



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 166

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, JUNE 9, 2020

No. 106

House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Thursday, June 11, 2020, at 9 a.m.

Senate

TUESDAY, JUNE 9, 2020

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, we need You more than human help. Restore us to Your favor, surrounding us with the shield of Your mercy. We have been shaken by forces that have come against us and look to You, our redeemer and friend. Lord, we are grateful that, though wrong seems strong, You continue to rule.

Fill our lawmakers with reverence and trust in Your prevailing providence. May that reverential awe keep them on the path of courage, integrity, and wisdom. Lord, remind them that You have invited them to seek and discover Your might. You declare in Psalm 50:15: "Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you."

We praise Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 1 minute in morning business.

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

IOWA'S PRIMARY ELECTION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, the House of Representatives has passed a bill that is kind of like a one-size-fits-all for elections, meaning that everything ought to be run out of Washington, DC, which is contrary to what we have done in this country for 240 years, wherein we have had 50 States running the elections. I want to refer to what happens in the State of Iowa.

Last week, Iowans voted in record numbers in our June primary. In most elections, about 40 percent of Iowans choose to vote by absentee ballot. This year, in our primary and, understandably, because of the pandemic, the vast majority cast its votes by absentee ballot—a State decision, a personal decision, not something dictated by Washington.

As I have already referred to, there are those here in Washington, DC—in Congress and maybe outside of Congress—who say that, unless the Federal Government mandates that States adopt a whole new, centralized, non-optional vote-by-mail system before November, Americans will not be able to vote from home.

Iowa's successful primary election shows that the absentee ballot system that is already in place in our State—and in most States—that is run by our county auditors is up to the task. We have proven that. Every Iowan who wants to vote absentee in November

can do so, and those who want to vote in person can also do so safely.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam 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.

JUSTICE IN POLICING ACT AND HEROES ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, as protests over the death of George Floyd continue, House and Senate Democrats came together yesterday to unveil sweeping reforms to our Nation's police departments.

The Justice in Policing Act was not only a response to the recent protests but a reflection of years of failed efforts to root out injustice and racial bias in our law enforcement. The bill would ban the use of choke holds and other tactics that have left Black Americans dead. It would limit the transfer of military weaponry and equipment to police departments. It would change the legal standard to make it easier to hold police accountable for misconduct when they use

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

S2771

deadly force on American citizens, and through increased data and transparency, as well as important modifications to training and practices, it would help prevent police misconduct in the first place.

This is a very strong bill, and rightly so. I give tremendous credit to Senators BOOKER, HARRIS, and so many others who contributed, as well as the Black Caucus, led by KAREN BASS and Chairman NADLER of the Judiciary. They put together a very strong bill. The reason is simple. The moment does not call for half measures.

Hundreds of thousands of American protesters are not asking us to chip away around the edges. They want bold reform and meaningful changes to assist them in something that all too often delivers unequal justice for too many Black Americans, and that has existed that way for too, too long. Well, that kind of bold reform and meaningful change is what the Justice in Policing Act will deliver—meaningful change. Democrats are going to fight very, very hard to make this proposal a reality.

Now, of course, in the Senate, it is ultimately up to Leader McConnell to decide what proposals, if any, come to the Senate floor. That is his prerogative as majority leader. But for 2 weeks, Leader McConnell has refused to respond to my requests for the Senate to consider a police reform bill before July 4, the end of the current work period. I have heard the Republican leader speak to the frustrations that have swept the Nation. I trust he is aware of the many abuses that have been allowed to persist unchecked in our police departments. Where is Leader McConnell on actually doing something about it?

Of course, there is another crisis at the moment, the COVID pandemic. According to reports in the press, Leader McConnell has told the Republican caucus not to expect another relief bill until late July at the earliest. This is happening even as some States begin loosening restrictions on business and travel. But even as that happens, our economy is hampered by severe Depression-level unemployment. While the number of new cases is falling on the east coast, the number of cases remains steady in much of the country and is increasing in a good number of States.

We are coming to a whole lot of cliffs. States are preparing their budgets in advance of the new fiscal year in July. If they don't get help soon, they may be forced to make severe cuts to public service, and thousands, hundreds of thousands, and even millions will be laid off—hard-working State and local officials whom our communities depend on.

There are other cliffs as well. The 3-month moratorium on eviction expires. Unemployment expires July 31. There are so many cliffs here, and make no mistake about it, COVID is related to racial justice as well. In the HEROES

bill, for instance, hazard workers and frontline workers get extra pay—hazard pay. More than 40 percent of them are minorities. These are the people on our frontlines. Rental assistance for people who might be evicted, a large percentage of minority folks cannot afford to own a home or rent, so we must act on that as well.

So the kind of racial justice we are talking about, the kind of inequality that exists—some of it—a good chunk of it would be relieved if we passed the HEROES Act, COVID 4 bill. Both of these are important to do. Racial justice, civil rights, a global pandemic, and economic disaster—these are not merely issues of the month but of this moment in American history. It is truly a time of historic challenge, and Leader McConnell and the Republican Senate are missing in action. There is no commitment to consider police reform and no urgency to provide our country relief, despite the upcoming cliffs that are going to be soon upon us.

Now there is a full 4 weeks remaining before July 4. I say to Leader McConnell: commit to a police reform bill on the Senate floor. Work with us on another emergency package that can come to the floor as well before July 4. We have waited too long already.

For weeks, we Democrats have had to relentlessly pressure our Republican colleagues to even hold the most routine oversight hearings. The Republican majority on the Homeland Security Committee, in particular, has wasted time these past few weeks trying to smear the family of the President's political opponent instead. Here we have a major crisis—a major crisis on the health front, on the economic front, on the racial justice front, and what are so many of our Republican friends doing? Raising back already discredited conspiracy theories to go after the President's political opponent at a time when Americans are calling for unity and coming together and doing something about our problems. It is a shame.

The Homeland Security Committee will finally, today, conduct a hearing with the FEMA Administrator for the first time in so long. This crisis has been raging for months. More than 8 weeks ago, we passed a \$3 trillion bill. Why is it taking so long to have any oversight at all? Finally, members of the committee will have the opportunity to press administration officials as to why, in the early days of the pandemic, the distribution of PPE and other critical medical supplies was marked by so much confusion, secrecy, incompetence, and delays. In fact, Senators WARREN, BLUMENTHAL, and I formally requested an investigation into Project Airbridge, the name of the Trump administration's opaque medical supply chain management project, which, by most reports, was a failure. Why aren't we looking into why that went wrong, what went wrong, and how we can correct it?

The harsh fact of the matter is this: We have lost too many Americans,

frontline workers, and hospital emergency personnel to this horrible COVID-19 disease. We will never know how many we lost because we weren't better prepared with the necessary protective equipment. The Trump administration's failure should be thoroughly investigated so it does not make the same mistake again if there is a resurgence of the disease.

Meanwhile, America is still waiting for the President to even acknowledge the issues of police violence and racial justice that are driving protests across the country, including across the street from the White House.

The President appears too preoccupied trying to emulate Richard Nixon, of all Presidents, and he doesn't offer even a scintilla of leadership. The President seems too preoccupied with his political precariousness to even try to bring the country together.

As former Defense Secretary Mattis wrote, "Donald Trump is the first president in my lifetime who does not try to unite the American people—does not even pretend to try. Instead, he tries to divide us. We are witnessing the consequences of three years of this deliberate effort. We are witnessing the consequences of three years without mature leadership. We can unite without him . . ."

And do that, we must, as Americans. Those words were not written by some liberal Democrat whom they will call names, cast aspersions on, never discussing the argument. It was written by one of our great military leaders, former Defense Secretary General Mattis.

Every day provides fresh evidence that this country will have to unite in spite of the President, not because of him.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

PROTESTS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, several times now I have praised the peaceful demonstrations protesting racial injustice and the killings of Black Americans. I am grateful that after several harrowing days of looting and riots, law enforcement restored order and helped these peaceful protests be heard.

Notwithstanding the far-left calls to disband the police altogether, I believe most Americans are ready to consider how the memories of Black Americans like George Floyd and Breonna Taylor can move us to continue combating residual racism.

Today, I need to discuss a different pressing problem that concerns Americans' constitutional rights. It is becoming clear to many Americans, including many who appreciate and applaud the recent protests, that our national life during this pandemic has slid toward a double standard.