

the hospital for treatment, and three had to be admitted because of their injuries.

In my home State of Texas, we have seen riots in Austin, San Antonio, Dallas, and Houston, my hometown—the hometown of George Floyd. In Austin, over the weekend, protesters tried to block a highway and destroyed multiple businesses, including a gas station, a Food Mart, a hotel, a Target, a Foot Locker, and other stores and businesses.

In Houston, another group of protesters closed down Highway 59, and rioters destroyed businesses and injured police officers.

This must stop. There are a host of tools that can be used to stop it. The first lines of defense when it comes to violent crime are the brave men and women of our police departments who are risking their lives every night as they engage with rioters and violent criminals.

Just as it is a slander to say that every protester is a violent rioter, it is also a slander—an absolute vicious lie—to paint every police officer as a racist, to paint every police officer as someone who commits abuse of power and police brutality, as we saw with George Floyd.

Yes, there are some who break the law, and that is why the officers are being prosecuted. The rule of law extends to everyone. If a police officer breaks the law, he or she should be prosecuted. But when we are looking to protect our own families, when we are looking to protect our spouse, when we are looking to protect our children—the people we call on to be our first line of defense are the men and women in blue.

Local officials who have decided politically that they are not going to let the police officers arrest the rioters, but they are going to release the rioters; the media that turn a blind eye and don't report on the police officers being murdered; the Hollywood celebrities who virtue signal and raise money to pay the bail for the people being arrested for violent looting—every one of them is contributing to this problem.

We also have Federal resources. I have spoken with U.S. attorneys in the State of Texas who are directing Federal resources. There are Federal laws on the books against rioting: 18 USC, section 2101, makes it a crime to travel in or use interstate commerce to incite a riot or participate in a riot; 18 USC, section 231, makes it a crime to “obstruct, impede, or interfere” with a law enforcement officer performing his or her duties “in any way” that affects commerce; 18 USC, section 844, makes it a crime to “maliciously [damage] or [destroy], or [attempt] to damage or destroy, by means of fire or an explosive, any building, vehicle, or other real or personal property used in interstate or foreign commerce”; 18 USC, section 1962, the RICO statute, makes it a crime for anyone associated with

an enterprise to engage in a pattern of racketeering activity where racketeering activity includes arson and robbery; 26 USC, section 5861(d) makes it a crime to possess a destructive device, which is defined in a way that includes a Molotov cocktail; and 18 USC, section 2314, makes it a crime to transport interstate or sell goods that are stolen.

All of those are Federal laws that are available for Federal prosecutors, that are available to the FBI. The message that needs to come clear—loud and clear—from every elected official is if you engage in violence, if you engage in looting, if you destroy shops, if you shatter windows, if you light police cars on fire, if you commit acts of violence, if you physically assault your fellow citizens, if you physically assault police officers, if you kill your fellow citizens, if you kill police officers, you will be prosecuted. You will be prosecuted, and you will go away to jail for a very long time.

There are organizations that are promoting this, that are funding this, that are coordinating this—organizations like antifa. For 2 years, I have been calling on the administration to designate antifa as a domestic terrorist organization. They have engaged in acts of violence all across this country. But this past week has been antifa's most shameful act.

This week, the President rightly announced that antifa would be designated as a terrorist organization. That means we can use law enforcement resources to track down—if you are providing funding and organizing, you will be prosecuted. We will use the RICO laws against you, the same laws that take down drug dealers.

If you are handing out bricks to young African-American men, trying to incite them to commit acts of violence, that is a criminal activity. It is also a cynical, bigoted activity. This must stop.

Our first responsibility is to protect our fellow citizens, to protect their lives, to protect their safety, to protect their rights. The President has that responsibility. The Attorney General has that responsibility. Every U.S. attorney in the country has that responsibility. The FBI has that responsibility. The Governors of all 50 States have that responsibility. Mayors have that responsibility. Police chiefs have that responsibility.

It is time for this to stop. It is time for us to come together. And it is time for the demagogues who peddle the vision, who seek personal benefit in fanning the flames of racial animosity, to stop playing games with people's lives.

If you are a Hollywood celebrity and want to make a contribution, make a contribution to a fund rebuilding the small businesses, the African-American businesses, the Hispanic businesses that have been looted and burned and destroyed. Make a contribution to a fund to the families of the police officers murdered. Don't pay to bail out the criminals assaulting those police

officers, burning those African-American small businesses, looting those African-American small businesses. You are not a social justice warrior. If you are lining up, seeking accolades for your support of violent criminals who are deliberately targeting the African-American community, I will tell you right now, you are not advancing racial equality if you are supporting violent criminals who are destroying far too many African-American communities and Hispanic communities. That is not helping the problem.

We need to keep America safe. We need to protect every American, regardless of race, regardless of skin color. We need to come together and keep America safe.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. LOEFFLER). The Senator from Iowa.

CORONAVIRUS

Ms. ERNST. Madam President, for months, as our Nation has confronted this pandemic together, everyone in America—every single one of us—has been asked to make serious sacrifices, whether that has meant working overtime in a hospital caring for the afflicted, temporarily closing a family business, euthanizing hogs and cattle, or forgoing important life events like a high school prom or a college graduation. COVID-19 has brought with it very challenging times.

While we have missed milestones and time together, Americans across the country have stepped up to help slow the spread of this virus and its toll on the lives of our fellow citizens. While we cannot return to life as usual just yet, we are entering a new phase. Step by step, State by State, America is safely reopening.

In Iowa, Governor Kim Reynolds has led our State with a steady hand during this critical time. Under Governor Reynolds' thoughtful plan and guidance from public health officials at the local, State, and Federal level, Iowa communities and businesses are starting to safely reopen, and many activities are carefully resuming. Iowans can once again participate in America's great pastime and play golf. Places of worship are opening for services while taking smart precautions. And while they will not be as crowded as they once were, restaurants and bars are taking the first steps in opening again, as well as are places that we all grew up going to in Iowa—our amusement parks, racetracks, outdoor performance venues, movie theaters, and museums—all with important public health guidelines in mind.

All of this is contingent, of course, upon having smaller groups of people and continuing to practice social distancing—simple precautions that can make a big difference.

While we all yearn for life to return back to how it was a few months ago, we must be smart about taking the appropriate steps. Certainly, we want to see our elderly relatives, gather with our family and friends once again, and

return to work and school. But, folks, the pandemic is not over. Let's take this one step at a time and keep in mind that while restrictions are being loosened, they are not eliminated, and there is a good reason for that.

As this process moves forward, Washington can make this transition more safe and successful. Working in partnership with the administration, State leaders, and the private sector, we can continue to increase testing and ensure those who may be infected are following proper guidelines and getting the care and information they need to limit the spread of the virus. We need to make sure our essential workers and others returning to the workforce have the personal protective equipment—the PPE—necessary to allow America to get back to work while ensuring the safety of our great workers.

In addition, these frontline essential workers should absolutely be able to keep more of their hard-earned paycheck—something I am working on closely with the administration and my colleagues. Our small businesses must be protected from predatory lawsuits so that Iowa's mom-and-pop shops can continue to provide paychecks to their hard-working employees.

Of course, we must continue to support our families—our moms and dads who are struggling to purchase diapers; our childcare providers and workers who have continued to look after our kids; our family caregivers who are helping Iowa seniors and those who are most at risk during this pandemic—and make sure we are prepared for whatever might come next.

Let's not only focus on the immediate needs but on the long-term national priority for critical medical supplies and other materials to be produced right here in the United States of America. We should never again depend on a foreign nation to protect our citizens, especially one like the Communist Party of China, which has been continually and unsurprisingly deceptive about this threat from the very beginning.

Folks, while we still have a ways to go before we can return to life as we know it, we will get through this, and when we do, we will revive the great economy we have built together and prepare for an even stronger future together.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I am very pleased to join my colleague from Iowa to highlight the need to responsibly reopen America and our economy as we continue to fight this COVID pandemic.

PROTESTS

Mr. President, before I talk about reopening America, I would like to address a deep tragedy—the brutal death of George Floyd.

It is clear that our entire country is united in horror and opposition to the

violent killing. Racial discrimination has absolutely no place in this country whatsoever. This senseless murder is unacceptable, and those responsible should be held accountable. I am anguished at the death of George Floyd. I am anguished at the violence we are seeing all across our streets today. There is no question that we must do our part to change racist attitudes that, unfortunately, exist today, and this must be done in a peaceful way. Looting and violent riots are not the way to do this, and it is not the way to honor George Floyd or those who are protesting peacefully, which is the great majority of people.

The other day, George's brother encouraged all of us to peacefully protest. He said that violence will not bring his brother back. No, it will not bring his brother back.

It makes me sad to see businesses and monuments that honor some of our bravest heroes destroyed and violence happening in cities across the Nation. In my State of West Virginia, there have been protests. However, they have been peaceful. I commend my West Virginians for peacefully protesting, and I encourage them to continue this. Instead of violence, we need to come together as a nation, to listen to one another, and to learn from one another. This is how real change can happen.

President George W. Bush and Mrs. Laura Bush published a statement yesterday, and I would like to read the last paragraph because I found it really quite moving as to how we are going to address this issue.

The rule of law ultimately depends on the fairness and legitimacy of the legal system. And achieving justice for all is the duty of all. This will require a consistent, courageous, and creative effort. We serve our neighbors best when we try to understand their experience. We love our neighbors as ourselves when we treat them as equals, in both protection and compassion. There is a better way—the way of empathy, and shared commitment, and bold action, and a peace rooted in justice. I am confident that together, Americans will choose the better way.

I appreciate so much the entire statement. Those last several words, as I said, really touched me.

On the matter before us today, many communities in our country are beginning to open, including in my State of West Virginia. As everywhere, COVID has had a terrible impact on many of our communities all across the country. The disease has affected every part of our lives. More than 105,000 of our fellow Americans have lost their lives because of this terrible virus. That includes 78 West Virginians. The unofficial unemployment rate is 14 percent in this country, but in my State of West Virginia, it is a shade over 15 percent, and we expect those numbers to rise when the May numbers are published later this week.

State and local officials across the country closed much of our economy in order to slow the disease. Our goal as a nation was to bend the curve in order

to prevent our hospitals and other medical providers from being overrun. In West Virginia, as in most of the country, we have been successful in bending the curve and reducing the spread of this terrible disease. It is important, as we move now to responsibly reopening our economy, to continue to follow the guidelines that have been prepared by our public health experts—washing our hands, social distancing, avoiding touching your face, and wearing your mask. Following these guidelines will help to make America's reopening successful. It will protect your health and the health of your community. Hindering the spread of the disease while allowing businesses to remain open as they follow the guidelines will aid in our economic recovery as well.

Most Americans understand there is no way to choose between public health and a strong economy because you cannot have one without the other. We can't have a strong economy if we are not protecting people from becoming sick, and we will not be able to make the necessary long-term investments in public health if we don't have a strong economy. That is why a responsible, step-by-step approach to reopening the economy that is driven by the data in States and local communities is so very important.

West Virginia's cumulative percentage of positive tests now stands at 2 percent, which is less than one-fifth of the national average. As of this morning, our daily positive test percentage was 0.88 percent. This is despite the fact that West Virginia has tested a higher percentage of our residents than the national average and all of our neighboring States. Even more encouraging is that, even as we began reopening our businesses in May, our cumulative percent of positive tests has remained below 3 percent since April 25.

Yet we have faced challenges. Outbreaks at our long-term care facilities in Monongalia County, Wayne County, Jackson County, and Kanawha County have resulted in 43 deaths, but do you know what? Our State responded quickly and tested every resident and every staff member in the nursing homes in our State. We were the first State in our Nation to do this and set the example that many have followed. Just last week, we had an outbreak at one of our prisons, where we had 118 positive tests. So we know that this is still there and that it still presents a danger, but I am really proud of the way we have pulled together during this crisis and addressed these challenges.

The progress reflected by the statistics is only possible because our State's residents have followed the guidelines. I thank all of the medical professionals, the first responders, and the frontline workers who have gone beyond the call of duty to protect public health and keep our communities running during this most difficult time.

Opening our economy is paramount, and opening it responsibly must be