

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

done. Even though the COVID is still with us, we must continue working together and following the guidelines so we can protect both our economy and our health.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

RESTART ACT

Mr. YOUNG. Mr. President, last week, I traveled around the great State of Indiana on my RESTART tour.

I visited small businesses up and down the State—eight cities, in fact—where we have seen so many Hoosiers adversely impacted by this pandemic. Like many other States, Indiana is starting to open up our economy, and I know so many Hoosiers welcome that. Our Governor, Eric Holcomb, has been implementing a five-stage plan for safely reopening Indiana's economy.

The cities on my tour have businesses that are in various stages of reopening. Restaurants like Catablu Grille in Fort Wayne, Arni's in Lafayette, and Woody's Library in Carmel are open at 50-percent capacity right now. The nonprofit Terre Haute Children's Museum remains closed, unfortunately, and is struggling to pay its employees. I visited Zimmer Biomet Hibbard, which is a medical device company in Valparaiso. I enjoyed the tour and visiting with the employees, but I discovered that its sales had dropped 95 percent in March. Fortunately, it received a Paycheck Protection Program loan, and that enabled it to keep all 23 of its employees on the payroll.

It is clear that we need to continue evaluating additional relief measures for small businesses and Indiana's nonprofits. My RESTART Act is a viable approach to help keep our hardest hit businesses and nonprofits going. The RESTART Act is a bipartisan measure I introduced with Senator BENNET. The effort here is to build upon the success of the Paycheck Protection Program. We have seen that more than 74,000 Hoosier businesses have benefited from PPP, with loans totaling nearly \$9.4 billion in the State of Indiana. Just for context, that is an average loan of about \$130,000. These are for small businesses like those that we see up and down our State.

The Paycheck Protection Program requires funds to be spent in just 8 weeks, but most restaurants, gyms, boutiques, and so many other businesses were not permitted to be open during part or all of that 8-week period. So the first part of the RESTART Act merely extends the timeframe to 16 weeks for our Nation's hardest hit businesses.

Secondly, we know that the PPP was meant to be a bridge to reopening the economy, but many small businesses have much longer bridges to cross. That is why our new RESTART Program would provide loans that would cover up to 6 months of payroll and fixed operating expenses. That is just for those businesses that have taken a

substantial revenue hit during this coronavirus pandemic. My RESTART initiative would provide needed funds with the flexibility for employers to pay bills and to implement social distancing measures, like with those Plexiglas dividers I have seen at so many businesses. Most importantly, it would bring employees back to work, which is exactly where they want to be.

Over the last several weeks, I have spoken to more than 22,000 Hoosiers by using Zoom teleconferencing capabilities, having conference calls, and other means. I have to say I am truly inspired by the way Hoosiers have come together to help one another during this pandemic. Everyone has done his part. Hoosiers want to work, and business owners are eager to pay them. The RESTART Act can help make sure this happens, and I hope my colleagues will give it strong consideration in the coming days.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator BRAUN and I be allowed to complete our remarks prior to the rollcall votes.

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

CORONAVIRUS

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I have to say that Tennesseans are enjoying being out and about. They are so thrilled to see the restart of our economy. Whether you are going to hair salons, restaurants, shopping centers, office parks, or manufacturing facilities, what we are hearing from Tennesseans is: Thank goodness we can get back to work. They are grateful that they have had the PPP to help them bridge from the shutdown to the restart. There has been \$8.8 billion that has made its way into our State through the PPP program, and our Governor, our Tennessee General Assembly, and our mayors are really working diligently to be certain that our economy opens up, that people are at work safely, and that we continue to defeat this COVID-19.

Over the past few months, we have seen Congress push forward, putting about \$3 trillion into the economy for a restart, and State and local governments have already put over \$139 billion worth of aid to good use by supporting local healthcare, helping to rescue businesses, and keeping companies working and local payrolls going—keeping people on the job.

Our Governor and general assembly in Tennessee have just announced a new program that they are doing in conjunction with local businesses. Now, imagine for a moment what it was like to watch the economy tumble from the perspective of a community that was already struggling and trying to make ends meet. The pandemic caused catastrophic damage to the traditional economy and also to many of the service organizations that were

there to meet needs. In Tennessee, as in many States, struggling communities depend on these nonprofit groups. This is why we fought so hard to include eligibility for nonprofits in the rescue funding packages.

I will tell you that this is making a difference in Tennessee for some of our nonprofit organizations, like the East Tennessee-based Appalachia Service Project. ASP teams travel throughout Central Appalachia. They repair homes for low-income families. Mayors in the communities that ASP visit are running on tight budgets, and they depend on volunteers to fix up unsafe or uninhabitable homes. You can only imagine how it felt to the people at ASP to watch their funding evaporate, knowing that the leaky roof that needed attention over in Sneedville would end up turning into a rotten floor and a moldy wall and would be a safety hazard for the individuals who lived there. Fortunately, ASP was able to get an SBA loan that gave it a little bit of breathing room. Although it has had to cancel its volunteer program, its essential staff and contractors will be able to continue working all through the summer.

The various rescue programs that Congress agreed to implement were not perfect by any means, but did they have a positive effect? From what we are hearing in Tennessee, they did, and they have been put to good use.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, I am a Main Street entrepreneur. I have spent my career building a little business into a large one over many years in my hometown. My wife, as well, has operated a home accessory and gift store on Main Street, literally. I am elated to see the American economy starting to get off to a smart restart.

I addressed, in a couple of floor speeches before we left in March, the question of how to reopen our economy. I believe businesses are disciplined and ready to pay attention to the rules—the new normal—to make sure their employees and their customers stay safe. Business owners will follow the rules. It is in their own best interests to do so. They have much to lose from a new spike in the coronavirus. Businesses are always more adept, more agile than government, and I am heartened to see the innovative approaches many businesses are taking across our country to address this challenge.

The virus does not affect all populations, industries, and areas of our country in the same way. So, naturally, the reopening in Indianapolis will be different from that on Main Street in Jasper, IN.

We should remember that although this presents challenges, a one-size-fits-all is rarely the best policy course of action, and decisions that affect citizens are best made by the level of government closest to them—mayors,