

You all know what happened next. He spoke about it just a few hours ago, but I think it is important to get on the record just one more time today that he deserves our thanks, and he deserves credit.

Before Senator SCOTT had a chance to write a single word of his bill, some of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle were ready to shut it down. It was stunning. Let me read you a few of these statements.

Someone said they suspect it “is going to be window dressing.” Another said: “It’s so far from being relevant to really the crisis at hand.” Another: “This is not a time for lowest common denominator, watered down reforms.” And then there was another unfortunate comment for which an apology was offered late today, and that apology was accepted. All of this is disappointing. It is hurtful, yes, but disappointing because this is a time when we have to carry on. We have to move forward.

Senator SCOTT announced the introduction of the JUSTICE Act. I am honored to be a cosponsor of that legislation, and I think it is imperative that we move forward with our discussions and our deliberations just as we would with any other bill. This Chamber is going to find a way to move forward with suggestions, but, above all, I urge my colleagues to consider some of the words that have been said. I urge them to take those words to heart, and I urge them to remember what we are fighting for and to stop focusing so hard on whom you have convinced yourself that you should be fighting against.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

POLICING REFORM

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, as everybody knows, this country faces an extraordinary set of crises—crises that are unprecedented in the modern history of our country.

Over the last several weeks, hundreds of thousands of Americans have taken to the streets and courageously demanded an end to police murder and brutality and to urge us all to rethink the nature of policing in America. In the midst of all that, we continue, of course, to suffer from the COVID-19 pandemic, which has taken the lives of over 115,000 Americans and infected over 2 million of our people.

Then, on top of that, we are experiencing the worst economic meltdown since the Great Depression of the 1930s, with over 32 million Americans having lost their jobs in the last 3 months. In the midst of all of that, enough truly is enough.

The U.S. Senate must respond to the pain and the suffering of our constituents. Let us begin work today, not next week, not next month but right now in addressing the unprecedented crises our people are facing. If there is anything that the torture and murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police has taught us, it is that we have to fundamentally rethink the nature of policing in America and reform our broken and racist criminal justice system.

Let us be clear—and I think everybody understands this—the murder of George Floyd is not just an isolated incident. It is the latest in an endless series of police killings of African Americans, including Rayshard Brooks, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Laquan McDonald, Tamir Rice, Alton Sterling, Freddie Gray, Rekia Boyd, Walter Scott, and many, many others.

The American people are rightly demanding justice and an end to police brutality and murder. And we have to hear that cry coming from all across this country, from large cities and small towns, and the Senate must act and act now.

Here is some good news in the midst of a lot of bad news, and that is thanks to a massive grassroots movement, the Senate will finally begin to debate legislation dealing with the police. That is a good thing. The bad news is that the Republican legislation, at least what I have seen this morning, goes nowhere near far enough as to where we need to go.

Now is not the time to think small or respond with superficial, bureaucratic proposals. Now is not the time for more studies. Now is the time to hold racist and corrupt police officers and police departments accountable for their actions. Now is the time to implement far-reaching reforms that would protect people and communities that have suffered police brutality, torture, and murder for far too long. Now is the time to act boldly to protect the First Amendment right to protest.

Let me very briefly describe some of the areas in which I think the Congress should move with regard to police brutality and the whole issue of policing.

First, and maybe most importantly, every police officer in our country must be held accountable, and those found guilty must be punished with the full force of law. That includes officers who stand by while brutal acts take place. Every single killing of a person by police or while in police custody must be investigated by the Department of Justice.

We must create a process by which police departments look like the communities they serve and be part of those communities, not be seen as invading, heavily armed, occupying forces. That is not what police departments should look like. We must, therefore, prohibit the transfer of Department of Defense military equipment to police departments.

Further, we need to abolish qualified immunity so police officers are held

civily liable for abuses. We need to strip Federal funds from departments that violate civil rights. We need to provide funding to States and municipalities to create a civilian core of unarmed first responders to supplement law enforcement.

For too long, we have asked police departments to do things which they are not trained or prepared to do, and we have criminalized societal problems like addiction and homelessness and mental illness, severe problems that exist in every State in the country. But these are not problems that will be solved by incarceration. We are not going to solve the crisis of addiction or homelessness or mental illness by incarceration. We have done that for too long, and it is a failed approach.

We need to make records of police misconduct publicly available so that an officer with a record of misconduct cannot simply move two towns over and start again. We need to require all jurisdictions that receive Federal grant funding to establish independent police conduct review boards that are broadly representative of the community and that have the authority to refer deaths that occur at the hands of police or in police custody to Federal authorities for investigation. We need to amend Federal civil rights laws to allow more effective prosecution of police misconduct by changing the standard from willfulness to recklessness. We need to ban the use of facial recognition technology by the police.

Finally, and certainly not least importantly, we need to legalize marijuana. In the midst of the many crises we face as a country, it is absurd that, under the Federal Controlled Substances Act, marijuana is at schedule 1, along with killer drugs like heroin. State after State have moved to legalize marijuana, and it is time for the Federal Government to do the same. When we talk about police department reform, we must end police officers continuing to arrest, search, or jail the people of our country, predominantly people of color, for using marijuana.

We need to ban the use of rubber bullets, pepper spray, and tear gas on protesters. The right to protest, the right to demonstrate is a fundamental, constitutional right and a right that must be respected.

RACISM

But let us be clear. Police violence is not the only manifestation of the systemic racism that is taking place in America today. Just take a look at what is going on with the COVID-19 pandemic. In recent months, we have seen Black and Brown communities disproportionately ravaged by this virus. We have seen workers, who earn starvation wages, forced to go to work day in and day out in unhealthy workplace environments because, without that paycheck, they and their families would go hungry. These working class families have, with enormous courage, kept our economy and society together in hospitals, in meat-packing plants, in

public transportation, in supermarkets, gas stations, and elsewhere.

These workers—again, disproportionately Black and Brown—have risked infection and death so that the rest of us can continue to get the food that we need, get our medicines, or put gasoline in our car. In the wealthiest country in the history of the world, workers should not have to choose between going hungry on one hand or getting ill or dying on the other.

When we talk about starvation wages in this country, I was happy to hear today that Target has raised its minimum wage for its many, many thousands of workers to \$15 an hour. That is something that I and many others here have long advocated for. This follows a decision 2 years ago by Amazon to raise the minimum wage for their workers to \$15 an hour and the effort in seven States across this country to raise their minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

Now is the time for Walmart—the largest employer in America, owned by the wealthiest family in America—to also raise their minimum wage to \$15 an hour. I should add that the Walton family, the family that owns Walmart, can more than afford to do this because, since Donald Trump has been President, their wealth has increased by about \$75 billion. Let me repeat. Their wealth has increased by about \$75 billion in the last 3-plus years, and they are now worth some \$200 billion as a family. You know what? I think the Walton family can afford to pay their workers \$15 an hour.

By the way, when we talk about racial justice, please understand that about half of Black workers in this country earn less than \$15 an hour.

Further, the House has done the right thing by passing legislation to raise the Federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour. The time is long overdue for the Senate to do the same.

CORONAVIRUS

Despite what we hear from the Trump administration, the COVID-19 pandemic is far from over. In fact, as you may know, nine States today—nine States—hit record highs for new cases in a single day. What we have seen unfold over the last several months and continue to see unfold is an administration that continues to ignore the recommendations from scientists and physicians.

No one doubts anymore, for example, that masks can play an important role in cutting back on the transmission of the virus. We need to utilize the Defense Production Act and manufacture the hundreds of millions of high-quality masks our people and our medical personnel desperately need. As part of the Defense Authorization Act, I will be offering an amendment to do just that. Other countries around the world are sending masks on a regular basis to all of their people. We can and should do exactly the same thing.

Not only do we need to act boldly and aggressively to address this horrific

pandemic that we are experiencing, not only do we need to act boldly to fix a broken and racist criminal justice system, but we need to respond with a fierce sense of urgency to the worst economic crisis in the modern history of our country.

Over the last 3 months, over 30 million Americans have lost their jobs, and because half of our people live paycheck to paycheck, having virtually nothing in savings, many of those people are now facing economic desperation. Today, all across our country, tens of millions of Americans are in danger of going hungry. In Vermont and in States all over America, we are seeing long lines of people in their cars lining up in order to get food that the Federal Government is now supplying.

But it is not just food. Millions of Americans are frightened to death that they will soon be evicted from their apartments or lose their homes to foreclosure. Imagine that. In the middle of an economic meltdown, in the middle of a pandemic, millions of people are in danger of being thrown out onto the streets.

Further, as part of the economic crisis, we are in danger of losing over half the small businesses in this country within the next 6 months—impossible to contemplate. Half of all small businesses in America are threatened with destruction.

I would say to Senator MCCONNELL and the Republican leadership here in the Senate that the American people cannot afford to wait. They need our help now, not a month from now, not 2 months from now. We need to respond vigorously to the enormous economic pain and suffering and anxiety that the American people, today, are experiencing.

What does that mean specifically? It means, among other things, that the Federal Government must guarantee 100 percent of the paychecks and benefits of American workers up to \$90,000 a year through a Paycheck Security Act, which is legislation that I introduced with Senators WARNER, JONES, and BLUMENTHAL. Countries in Europe that have taken this approach have not experienced the skyrocketing levels of unemployment we have seen here in the United States.

As a result of the economic downturn, we know that over 16 million Americans have already lost their health insurance. Further, there are estimates that that number could go as high as 43 million people losing their health insurance, and that is on top of the 87 million Americans who were already uninsured or underinsured before the pandemic.

Responding with a fierce sense of urgency to the economic crisis means that, in the midst of the horrific pandemic, every man, woman, and child in this country must receive the healthcare they need, regardless of their income. That means that Medicare must be empowered to pay all of the healthcare bills of the uninsured

and underinsured until this crisis is over. If this crisis has taught us anything, it has taught us that we are only as safe as the least insured among us.

Responding with a fierce sense of urgency means providing every working-class person in America with a \$2,000 emergency payment each and every month until this crisis is over, so that they can pay the rent, feed their families, and make ends meet. A one-time \$1,200 check does not cut it. An emergency \$2,000 monthly payment will serve also as a major stimulus in reviving the economy.

Responding with a fierce sense of urgency means making sure that no one in America goes hungry, which means that we have got to substantially expand the Meals on Wheels program, the school meals program, and SNAP benefits.

Responding with a fierce sense of urgency means making sure that the Postal Service receives the emergency funding that it desperately needs. If we could bail out large corporations, if we could provide over \$1 trillion in tax breaks to the wealthy and the powerful, please do not tell me that we cannot save and strengthen the Postal Service, an agency of huge importance to our entire economy.

Acting with a fierce sense of urgency means extending the \$600 a week in expanded unemployment benefits that expires in July. Failure to extend these benefits would slash the incomes of millions of Americans by 50, 60 or even 70 percent. You can't do that in the midst of an economic crisis.

Here we are today. We are in the midst of the worst public health crisis in over 100 years, and the Republican Senate is doing nothing about it. We are in the midst of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. People all over this country in every State in America are financially hurting, and the Republican Senate today is doing nothing about that. We continue to see African Americans brutally murdered and tortured by racist police officers, and the Republican Senate leadership proposes a woefully inadequate solution.

Now, I understand that not everyone in America is hurting, not everyone in America needs help from the Senate. While over 32 million Americans have lost jobs during this horrific pandemic, 630 billionaires in America have seen their wealth go up by \$565 billion—amazing, but true. Over the first 3 months of this horrific pandemic, America's top 630 billionaires have seen their wealth go up by \$565 billion—hard to believe.

In other words, at a time of massive income and wealth inequality, which is already today worse than at any time since the 1920s, a horrific situation is becoming much worse. During the last 3 months, while the very, very rich have become much richer, American households have seen their wealth go down by \$6.5 trillion. Billionaires see their wealth increase by over \$600 billion; American households see their