

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

wealth go down by \$6.5 trillion. In the midst of everything else that we are experiencing, we are currently witnessing what is likely the greatest transfer of wealth from the middle class and the poor to the very rich in the modern history of our country.

In the midst of these unprecedented crises, it is time for the Senate to act in an unprecedented way. In every State in this country, our constituents are hurting, and they are calling out for help. Let us hear their cries. Let us hear their pain. Let us act and act now.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

CHINA

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I am here on the floor this evening to talk about China and to talk about how we can have a better relationship with China, one that is fair and equitable.

I am going to talk specifically about some of the investigations and reports that we have worked on here in the U.S. Congress over the past couple of years. I am going to be talking about four specific reports that came out of what is called the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. I chair that subcommittee. It is under the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, and it is a committee that takes these investigations seriously. We do a fair, objective, thorough job. All of our investigations are bipartisan. I am going to talk a little about why these investigations that we have done have led me to the conclusion that we need to do much more here in this country to be able to respond to China and to be able to have the kind of fair and equitable relationship that we should all desire.

A lot of China's critics talk about the fact that China needs to do things differently, and I don't disagree with most of that, but the reality is there is much we can do right here in this country to create a situation in which we do not have the issues that I will talk about tonight—some of the unfair activities that have occurred here in this country. Frankly, I think we have been naive and not properly prepared. I will also talk about some legislation that we are proposing tomorrow morning, which will focus on how to make America more effective at pushing back against a specific threat to our research and our intellectual property.

Our goal is not to have China as an enemy. Our goal is to actually have China as a strategic partner, wherein there is a fair and equitable and sustainable relationship, but it is going to require some changes. Again, I am going to focus tonight on some changes we need to make right here, changes that are within our control.

Our investigations have been thorough—in fact, driven—and our reports have been objective, bipartisan, and eye-opening, and I encourage you to go on the PSI website—psi.gov—and check it out.

Our first report was in February of 2019. It detailed a lack of transparency

and reciprocity, among other concerns, with the Confucius Institutes that China operates here in this country. These Confucius Institutes are at our colleges and universities. Some people are aware of that, but some may not be aware that they are also at our elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. Our reports show how these Confucius Institutes have been a tool to stifle academic freedom where they are located, toeing the Chinese Communist Party line on sensitive issues like Tibet or Taiwan or the Uighurs or Tiananmen Square.

By the way, when I talk about China tonight, I hope people realize I am not talking about the Chinese people. I am talking about the Chinese Government; therefore, I am talking about the Chinese Communist Party. With regard to the Confucius Institutes, for example, which are spread around this country, ultimately, they report to a branch of the Chinese Government that is involved with spreading positive propaganda about China. Ultimately, it is controlled by whom? The Chinese Communist Party.

So I hope the comments I make tonight will not be viewed as comments that are regarding the Chinese people as much as a small group in China, the Chinese Communist Party, that, with regard to the Confucius Institutes and other approaches it has taken to the United States, have led to these issues.

By the way, it is thanks to our report and to the broader scrutiny that followed that we learned about the lack of academic freedom and about the fact that history is being taught a certain way at the Confucius Institutes. By the way, it also pointed out that the Chinese language is taught. It is a good thing to have this intercultural dialogue and the opportunity to learn more about China, but there needs to be, again, an understanding and a history of China that is fair and honest, which does include discussions of what happened in Tiananmen Square or what is happening today with regard to the Uighurs—a minority group in China that is being oppressed.

In the year that followed our scrutiny—so, really, in the last year and a few months—23 of the, roughly, 100 Confucius Institutes on college campuses in America have closed, and others have made some positive changes as to how they operate. So I believe our report made a significant difference in terms of how we relate to the Confucius Institutes.

I said earlier that one of my concerns about the Confucius Institutes was the lack of reciprocity. When our State Department has attempted to set up something comparable on Chinese university campuses, it has been unable to do so. In fact, whereas the Confucius Institute employees and members of the Chinese Government are able to come on our college campuses, we are told that U.S. Government officials and, for that matter, private citizens cannot go on Chinese campuses with-

out having a minder, somebody to be there to monitor what they are doing. Sometimes they are not permitted to go at all, which goes to the lack of reciprocity.

Yet my goal, really, is to, again, talk about what we can do here. I would urge those tonight who are watching and who are connected with a college or a university that still has a Confucius Institute—or a high school or a middle school or an elementary school—to check it out. Check out our report in which we have many instances when the American students who are learning there are not getting the full story. That may not be true in the case of all Confucius Institutes, but I would recommend that you do the research yourself.

Then, in March of 2019, after the Confucius Institute report, our report into the Equifax data breach here in America showed how China had targeted private U.S. companies and stolen the information of millions of Americans. In the Equifax data breach of 2017, which we studied and which is one of the largest in history, the personal information of 147 million Americans was stolen by IP addresses that originated in China. So we should just be aware of that, and we should take precautions and protections and encryptions and security measures here to avoid it. Again, this is about our doing more here in this country to be prepared for the reality of the 21st century.

Then, in November of last year, we released another eye-opening report, this one detailing the rampant theft of U.S. taxpayer-funded research and intellectual property by China by way of its so-called talent recruitment programs—meaning, China systematically finds promising researchers who are doing work on research that China is interested in, and China recruits them. These programs have not been subtle. The Thousand Talents Plan is the most understood of these programs, although there are a couple hundred others. Yet we showed, in studying the Thousand Talents Plan, how this problem has been ongoing for two decades in this country. Through this program, much of what China has taken from our labs and then taken to China has gone directly toward fueling the rise of the Chinese economy and the Chinese military.

Again, this is about China, but it is really about us. How have we let this happen?

Specifically, we found that the Chinese Government has targeted this promising, U.S.-based research and its researchers. Often, this research is funded by U.S. taxpayers. As taxpayers, we spend \$115 million a year on research to places like the National Institutes of Health or to the National Science Foundation or to the Department of Energy for basic science research. It has been a good investment because, through some of these investments, we have discovered cures to particular kinds of cancer and technologies that have helped our military,