PELOSI needs a very serious reality check. The far-left fantasy will never become law. It cannot pass the Senate.

The country is trying to recover from the coronavirus. People are stressed. They are struggling. They are sacrificing. They are suffering. They need help to survive the crisis.

People have been living through 2 months of lockdowns to slow the spread of the disease. While the infection rate has finally started to flatten, tragically, tens of thousands of Americans have already died. More than 36 million people have lost their jobs.

People back home in my State of Wyoming and people who, I am sure, are back home in the Presiding Officer's home State of Missouri—people all across the country know what we need to do. We need to get back to business safely. We need this disease behind us. We need our communities back, and we need it as soon as possible.

Yet, as States reopen, incredibly, the Democrats are exploiting and prolonging the Nation's pain. Why? It seems to me they are trying to do it for political gain.

Joe Biden has called this deadly disease "an incredible opportunity . . . to fundamentally transform the country." NANCY PELOSI agrees. The global outbreak, she said, is a "wonderful opportunity" according to the Speaker of the House. She cannot let a crisis go to waste. I have seen the video of Hillary Clinton saying that you do not want a crisis to go to waste. So what is NANCY PELOSI doing? She is wasting the public's time on a proposal that does not have a single chance in the world of becoming law.

This bill really is a political payoff to NANCY PELOSI's constituency and her allies. Look at the wish list. Topping the House Democrats' \$3 trillion liberal wish list is the great blue State bailout. It has \$1 trillion to bail out very badly mismanaged Democrat-run States and local governments, sanctuary cities, one after another. The bill rescues underwater blue State pension plans. It includes a tax cut to the wealthiest 1 percent who live in those specific States—Illinois, New York, and California. It is a windfall for wealthy taxpayers in Democrat-run States.

That is not all. The bill provides direct payments to illegal immigrants. Apparently they forgot about that in the last bill, so they put it in this one—direct payments to illegal immigrants. Astonishingly, there is not an additional dime for paycheck protection funds, not for the small businesses that we need to keep on the payroll, even though the paycheck protection plan has saved 50 million jobs already in America.

The bill does want to seek to release prisoners from ICE detention centers, so NANCY PELOSI is focusing on that. But there is no liability protection for the small businesses that we need to get to reopen the country. That is not included in her bill.

These mom-and-pop businesses in my State of Wyoming are facing an avalanche of abusive lawsuits as they try to reopen. The Wyoming legislature actually addressed it in a special session on Friday. We need to address it as a nation.

The proposal that Pelosi has put out abolishes State voter ID requirements and overrides State voting laws. It is all a part of her master plan for Federal control of State election laws. As a former attorney general, the Presiding Officer understands clearly the importance of States having the pre-eminent role in the election process, not the Federal Government.

The Pelosi bill bales out the U.S. Postal Service, and it funds something that she calls environmental justice and does it to the tune of \$50 million. How does that help in the fight of coronavirus?

The proposal takes good care of the marijuana industry—absolutely—even though selling pot is still a felony in most States. I don't know how that helps in the fight against the coronavirus.

No matter. The Pelosi plan gives the cannabis business special access to cut-rate finance. In fact, her bill reads more like a marijuana measure than a pandemic package. That is because it includes the word "cannabis" 68 times—more often than she mentions jobs, hiring—the important thing about getting our country open and getting our communities back.

This Democratic socialist Christmas list just goes on and on—and the astronomical price: \$3 trillion.

If enacted, this Pelosi package would be the largest waste of taxpayer dollars in U.S. history. It is the largest bill, financially, ever passed in Congress. Fortunately, it will never become law.

Now, NANCY PELOSI must not realize that families all across America are having a hard time paying their bills, feeding their kids, paying the rent. She must not recognize that; otherwise, why would she put all of this money in all of these things—these priorities: payouts to sanctuary cities—how does that help us fight the coronavirus?—favorable financing to the marijuana industry, tens of millions of dollars for environmental justice.

Keep in mind, much of the money from the bipartisan CARES relief package that Congress already passed, money that has been appropriated, has not yet been spent. In March, Congress approved nearly \$3 trillion in combined coronavirus aid.

Lots of it has gone to States. My home State of Wyoming just had a special session of the legislature this past Friday-Saturday to see how we are going to go ahead spending the bil-

lions—\$1.25 billion—that have come to so many States. And Wyoming—while there are a number of other States smaller in size—got the lowest amount of money. They haven't spent it. They are having a special session to decide how to spend it. Some States may need more flexibility in spending it. But NANCY PELOSI is trying to send out another trillion dollars to States and to cities.

As a Republican, I would say, from the start, our focus has been on helping people through the health and economic crisis that is upon us. We want to help the American people weather the storm.

Now, when House Democrats say that NANCY PELOSI lays down a marker—as she says—for future bipartisan talks, in reality, Democrats are only weakening their position by betting big against the American economic recovery. That is what they are doing in the bill that they put together because the Pelosi bill includes specific what I believe are job-killing proposals—not things to help more Americans work but things making it harder for Americans to get back to work.

This bill would slow the recovery by keeping millions of Americans on the government payroll all the way into 2021. The Presiding Officer has been a leader in this fight about perverse incentives that we see in some of the legislation that has already passed.

This bill, this fantasy island that NANCY PELOSI is on, extends increased unemployment benefits so people could make more money by not working than by going back to work. Now, that means as much as half of the workforce could earn more by not working than by returning to work all the way into 2021.

So the Democratic socialists want the businesses that are trying to reopen and to rehire workers to compete with unemployment benefits until 2021, until April of next year. The Democrats are proposing that these American businesses—instead of hiring 36 million Americans who are out of work, they want to make it easier for them to hire illegal immigrants than the Americans who are currently out of work. That is what she has set up in her scheme.

The bill also raises taxes on struggling small businesses. It mandates paid family leave through the end of 2021 and removes a small business tax exemption.

It is as if Democrats don't want the economy to reopen and don't want people to return to work. That is what I see when I read through the 1,800 pages.

Before the pandemic hit, we had record job growth, record low unemployment, and record-high consumer confidence. Now, unemployment is approaching the level of the Great Depression.

The best way to help the 36 million people who are out of work is to reopen our communities and reopen our country. It is telling that House Democrats'

\$3 trillion bill includes no measures to help Americans get back to work, no added support for hard-hit small businesses, and no protections for American jobs.

Congress will be considering providing more virus aid in coming months and weeks. Any recovery legislation will have to be targeted, temporary, and tailored to address the coronavirus emergency.

COVID-19 legislation must include reasonable, responsible liability protections for healthcare providers and for employers, for the small businesses in our States, and it needs to promote economic jobs and growth.

Now, Senate Republicans are focused on reopening America. The American taxpayer can't be asked to pay for items on Speaker PELOSI's \$3 trillion socialist Christmas list. The American people need us to throw them a life preserver, not the anvil that NANCY PELOSI has thrown their way.

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, after every natural disaster, after every major emergency, there is always a period of response—that initial triage. Think about performing search and rescue operations, providing medical care, and setting up emergency shelters. You are moving quickly to complete these time-sensitive tasks to get everyone to safety and minimize the loss of life.

At some point, though, you begin to transition to recovery—clearing the debris, restoring power, rebuilding, and eventually trying to return to life as normal. As always, there will be a period of transition between those periods in which you continue to focus on the short-term response while you plan for the longer term recovery. While we face a much different type of crisis today, I believe the same principles apply.

Our heroic healthcare workers continue to respond to this virus on the frontlines. Our farmers, our ranchers, our truckers, our grocery store employees, and food banks are ensuring people have food on their tables. The mailmen, delivery drivers, waste collectors, and other workers in critical sectors are keeping the cogs of our society and our economy running, and slowly but surely, recovery is happening too.

In Texas and other States across the country, businesses are welcoming customers through their doors for the first time in a while. Parks are beginning to reopen, and schools are making plans

for the fall. Every day, the needle is moving in a positive direction, but I am worried that, without some protections for these workers, these businesses, these churches, and these food banks, we are going to reverse course or stop them dead in their tracks. We are already seeing lawsuits piling up that claim somebody did this or did that in a corona-related incident. Unfortunately, there is an economic incentive to use as a cash cow the virus that has infected some 1.5 million Texans, and we are setting up for what could be one of the biggest bonanzas in history in terms of litigation.

You had better believe that those who could find themselves on the receiving end of these lawsuits are taking notice. A recent survey by the National Federation of Independent Business found that nearly 70 percent of small business owners are concerned about liability claims and that hospitals are cautious about resuming procedures, like organ transplants or cancer biopsies, because they could get sued as well. Even if you have done everything the public health officials say you should do and even if you have accommodated every request that the President, the Governor, or the mayor has made, you could still be sued. Even if businesses and hospitals follow all of the relevant guidelines and act in good faith, they could end up fighting very long and very expensive lawsuits. They could end up winning those lawsuits, but they could also end up going bankrupt in the process because defending a lawsuit is not cheap. At a time when we want people to focus like a laser on reopening their businesses and refilling these jobs, we can't allow that incentive for a lawsuit lottery to bleed our health workers dry and deter our recovery.

Congress needs to take action to prevent these opportunistic lawyers from using this crisis to make money and to, at the same time, hurt our economy and hurt our recovery. Leader MCCONNELL and I and others are working on a proposal that would put commonsense reforms in place and protect those who act in good faith from being sued into oblivion. I want to be absolutely clear about the goals of this legislation. There is no effort to pass a blanket immunity. There is no effort to protect bad actors who willingly put their patients, their employees, or customers in danger. What we are talking about is temporary and targeted liability protection for those who act in good faith and follow all of the relevant public health guidelines and direction.

First, we must protect the healthcare workers who are on the frontline of this crisis. These men and women have made tremendous physical and mental sacrifices while serving during this unprecedented time, and we simply can't allow them to be taken to the cleaners by those who are looking for a payout.

More than a dozen States have already provided protections for healthcare workers by raising the

threshold for medical malpractice lawsuits. The Democratic Governor of New York, Andrew Cuomo, has issued an executive order granting healthcare workers immunity from civil liability. Let me make sure people get this. The Democratic Governor of New York has issued an executive order granting healthcare workers immunity from civil liability. Again, this is not a blanket immunity. There are exceptions for gross negligence and willful conduct.

If limiting liability makes sense in New York, then I think it certainly makes sense elsewhere. We need to provide the same level of protection for healthcare workers all across the United States so they can operate without fear of having to defend themselves in lawsuits when they are doing their very best, in a time of crisis, to, in good faith, follow all of the appropriate guidance. Yet we can't stop there. We have to provide similar protections for the workers, the businesses, the schools, the nonprofits, and other institutions that are critical to our recovery.

Think about small business owners—70 percent of whom I know are worried about liability lawsuits, which is according to the National Federation of Independent Business. Once they receive the green light to open their doors, they have to make a very important decision: Is it worth the risk?

Let's say that you are a restaurant owner who has gone through the CDC's newly released decision tree for restaurants and bars and that you are prepared to implement all of the recommended health and safety actions as well as to monitor your staff. There is nothing stopping the first person who walks through the door from suing you in a few weeks because one believes one contracted the virus at your restaurant. It is not just businesses that are facing these types of decisions. Any nonprofit organization or agency that serves the public is in a similar position, even if it has gone to great lengths to comply with public health recommendations.

As our public schools, colleges, and universities weigh decisions about reopening this fall, liability protections are going to play a major factor. Last week, the Committee on the Judiciary held a hearing on liability protections. One of the witnesses we heard from was Lee Tyner, who serves as the general counsel for Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, TX. In his testimony, Lee called this the "cliff problem." He said that this is what his University of Virginia law school professor used to describe as being an uncertain standard of care. A liability cliff is some sort of line that would be catastrophic to cross.

If you know where that cliff is, you are able to make good decisions about how far you are willing to go and what kind of risks you are willing to take, but if you do not know exactly where it is, then uncertainty will likely lead you to avoid the area altogether. In