

agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 641) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021—Continued

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. 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. HEINRICH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded and to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). Without objection, it is so ordered.

JUSTICE IN POLICING ACT

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, Americans are demanding an end to the persistent racial injustice and violence that inflicts our country.

Protestors have gathered outside of the White House and the Capitol. New Mexicans from our biggest city to our smallest communities are marching for meaningful change.

I have joined these protests in Emancipation Hall, in the streets of Washington, DC, and now I am joining them from the U.S. Senate floor.

The systemic racism being called out is real, and it is all around us all of the time. Within law enforcement, we have seen it in the horrific videos documenting the racist violence that took the lives of Black men and women at the hands of police officers and extrajudicial killers.

As a father raising two sons, my heart aches for the parents whose sons' and daughters' names we now chant loudly in the streets.

It is unacceptable for any American to live in fear of violent encounters when they enter public spaces or retail stores or just go out for a walk. The very fact that painful experiences with law enforcement are ubiquitous among so many in our Nation should be evidence enough that our current model of policing is not working. That is why I am proud to support my colleagues Senator BOOKER and Senator HARRIS to cosponsor the Justice in Policing Act.

This sweeping legislation reforms the police system as Americans across the country demand an end to police violence that is disproportionately targeting communities of color. It would address qualified immunity standards in Federal law which currently stand in the way of police officers being held accountable in court when they violate constitutional rights.

It would improve transparency in police departments by creating a national police misconduct registry, requiring accurate data reporting on misconduct and use-of-force incidents and ensuring problematic officers cannot avoid accountability by simply changing departments.

It would also institute a real national ban on choke holds and other deadly, restrictive airway holds. We have seen this use of lethal force kill George Floyd and Eric Garner before him and earlier this year, in Las Cruces, NM, when a police officer killed Antonio Valenzuela with a vascular neck restraint. While I hope that justice will be served for Mr. Floyd's and Mr. Valenzuela's families, I know that these men should never have died in the first place. This lethal and unnecessary type of force should not be allowed anywhere in America.

The Justice in Policing Act would put an end to the injudicious use of no-knock warrants that led to the murder of Breonna Taylor in Louisville, KY.

In order to prevent future extrajudicial killings like the murder of Ahmaud Arbery earlier this year by vigilantes in Georgia, the Justice in Policing Act would also finally designate lynching as a Federal crime.

The legislation would also make broad improvements in training for police officers. That includes implicit bias training to confront the prejudice that contributes to racial profiling and confrontational treatment of people of color.

We must also make deescalation and crisis intervention techniques standard operating procedures in encounters and make the use of lethal force the absolute last resort.

In my State, we have seen far too many incidents in which police have killed people of color with lethal tactics or responded to New Mexicans experiencing mental illness or addiction with unnecessary force that resulted in death. Nearly a decade ago, the Department of Justice began an investigation into the Albuquerque Police Department after numerous such fatal police encounters.

In 2014, the Department of Justice released its report that cited chronic abuses of civil rights, widespread community distrust, and a pattern of excessive force across the department. For these past 6 years, the Albuquerque Police Department has been under a federally enforced consent decree that has brought much needed changes in hiring, training, and use-of-force policies.

This ongoing process of changing just this one police department's culture is far from complete. Court hearings continue, and a federally appointed monitor continues to oversee the yearslong process of completing all of the reforms in the federally mandated, court-approved settlement agreement.

We have still seen multiple fatal police shootings each year since reforms began. That includes one case from just

this March in which the response to a welfare check on Valente Acosta-Bustillos, a man with documented behavioral health challenges, ended with officers fatally shooting him after he wielded a shovel that he had been using to do yard work.

This is not an isolated incident. The evidence is everywhere that systemic reform is needed for law enforcement, not just in Albuquerque but all across my State and all across this country.

Since the beginning of 2015, since the Nation reeled over the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO, there have been more than 5,000—5,000—fatal police shootings. It pains me to say that in that time period, New Mexico has had the highest rate of these shootings in the entire country on a per capita basis.

While our overall nationwide statistics on deaths in police custody are incomplete—which is a problem in and of itself—the data we do have makes it clear that police in the United States are killing people at a rate much higher than our peer nations.

A review of media-reported, arrest-related deaths in the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that more than 1,300 people died in police custody in the 10 months from June 2015 to March 2016. During that same period, only 13 people in the United Kingdom died in or after being in police custody.

While we are a much larger country, even on a per capita basis, that means that Americans are being killed at a rate of approximately six times higher than in the UK. Many, if not most, of these deaths fall or are deemed "justified" by law enforcement, but I want to say in the strongest possible terms: We can't keep accepting a system that justifies this level of deadly violence.

The House of Representatives demonstrated last week that we can take action to address this system. Answering the calls of Americans all across our country, the House voted to pass the Justice in Policing Act. The Senate needs to do the same because no one should be above the law—no one, including those in law enforcement.

While I believe these last weeks and months of Americans calling for justice have changed many hearts and minds, I am not naive enough to believe the current administration is either willing or capable of bringing the level of change that Americans are demanding.

Unfortunately, in the last 3½ years, President Trump and his Justice Department have either turned a blind eye, excused, or even openly encouraged a more violent police culture.

Starting under Attorney General Jeff Sessions and certainly continuing under Attorney General Bill Barr today, this administration has spent much more time and Department of Justice resources aiding the President's own political battles and implementing even harsher penalties on Americans than on holding police departments accountable for guaranteeing equal justice under the law.

None of this excuses us in the U.S. Senate from our own responsibility to lead. We have a moral obligation, as Senators, to grapple with how we can bring about necessary Federal changes with better Federal policies. That should start with passing the accountability measures, the meaningful improvements to police training, and the bans on excessive lethal force tactics that are in the Justice in Policing Act.

We also need to encourage the changes that will necessarily need to come at the local government level. Advocates are calling on local governments to reassess their budgets and how much they have prioritized policing and prisons over education and housing. They are also calling on their local leaders to reimagine a world where armed police officers are not the responders dispatched to all crisis situations.

Last week, the mayor of Albuquerque, Tim Keller, announced a proposal to create an entirely new public safety department that would dispatch social workers, housing and homelessness specialists, and violence prevention and diversion program experts instead of police officers to homelessness, so-called down-and-out calls, and behavioral health crises.

This is the scale of systemic change that we need to be thinking about and devoting real resources toward implementing in all of our communities. We all need to carefully assess the effectiveness of continuing a status quo in law enforcement that is clearly not keeping all of us safe.

It will not be easy to dismantle the “us versus them” warrior mentality that is so pervasive in far too many of our law enforcement agencies. If you treat the communities that you police like they are war zones, you create a relationship that dehumanizes the very people you are charged to protect, and you fuel more of the very violence and crime that you are supposed to prevent.

Our streets in American communities should never be treated like battlefields. Our local law enforcement officers should not be armed with military-grade equipment or AR-15s or MRAP armored vehicles. They should not be meeting peaceful protesters or demonstrators with teargas, flash grenades, or rubber bullets. Police officers should not be treating any of us—whatever our race and regardless of the reason we are encountering them—as if we are enemy combatants.

This militarized version of policing is simply not the way to keep the peace or create a sense of public safety in our communities. It has created a distrust in police and perpetuated trauma and inequities in communities across our country.

I believe that we must transform this dangerous warrior mentality into a guardian and neighborhood support mentality that looks to serve all members of our communities. We should remember that police officers are supposed to be officers of the peace.

Now, I want to be careful to emphasize that the responsibility for changing this mentality must not fall entirely on the shoulders of our law enforcement officers because we also recognize that our law enforcement officers, too, are being impacted and harmed by this broken system. We, as a society, have asked them to treat the symptoms and respond to the deficiencies that all of us have allowed to persist in education, in healthcare, in addiction treatment, and in housing.

On a daily basis, police officers address the most acute impacts of our not solving those other issues. I would argue that this is because the same wrongheaded “us versus them” warrior mentality that I have been describing has long resided within this very institution and has been baked into our country as a whole.

It is the same warrior mentality that has fueled the Federal Government’s ineffective and racist War on Drugs and War on Crime over the course of the last 50 years. Intentionally or not, these policies helped build what advocates label the “school-to-prison pipeline” and the “New Jim Crow.” “New Jim Crow” may sound harsh, but in my estimation, it is an astonishingly accurate way to describe the unequal society we have created across our entire country.

More than half a century since the marchers in the civil rights movement called on us to create an America where we were all judged by the content of our character rather than the color of our skin, we find ourselves facing the same challenges as 50 years ago, with implicit bias and structural inequities ravaging our communities of color. That is what you get after combining militarized policing with overly harsh sentencing laws, mass incarceration, private prisons, continued institutional racial discrimination, and a decades-long disinvestment in public education, affordable housing, food assistance, addiction treatment, and healthcare resources.

That is the system we are talking about when we talk about systemic racism. It will take more than nice words and kind wishes in a fleeting period of weeks to dismantle that system that has been built up in the 400 years since the first slaves were brought to our shores and in the last 50 years of rapidly growing mass incarceration. The sooner we finally recognize this, the sooner we can try to envision and implement effective, comprehensive reforms on the scale necessary to create institutions that look out for all of us.

Over the last months, as we have all confronted the health and economic crises brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, I have often heard that we need to get back to normal. But that version of normal was not working for all of us.

Rather than hoping to get back to that unequal and unjust normal of before, I would offer this challenge to all of us. We have an opportunity—an opportunity to rebuild our country in the

months and years ahead. Let’s rebuild our country to create an America that includes all of us. Let’s rebuild our country in a way that respects the human dignity of Black lives and provides safety and opportunity to all of us. Let’s rebuild America to become the place we all want it to be: a nation where we see each other as fellow human beings, equally deserving of life and liberty.

There is still so much more hard work ahead of us. Passing the Justice in Policing Act is a first meaningful step on a long path forward.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

FREE SPEECH

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, over the past few months, we have all watched the power that the digital community has to make someone’s passing thought go viral and the power that the digital mob has to make controversial voices completely disappear.

Well, who is the “digital mob” exactly, because right now we are hearing a lot about mob rule. Sometimes it is hard to tell who the mob actually is. Is it the millions of users who swarm social media platforms at the very first hint of a controversy, or is it the professional activists who provoke many of these attacks? They seem to know just when to pitch a thought, a word, or an idea. Could it be the platforms themselves that cave to the pressure and police speech when they don’t agree with that speech?

So let’s drill down on this just a little bit. Today I want to focus on the Googles and the Facebooks of the world because, when it comes down to it, they are the ones that are in the driver’s seat. They are the ones that end up calling the shots.

For years, tech companies have waged a very public war against platform users who speak out against the popular narrative, and the executives charged with defending these calls routinely struggle to explain the arbitrary nature of their content-moderation policies.

Every time moderators remove a post for what is called shocking content or cause a moral panic by placing a warning label on satire, Big Tech asks us to just, oh, write it off: It was a mistake. We really didn’t mean to do it. Move on.

But we haven’t moved on because the platforms themselves have provided plenty of evidence to confirm that Big Tech’s employees bring their bias to the workplace. Bear in mind, all of these employees who are developing the search models—the algorithms that are prioritizing your search, that are mining your data, that are policing

your speech—are bringing their bias and their prejudice to the workplace.

These fears were confirmed back in 2017 when the New York Times reported that a Twitter employee intentionally—intentionally—deleted President Trump's account, not because of any violation but because the employee had an ax to grind. They did not like President Donald Trump.

This May, the Wall Street Journal revealed that Facebook set up a multistep approval process for changes to its "integrity ranking initiative" due to "reasonable concerns that overzealous engineers might let their politics influence the platform."

Think about that. Facebook set up a multistep approval process for changes to its integrity ranking initiative due to reasonable concerns that overzealous engineers might let their politics influence the platform. Do you think? Of course they were. Of course they were. The problem: They have been doing it all along and trying to say it is just your imagination when, actually, it is not.

I don't think anyone anticipated that digital platforms would become powerful enough to act as judge and jury over what information Americans should be allowed to access online. Congress certainly didn't anticipate it when drafting legislation to keep those companies in check. But they have overstepped their bounds. They continue to misbehave until we come along and slap their hand, and then they try to act as if they are going to solve their problems, which leads us to our current debate over section 230 reform.

Big Tech relies on section 230 of the Communications Decency Act to shield themselves from content-based litigation. The statute also acts as a sword that platforms can engage to remove content they judge to be obscene, violent, harassing, or otherwise objectionable.

In the section 230 world, then, the users—the users—are responsible for what they post, not the platform that hosts the content.

The platforms, however, have the right to set their own content guidelines within limits without being sued. That sounds reasonable. Section 230 is important, specifically, because of what it doesn't do. It does not force companies to choose between moderating every piece of content they host and letting their websites turn into the Wild West.

But, as I said, no legislation could have anticipated our current digital landscape. Big Tech companies like Google and Facebook now have the power to ruin content creators who step out of line. And it is their line. Even if those creators manage to stay on the right side of the moderators, they know their online presence—and many times this is also their livelihood—lives or dies at the hands of employees given the near-impossible task of remaining completely neutral 100

percent of the time. The dynamic between users and platforms has changed. And now, Congress must change the law that guides that dynamic.

Here is the problem. This country has become so polarized, I am not sure Big Tech understands what a healthy dynamic would actually look like. No longer do their choices seem to make sense to many Americans. The compulsion to flag and report and threaten has become a reflex. When the digital mob chooses to attack on any given day, then, their choices are going to change with every news cycle. As we have seen, this heavily influences how Big Tech chooses to police content on their platforms.

You may have been saying or posting something for years—no problem. But then one day, that digital mob—because of the news cycle—will choose to attack you.

Conservatives have suffered under this mob rule. There is no denying it. There is no denying that there is a digital mob. But reform can happen without overextending the heavy hand of Federal regulation over the entire tech industry. As someone who knows what it feels like to be censored, I get it. I absolutely understand why we need these reforms and why Congress needs to act now, this year. But I also know that the more you rely on threats to motivate good corporate behavior, the more likely you will be to find reasons to follow through on them.

We must find stronger ways to rein in tech firms seeking to become the new speech police. We know for a fact that Big Tech's biases are the problem. But when did more government become the solution? We already tried that approach. We called it the fairness doctrine. Guess what. It did not work. Instead of encouraging free and fair discourse, powerful parties use those rigid standards as leverage to control speech.

And, I will tell you, I can think of few things more dangerous than allowing lawmakers and bureaucrats to weaponize the full force of the Federal Government against the private exchange of information.

What we do know is this. Big Tech's era of self-regulation is over. It no longer works. Big Tech is not a group of infant companies. They are referred to as Big Tech because they have grown.

This self-regulation is over. It is time for Congress to take an action. But punitive, one-size-fits-all standards will put these tech companies in a straitjacket. It would hamper innovation, and, eventually, it would collapse the industry.

Instead, we should set up and give Big Tech guidance that will encourage growth and will encourage innovation, while also making it abundantly clear that Congress will not allow Big Tech's political bias to determine what information Americans are allowed to access online. We will not allow Big Tech and their political bias to determine

how information is prioritized through your search engine. We are not going to allow Big Tech and their political bias to data-mine every email, every text, and every search, and then use that to access your information online.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the previously referenced articles from the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[Nov. 2, 2017]

ROGUE TWITTER EMPLOYEE BRIEFLY SHUTS
DOWN TRUMP'S ACCOUNT
(By Maggie Astor)

This is the way the world ends: not with a bang but a deleted Twitter account.

At least, so it appeared for 11 minutes Thursday evening, when visitors to President Trump's personal account, @realDonaldTrump, were informed that there was no such thing.

The error message on some devices was even more dire: "@realDonaldTrump does not exist."

Amid a presidency that has seemed, at times, to be conducted primarily in 140-character pieces, this was a seismic event—and what was left of Twitter erupted. It was a raucous, modern-day town-square gathering of the sort not seen since . . . well, since five months ago, when Mr. Trump coined a new word in the middle of the night.

It was just before 7 p.m. Thursday, and the internet was in an uproar. Time stopped. The sun rose in the west and set in the east. What, the watchers wondered, was going on? Had Twitter closed the president's account? Had a White House aide snatched the phone from Mr. Trump's tweeting hands? Had Robert Mueller chosen this moment to rifle through the president's direct messages? Had Mr. Trump himself—could it be?—decided he'd had enough of his favorite medium?

The answer, revealed three hours later, was something straight out of "Office Space." After saying in an initial statement that the account had been "inadvertently deactivated due to human error by a Twitter employee," Twitter announced that a rogue customer support worker had done it on his or her last day at the company.

Many of Mr. Trump's supporters were incensed, with some saying the incident showed a disregard for free speech. His opponents, on the other hand, were gleeful. "America: Hire this person," former Representative John Dingell of Michigan tweeted.

Even before Twitter confirmed that the deactivation had been deliberate, some were speculating about it.

In the tech world, the statement raised more questions than it answered. Twitter has never said how many employees have access to Mr. Trump's account, or described the safeguards it has in place for its highest-profile users. And the company is already under the microscope in Washington, where Congress is investigating how technology giants might have shaped the outcome of the 2016 presidential election.

Mr. Trump was locked out for just 11 minutes, and then, just as suddenly, he was back. Those watching found themselves unscathed—though some could not quite shake a sense of dread.

The president himself got back to business as if nothing had happened, tweeting at 8:05 p.m.: "Great Tax Cut rollout today. The lobbyists are storming Capital Hill, but the Republicans will hold strong and do what is

right for America!" He then fired off four more tweets, denouncing the Democratic National Committee and James B. Comey before inviting viewers to watch his interview with Laura Ingraham on Fox News.

And so, back in the offices and homes of the nation, the people of Twitter could only sit back and reflect.

For better or for worse, the world seemed predictable again, and one user made his prediction bold. "Man," Alex Zalben wrote, "in like nine months there's gonna be a ton of Trump Twitter blackout babies."

[May 26, 2020]

FACEBOOK EXECUTIVES SHUT DOWN EFFORTS TO MAKE THE SITE LESS DIVISIVE

(By Jeff Horwitz and Deepa Seetharaman)

A Facebook Inc. FB 0.35% team had a blunt message for senior executives. The company's algorithms weren't bringing people together. They were driving people apart.

"Our algorithms exploit the human brain's attraction to divisiveness," read a slide from a 2018 presentation. "If left unchecked," it warned, Facebook would feed users "more and more divisive content in an effort to gain user attention & increase time on the platform."

That presentation went to the heart of a question dogging Facebook almost since its founding: Does its platform aggravate polarization and tribal behavior?

The answer it found, in some cases, was yes.

Facebook had kicked off an internal effort to understand how its platform shaped user behavior and how the company might address potential harms. Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg had in public and private expressed concern about "sensationalism and polarization."

But in the end, Facebook's interest was fleeting. Mr. Zuckerberg and other senior executives largely shelved the basic research, according to previously unreported internal documents and people familiar with the effort, and weakened or blocked efforts to apply its conclusions to Facebook products.

Facebook policy chief Joel Kaplan, who played a central role in vetting—proposed changes, argued at the time that efforts to make conversations on the platform more civil were "paternalistic," said people familiar with his comments.

Another concern, they and others said, was that some proposed changes would have disproportionately affected conservative users and publishers, at a time when the company faced accusations from the right of political bias.

Facebook revealed few details about the effort and has divulged little about what became of it. In 2020, the questions the effort sought to address are even more acute, as a charged presidential election looms and Facebook has been a conduit for conspiracy theories and partisan sparring about the coronavirus pandemic.

In essence, Facebook is under fire for making the world more divided. Many of its own experts appeared to agree—and to believe Facebook could mitigate many of the problems. The company chose not to.

Mr. Kaplan in a recent interview said he and other executives had approved certain changes meant to improve civic discussion. In other cases where proposals were blocked, he said, he was trying to "instill some discipline, rigor and responsibility into the process" as he vetted the effectiveness and potential unintended consequences of changes to how the platform operated.

Internally, the vetting process earned a nickname: "Eat Your Veggies."

Americans were drifting apart on fundamental societal issues well before the cre-

ation of social media, decades of Pew Research Center surveys have shown. But 60% of Americans think the country's biggest tech companies are helping further divide the country, while only 11% believe they are uniting it, according to a Gallup-Knight survey in March.

At Facebook, "There was this soul-searching period after 2016 that seemed to me this period of really sincere, 'Oh man, what if we really did mess up the world?'" said Eli Pariser, co-director of Civic Signals, a project that aims to build healthier digital spaces, and who has spoken to Facebook officials about polarization.

Mr. Pariser said that started to change after March 2018, when Facebook got in hot water after disclosing that Cambridge Analytica, the political-analytics startup, improperly obtained Facebook data about tens of millions of people. The shift has gained momentum since, he said: "The internal pendulum swung really hard to 'the media hates us no matter what we do, so let's just batten down the hatches.'"

In a sign of how far the company has moved, Mr. Zuckerberg in January said he would stand up "against those who say that new types of communities forming on social media are dividing us." People who have heard him speak privately said he argues social media bears little responsibility for polarization.

He argues the platform is in fact a guardian of free speech, even when the content is objectionable—a position that drove Facebook's decision not to fact-check political advertising ahead of the 2020 election.

INTEGRITY TEAMS

Facebook launched its research on divisive content and behavior at a moment when it was grappling with whether its mission to "connect the world" was good for society.

Fixing the polarization problem would be difficult, requiring Facebook to rethink some of its core products. Most notably, the project forced Facebook to consider how it prioritized "user engagement"—a metric involving time spent, likes, shares and comments that for years had been the lodestar of its system.

Championed by Chris Cox, Facebook's chief product officer at the time and a top deputy to Mr. Zuckerberg, the work was carried out over much of 2017 and 2018 by engineers and researchers assigned to a cross-jurisdictional task force dubbed "Common Ground" and employees in newly created "Integrity Teams" embedded around the company.

Even before the teams' 2017 creation, Facebook researchers had found signs of trouble. A 2016 presentation that names as author a Facebook researcher and sociologist, Monica Lee, found extremist content thriving in more than one-third of large German political groups on the platform. Swamped with racist, conspiracy-minded and pro-Russian content, the groups were disproportionately influenced by a subset of hyperactive users, the presentation notes. Most of them were private or secret.

The high number of extremist groups was concerning, the presentation says. Worse was Facebook's realization that its algorithms were responsible for their growth. The 2016 presentation states that "64% of all extremist group joins are due to our recommendation tools" and that most of the activity came from the platform's "Groups You Should Join" and "Discover" algorithms: "Our recommendation systems grow the problem."

Ms. Lee, who remains at Facebook, didn't respond to inquiries. Facebook declined to respond to questions about how it addressed the problem in the presentation, which other

employees said weren't unique to Germany or the Groups product. In a presentation at an international security conference in February, Mr. Zuckerberg said the company tries not to recommend groups that break its rules or are polarizing.

"We've learned a lot since 2016 and are not the same company today," a Facebook spokeswoman said. "We've built a robust integrity team, strengthened our policies and practices to limit harmful content, and used research to understand our platform's impact on society so we continue to improve." Facebook in February announced \$2 million in funding for independent research proposals on polarization.

The Common Ground team sought to tackle the polarization problem directly, said people familiar with the team. Data scientists involved with the effort found some interest groups—often hobby-based groups with no explicit ideological alignment—brought people from different backgrounds together constructively. Other groups appeared to incubate impulses to fight, spread falsehoods or demonize a population of outsiders.

In keeping with Facebook's commitment to neutrality, the teams decided Facebook shouldn't police people's opinions, stop conflict on the platform, or prevent people from forming communities. The vilification of one's opponents was the problem, according to one internal document from the team.

"We're explicitly not going to build products that attempt to change people's beliefs," one 2018 document states. "We're focused on products that increase empathy, understanding, and humanization of the 'other side.'"

HOT-BUTTON ISSUES

One proposal sought to salvage conversations in groups derailed by hot-button issues, according to the people familiar with the team and internal documents. If two members of a Facebook group devoted to parenting fought about vaccinations, the moderators could establish a temporary subgroup to host the argument or limit the frequency of posting on the topic to avoid a public flame war.

Another idea, documents show, was to tweak recommendation algorithms to suggest a wider range of Facebook groups than people would ordinarily encounter.

Building these features and combating polarization might come at a cost of lower engagement, the Common Ground team warned in a mid-2018 document, describing some of its own proposals as "antigrowth" and requiring Facebook to "take a moral stance."

Taking action would require Facebook to form partnerships with academics and nonprofits to give credibility to changes affecting public conversation, the document says. This was becoming difficult as the company slogged through controversies after the 2016 presidential election.

"People don't trust us," said a presentation created in the summer of 2018.

The engineers and data scientists on Facebook's Integrity Teams—chief among them, scientists who worked on newsfeed, the stream of posts and photos that greet users when they visit Facebook—arrived at the polarization problem indirectly, according to people familiar with the teams. Asked to combat fake news, spam, clickbait and inauthentic users, the employees looked for ways to diminish the reach of such ills. One early discovery: Bad behavior came disproportionately from a small pool of hyperpartisan users.

A second finding in the U.S. saw a larger infrastructure of accounts and publishers on the far right than on the far left. Outside observers were documenting the same phenomenon. The gap meant even seemingly

apolitical actions such as reducing the spread of clickbait headlines—along the lines of “You Won’t Believe What Happened Next”—affected conservative speech more than liberal content in aggregate.

That was a tough sell to Mr. Kaplan, said people who heard him discuss Common Ground and Integrity proposals. A former deputy chief of staff to George W. Bush, Mr. Kaplan became more involved in content-ranking decisions after 2016 allegations Facebook had suppressed trending news stories from conservative outlets. An internal review didn’t substantiate the claims of bias, Facebook’s then-general counsel Colin Stretch told Congress, but the damage to Facebook’s reputation among conservatives had been done.

Every significant new integrity-ranking initiative had to seek the approval of not just engineering managers but also representatives of the public policy, legal, marketing and public-relations departments.

Lindsey Shepard, a former Facebook product-marketing director who helped set up the Eat Your Veggies process, said it arose from what she believed were reasonable concerns that overzealous engineers might let their politics influence the platform.

“Engineers that were used to having autonomy maybe over-rotated a bit” after the 2016 election to address Facebook’s perceived flaws, she said. The meetings helped keep that in check. “At the end of the day, if we didn’t reach consensus, we’d frame up the different points of view, and then they’d be raised up to Mark.”

SCUTTLED PROJECTS

Disapproval from Mr. Kaplan’s team or Facebook’s communications department could scuttle a project, said people familiar with the effort. Negative policy-team reviews killed efforts to build a classification system for hyperpolarized content. Likewise, the Eat Your Veggies process shut down efforts to suppress clickbait about politics more than on other topics.

Initiatives that survived were often weakened. Mr. Cox wooed Carlos Gomez Uribe, former head of Netflix Inc.’s recommendation system, to lead the newsfeed Integrity Team in January 2017. Within a few months, Mr. Uribe began pushing to reduce the outside impact hyperactive users had.

Under Facebook’s engagement-based metrics, a user who likes, shares or comments on 1,500 pieces of content has more influence on the platform and its algorithms than one who interacts with just 15 posts, allowing “super-sharers” to drown out less-active users. Accounts with hyperactive engagement were far more partisan on average than normal Facebook users, and they were more likely to behave suspiciously, sometimes appearing on the platform as much as 20 hours a day and engaging in spam-like behavior. The behavior suggested some were either people working in shifts or bots.

One proposal Mr. Uribe’s team championed, called “Sparing Sharing,” would have reduced the spread of content disproportionately favored by hyperactive users, according to people familiar with it. Its effects would be heaviest on content favored by users on the far right and left. Middle-of-the-road users would gain influence.

Mr. Uribe called it “the happy face,” said some of the people. Facebook’s data scientists believed it could bolster the platform’s defenses against spam and coordinated manipulation efforts of the sort Russia undertook during the 2016 election.

Mr. Kaplan and other senior Facebook executives pushed back on the grounds it might harm a hypothetical Girl Scout troop, said people familiar with his comments. Suppose, Mr. Kaplan asked them, that the girls

became Facebook super-sharers to promote cookies? Mitigating the reach of the platform’s most dedicated users would unfairly thwart them, he said.

Mr. Kaplan in the recent interview said he didn’t remember raising the Girl Scout example but was concerned about the effect on publishers who happened to have enthusiastic followings.

The debate got kicked up to Mr. Zuckerberg, who heard out both sides in a short meeting, said people briefed on it. His response: Do it, but cut the weighting by 80%. Mr. Zuckerberg also signaled he was losing interest in the effort to recalibrate the platform in the name of social good, they said, asking that they not bring him something like that again.

Mr. Uribe left Facebook and the tech industry within the year. He declined to discuss his work at Facebook in detail but confirmed his advocacy for the Sparing Sharing proposal. He said he left Facebook because of his frustration with company executives and their narrow focus on how integrity changes would affect American politics. While proposals like his did disproportionately affect conservatives in the U.S., he said, in other countries the opposite was true.

Other projects met Sparing Sharing’s fate: weakened, not killed. Partial victories included efforts to promote news stories garnering engagement from a broad user base, not just partisans, and penalties for publishers that repeatedly shared false news or directed users to ad-choked pages.

The tug of war was resolved in part by the growing furor over the Cambridge Analytica scandal. In a September 2018 reorganization of Facebook’s newsfeed team, managers told employees the company’s priorities were shifting “away from societal good to individual value,” said people present for the discussion. If users wanted to routinely view or post hostile content about groups they didn’t like, Facebook wouldn’t suppress it if the content didn’t specifically violate the company’s rules.

Mr. Cox left the company several months later after disagreements regarding Facebook’s pivot toward private encrypted messaging. He hadn’t won most fights he had engaged in on integrity ranking and Common Ground product changes, people involved in the effort said, and his departure left the remaining staffers working on such projects without a high-level advocate.

The Common Ground team disbanded. The Integrity Teams still exist, though many senior staffers left the company or headed to Facebook’s Instagram platform.

Mr. Zuckerberg announced in 2019 that Facebook would take down content violating specific standards but where possible take a hands-off approach to policing material not clearly violating its standards.

“You can’t impose tolerance top-down,” he said in an October speech at Georgetown University. “It has to come from people opening up, sharing experiences, and developing a shared story for society that we all feel we’re a part of. That’s how we make progress together.”

END CHILD EXPLOITATION ACT

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I want to take a moment to thank Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman LINDSEY GRAHAM for adding the bipartisan and critically important END Exploitation Act to the EARN It Act, which is set for markup on Thursday.

This bill, which I introduced with Senator CORTEZ MASTO, would lengthen evidence preservation time in online child exploitation cases and assist law enforcement in prosecuting child pred-

ators. Once passed, the law will double the length of time we require tech firms like Facebook and Snapchat to preserve evidence and reports of online child exploitation.

In 2018, tech companies reported over 45 million—45 million—photos and videos of children being sexually abused. Unfortunately, that was double the number of reports in 2017. This legislation will give the police more time to investigate these horrific crimes. It will put child predators in jail where they belong.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill 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 (Mrs. BLACKBURN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 3685

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, today is July 1. For millions of Americans, the rent is due. Utility bills don’t stop, either. But too many New York families and too many American families will be unable to make the payments amid the pandemic that has already hurt my city and its people.

The first of the month should not be the end of the financial line for working families, and that is why we are here. We must continue to put real pressure on Leader MCCONNELL to pass the COVID 4 legislation that would include critical rent relief to families who desperately need the help.

Our working families—many of color and other minority groups—are in desperate need of this basic assistance so they can continue working, feeding their families, making ends meet. That is our push today.

Enact the Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act—which has a \$100 billion promise to renters across the country—and the promise is real help during the real and unprecedented crisis.

Let me give you some background. The Heroes Act would authorize \$100 billion for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program led by SHERRON BROWN, the ranking member of the Banking and Housing Committee, who has just done a great job letting people know the crisis and now acting on it. What it does is it helps families and individuals pay their rent and utility bills and remain in their homes during and after the COVID-19 crisis.

The bill was already included in the House-passed and bipartisan Heroes Act, but, unfortunately, once again—as he does with so many other important issues—Senate Majority Leader MITCH MCCONNELL has refused to bring it to the floor, so Senator BROWN has come to ask the unanimous consent.

Without basic assistance, even those renters who are currently shielded by temporary Federal and local eviction

bans may still face eviction. Let me tell you, once someone is evicted and homeless, they regress. The kids can't go to school. Healthcare becomes even more remote. Getting to a job through public transportation is so difficult.

This actually is a stitch in time that saves nine. If people can stay in their homes because they can't pay the rent through no fault of their own, they have a better chance of reestablishing their lives and maybe even climbing up that American ladder. If they are kicked out of their homes because they can't pay the rent, through no fault of their own, it is very, very difficult. They are in a deep, deep hole.

We must, must do something for them. Senator BROWN, with his persistence and passion, has put together the right plan. We talk about numbers, sure, but behind those numbers are the faces of countless New Yorkers we see each and every day on mass transit, walking the streets, working among us. These folks are fine, hard-working people. All they want is a little dignity in their lives and ability to keep a roof over their heads. They need help now more than ever.

We need action on this now, and that is the message to our friends on the other side of the aisle.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I thank the Democratic leader.

I have a prepared speech I want to make, but I heard Senator SCHUMER talk about this. These are human beings. We in this body are Senators. We go back and forth to our States. We have the privilege of working pretty safe. We are paid. We aren't exposed to the virus all that much, mostly because we are pretty careful because we can be, and we have jobs where we can be.

Think about this. You work in a grocery store, and you are exposed to the coronavirus. A grocery store worker told me one day: They tell me I am essential, but I feel expendable because I am not very safe in this job, and they don't pay me much.

What if she gets laid off—that wouldn't happen so much in a grocery store because they are hiring—but in another job, they get laid off. They have to worry about potential eviction. Their unemployment will run out at the end of July. We have done nothing to help them.

What happens with all these people who get evicted? They end up on the streets or they go to homeless shelters that are too crowded. They go to live on their cousin's couch in the basement. What are the chances of them getting coronavirus? These are human beings in New York and Ohio and Idaho and Tennessee and all over. I can't believe we are not about to do something about this.

I thank the leader for his involvement on this issue that is so important. We are in the middle of a crisis,

unlike anything any of us have ever lived through. That goes without saying. Every single day we hear about hundreds and hundreds more Americans dying.

Back in March, South Korea had 90 cases. We had 90 cases. The capital of South Korea is 800 miles from Wuhan where this virus started. They have had fewer than 300 people die. We have had 120,000. They don't have better doctors. They don't have better public health. They don't have better medical scientists. They have better leaders than we do, obviously. Their unemployment rate is under 4 percent and fewer than 300 people have died. The people who have died are our sisters, our brothers, our parents, our friends, and neighbors.

The President of the United States and the Republican leader down the hall—who occasionally goes in and out of his office—have stopped pretending to care. They rarely talk about the coronavirus. The President rarely extends any sympathy to our brothers and our sisters and our parents and our friends and our neighbors who have been sick and who have died. It is not the President's rich friends who are dying; it is our grandparents. They are the people in nursing homes. They are disproportionately the Black and Brown workers who caught the virus on the job.

The Trump administration and Senator MCCONNELL, essentially, have just given up. We can't. We have to do our jobs. We need to show leadership where the President has failed and where the majority leader—the most powerful person in this body, the top elected official in the Senate, says: "I see no urgency." He sees no urgency because he is not out talking to people who are about to be foreclosed on or evicted from their home. Imagine being evicted in the middle of a pandemic. Imagine the fear and anxiety a family have when they are in that position.

We need to fight the health crisis and economic crisis. We can't do one without the other. Millions of Americans are in danger of being evicted and having their homes foreclosed on. The last thing we need to do is turn them out on the streets.

We have a housing crisis. Many know this. Senator MENENDEZ has joined us, who is one of the best advocates for these issues of anybody in the Senate. We knew there was a housing crisis before the coronavirus set.

We know that one-fourth of renters in this country, before the coronavirus, paid more than half of their income in housing. One thing happens in their life, just one thing. Their car breaks down. Their child gets sick. They get in a car accident, and they are out of work for a week. They get evicted. They don't have any kind of margin there.

We know that professions we are recognizing as essential don't pay enough to afford housing. We are seeing millions of people have these emergencies.

The ones they had before, many people have now. Millions have them all at once. They face impossible choices between rent and groceries, or prescriptions, or draining their savings, or going to a payday lender, and you never go to a payday lender once. You keep going back and back, and the interest you pay is more than you originally borrowed. In essence, they have no choice at all. It is not a choice between prescriptions and groceries and draining their savings. It is no choice at all. Far too often, it ends up being eviction.

In the CARES Act, we passed emergency expansion of unemployment insurance. I appreciate my friend Senator CRAPO, chairman of this committee, who supported that and so much of what is in this package. We provided funding for the most immediate needs of housing and organizations that put a temporary moratorium on evictions and foreclosures for some—not all renters and not nearly all homeowners. It is an important step but not enough.

We face two huge cliffs. This is July 1. On July 31, the \$600 a month that has kept people in their homes and kept food on their table and kept clothes on the backs of their kids—that \$600 a month ends come July 31. At the end, in many cases, the eviction moratorium ends.

The President and Leader MCCONNELL don't seem to notice. They don't seem to care. For all those renters who have been protected, back rent will suddenly be due. You may have gotten a moratorium on your rent for 3 months, but now you will owe for 4 months. The same goes for millions who aren't protected under the CARES Act but got relief from a temporary State or local moratorium or because their eviction courts were closed in many States.

With tens of millions of people filing for unemployment, the President is still refusing to lead and do something about this virus to get it under control. We know people still need help. They still need help paying the rent. They still need help making mortgage payments. They still need help protecting themselves from evictions and foreclosures. Forty percent of Black and Latinx renters report they are unlikely able to make their next payment—40 percent. It is not because they are not working hard. They got laid off and are in low-wage jobs.

That is why Senator MENENDEZ and I and Senator SCHUMER and others cosponsored and introduced—39 of my fellow colleagues—introduced the Emergency Rental Assistance Stabilization Act. It would provide \$100 billion for emergency rental assistance, including help with missed rent and utility bills. It already passed the House twice.

It is included in the Heroes Act that they passed a month ago, but it is sitting on the majority leader's desk because he doesn't seem to notice. For millions of families, the bills keep

coming and the clock keeps ticking and the stress keeps mounting.

Now a second round of layoffs are starting because this President refuses to lead and get this virus under control.

Two weeks ago, they reopened eviction courts in Columbus. They opened the Convention Center to process evictions. Think of the heartache in that building. People go to court and find out they are evicted. The judge brings down a gavel, and their lives turn upside down. Reflect on that. Tens of millions of people lose their jobs. We are not using arenas to play basketball or to play indoor soccer. We are not doing that now. We are using arenas as eviction courts.

Before this pandemic, President Trump and his wealthy Cabinet Members didn't realize or didn't care that behind the rosy stock market data this economy was already broken for millions of workers—especially for Black and Brown workers for whom it never worked to begin. Now the Trump administration—sort of like what happened with the Russians paying to kill American troops—the administration either doesn't know it or doesn't care that the bottom is falling out for these families.

Without emergency rental assistance, these families find themselves on the street with their lives turned upside down in the middle of a pandemic.

People are tired of the lack of action and lack of accountability. They are tired of being betrayed by a leader who is supposed to look out for them. They are tired of feeling like no one is on their side. We are the greatest country on the Earth, and we should act like it.

American people should not always have to fend for themselves because we have an indifferent majority leader and a President who doesn't know or doesn't care in the middle of this once-in-a-generation crisis.

It is time to step up. It is time to lead. It is time to think about what it would be like to face an eviction, knowing your two small children and you don't know where you are going to live. It is probably going to be in a homeless shelter or in a cousin's basement. You know your chances of getting infected with the coronavirus go up. Just think about those people when we make these decisions.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 3685, the Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act of 2020. I ask that the bill be considered read three times and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAPO. Madam President, reserving the right to object.

To date, Congress has appropriated nearly \$3 trillion to protect, strength-

en, and support Americans in all walks of life, to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and to stabilize the infrastructure and our economic system.

Senator BROWN and I worked on a big part of that package together on a team which was put together by Senator MCCONNELL to try to make sure we addressed, in a bipartisan fashion, the way to respond to this pandemic.

The CARES Act has been central to the effort and includes measures to help families directly, to provide aid to small businesses, to assist those in the medical field and on the frontlines of our response effort, and to stabilize our markets.

Soon after, Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act—or CARES Act—codifying and extending these protections and providing financial relief to renters—yes, to renters.

Title IV of the CARES Act contains three housing provisions. Section 4022 imposes a 60-day eviction and foreclosure moratorium for single-family borrowers with federally backed mortgage loans. It allows struggling homeowners 1 year of loan forbearance.

Section 4023 extends similar relief to multifamily borrowers who are current on their mortgage payments. They can request up to 90-days forbearance as long as they do not evict the tenant or charge late fees during the pandemic.

Section 4024 imposes a 120-day moratorium on evictions, fees, and penalties. That moratorium will not expire until August 31.

As with much of the CARES Act, the provisions dealing with stabilizing our economy and helping to support and sustain workers, small business owners, homeowners, and home renters are all playing out right now as we speak.

Yet the real objection here is that Senator MCCONNELL and the Republicans have said we want to work on looking at the next package of support, but we want to see how this one is playing out first and identify those places where we need to target the relief most.

The objection is that there is a desire, once again, to go rapidly into passing the House bill and not having regular order follow in the Senate as we work to approach this issue as the existing CARES Act plays out.

All of our housing agencies have extended this eviction and foreclosure moratorium and are working to help address the issues relating to tenants. HUD has expanded issuer assistance to include Pass-Through Assistance Program support, which allows servicers to apply for assistance in meeting principal and interest payments, and the FHFA has announced that no mortgage servicer will be responsible for advancing more than 4 months of missed principal and interest payments on a loan. All of these things have been done to stabilize the housing markets and to assist low-income home ownership and home construction and assistance.

While I am open to looking at the question of whether additional assist-

ance is needed for renters, homeowners, and others in our society, I am not willing to simply bypass the process in the Senate—ignore the considerations that our leadership has called for as we look to see how our current support programs are playing out—and simply jam the House bill through the Senate without having any debate or process.

This was the biggest rescue package in the history of Congress, and we included a variety of oversight mechanisms in the legislation to ensure that the dollars and programs associated with it reached their intended marks. Many of the provisions in the CARES Act and those appropriated dollars are still making their way to these individuals and families and businesses and markets across the country.

So we must work together to address these critical issues rather than simply try to jam one party's or one side of this Congress's approach to the solution without going through regular order.

I would say the arguments that are being made that we or any of us are somehow turning a blind eye to the problems that exist could not be further from the truth. As I said earlier, the reality is that we passed the largest relief program in the history of this country. We are working to provide liquidity, as well as actual dollar relief, in the amount of trillions of dollars, and those programs are still playing out.

We need to work together rather than, by unanimous consent request after unanimous consent request after unanimous consent request, try to jam down one side's approach without looking to find the cooperative solutions that I know we can.

Like I said, I am open to working on these very issues, but the way to do it is not to come to the floor with a unanimous consent request—take it or leave it. We need to let proper, regular working order operate in the Senate, and we have time to do so.

For that reason, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, before turning to Senators MENENDEZ, CORTEZ MASTO, WYDEN, KLOBUCHAR, REED, SCHATZ, and VAN HOLLEN, who all want to speak, I appreciate the comments from my friend—and he really is my friend—from Idaho. We work well together.

We want to do regular order. This last bill was passed in March. Then there was April, May, June. Now we are in July. It is not a question of regular order. We would love to sit down with Senator MCCONNELL and start negotiating as to what is next. We have wanted that really from about April 1. No April Fools' joke there; we really wanted to do that. Instead, Senator MCCONNELL just seemed to ignore this.

I mean, go back to the human side. What happens when somebody is unemployed? We will be leaving now for 2

weeks. That is why we are doing these unanimous consent requests now. It is because we want to see action. We have asked and asked and begged and begged and pleaded and pleaded. So what happens? We will go back home for 2 more weeks. Right now, if you can't find a job, if you are unemployed and are getting that \$600 a week, you start paying attention online or you read the papers or however you get your information, and you find out that this is going to expire at the end of July. You don't know what you are going to do, but you know that you haven't paid rent in 3 months because you have had an eviction moratorium.

Senator CRAPO talked about the moratorium. Only half of the people who pay mortgages are subject to that moratorium and are protected, and only a third of people who rent are. So, for most people, that is simply not the case.

Now that the eviction courts are open and the evictions are starting, what happens to those people? Are we just going to say: Well, let's see it play out. We know what will happen. If you don't have rental assistance, if you lose your unemployment and don't get that \$1,200 check, which is basically 1 month's rent for most people, we know what is going to happen to you. Your life is going to turn upside down. That is why we need to move. That is why we need to pass this.

I am disappointed that Senator MCCONNELL has shown no interest in doing anything on this other than just sitting tight and hoping that the money he raises from special interests—from tobacco, the gun lobby, banks, and insurance companies—can help his candidates get reelected and he can be majority leader again.

I yield the floor to Senator MENENDEZ.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, let me thank my colleague, the ranking Democrat—the senior Democrat—on the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, for his passion and his commitment. He has really elevated housing within the jurisdiction of the committee, which is something I am passionate about. Very often, everyone refers to the committee as the Banking Committee, but housing is a critical element of what it does. He has elevated it, and I really appreciate his passion on behalf of the millions who rent or who are fortunate enough to own homes and want to keep them to try to be able to do so.

I would just say to my distinguished chairman of the committee that I do have the highest respect for him.

Look, with the CARES package, we lumped in trillions of dollars, but overwhelmingly that money went to businesses. Of course, I support that, but it went to businesses. It went to sustain businesses. It went to ultimately help small, midsized, and even large businesses. It went to sustain sectors of our

economy like the airline industry and others.

What we are talking about goes to the very essence of what it is to have a home. "Home" is one of the most important American concepts. It is where we are taken when we are born. It is where we are nurtured while we are young. It is where we are schooled. It is where good times and bad times take place. Ultimately, it is where we build a life around our families if we are fortunate to have a home. Then, in a pandemic, we have learned that it is also a place in which to shelter.

I come to the floor today to warn of an impending storm that is brewing, and it is headed our way.

When the funds for the PPP—for the business program—ran out, we didn't have regular order to see if the PPP had been working well. No. There was a rush to put more billions in it. It was only when we said "Wait a minute, this isn't working so well for small and midsized businesses" that we made some reforms. So there was a rush then. There was no regular order.

We have a storm that is brewing and is headed our way. It will bring with it enormous financial pain. It will threaten public safety. It will make fighting the pandemic that much harder, and it will set back our Nation's economic recovery. If the Senate fails to respond to this looming crisis, Americans will needlessly suffer; families will be displaced; personal fortunes will be wiped out; and the scars will run so deep that it could take decades to heal the wounds.

As the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, the one saving grace most of us had—the one place we could take refuge to protect ourselves and our families—was our home. Our leading medical experts all urged us to stay home. If you are sick, stay home. If you have an underlying condition or are immunocompromised, stay home. If you are elderly or otherwise at risk, stay home. If you can, work from home. If you are a student, go online and learn from home. If we have learned anything from this pandemic, it is that staying home can help to contain the virus, flatten the curve, and save lives.

What if you don't have a home? As we speak, millions of our fellow Americans are asking themselves that very same question.

At a time when COVID-19 cases are spiking across the country, the provisions that we passed in the CARES Act to help renters and homeowners stay in their homes are about to run out. If we do nothing, we could face a foreclosure and eviction crisis far greater than that which we encountered during the great recession.

There is a storm on the horizon. Americans shouldn't have to fear being thrown out on the street if they miss their next rent or mortgage payments through, really, no fault of their own. They shouldn't have to fear losing their greatest personal assets or that

one safe place in the middle of a pandemic, further exposing themselves and others to the virus.

The Senate can stop this if it wants to. We can make sure that every American has a safe and healthy place to call home. That is why I joined my Democratic colleagues on the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs in introducing two bills last month that will provide assistance to homeowners and renters.

The Housing Assistance Fund, led by Senator REED, provides \$75 billion in targeted assistance to keep people in their homes while they search for new employment or a way to get back to work. This money can go toward mortgage payments or utilities or as other support to prevent eviction, delinquency, or foreclosure.

The Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act, led by Senator BROWN, would provide \$100 billion in rental assistance to help families pay rent and help property owners maintain safe and healthy housing. It will help the economic recovery by stabilizing the rental market overall.

We also have to empower Americans to make informed financial decisions—to help them navigate the maze of lenders, landlords, government agencies—to find a sustainable path to stay in their homes.

We all know there is a housing affordability crisis in this country that jeopardizes the aspirations of millions of Americans who hope to join the middle class, and just as they have borne the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic, low-income and minority Americans will disproportionately suffer during economic downturns.

The provisions that the chairman talked about in the law that we passed in order to help are going to be expiring. To the extent that you know about it, you might invoke it to protect yourself against an eviction or a mortgage foreclosure, but if you don't know about it and either the financial institution or your landlord looks the other way and doesn't follow the law, well then, you won't get the protection.

That is why I and 19 of my Democratic colleagues introduced a bill on Monday to provide \$700 million in housing counseling assistance. Research shows that homeowners who receive housing counseling have better outcomes than those who don't, and that evidence is overwhelming. Their risk of default goes down, and they are more likely to see their credit scores rise and their debt levels fall.

In rough times like we are in right now, these borrowers are more likely to get sustainable mortgage modifications and are less likely to end up in default. The benefits of housing counseling flow to the community at large because when a family is able to buy a home, pay their mortgage, build equity, and ultimately achieve the American dream, our towns and cities thrive. And during a pandemic, having

a safe and affordable place to live could mean the difference between life and death.

It is also especially important for senior citizens, who are more susceptible to COVID-19. So tomorrow I will introduce legislation to provide \$1.2 billion in aid for older adults living in federally assisted housing.

This bill provides additional rental assistance for senior housing, personal protective gear, and staffing to help maintain a healthy community.

So the forecasts are in. The storm is coming. The question is, What are we going to do about it?

The Fourth of July is Independence Day. It is nice to have independence from the fear that I will lose the place that I call home. That would be a tremendous gift on the Fourth of July.

Are we going to help our most vulnerable citizens during this pandemic or are we going to just watch them suffer, lose everything, and exacerbate this public health crisis?

Today is July 1. The rent is due. Mortgage payments are due. The Senate's work is due.

I remember—and I will close with this personal anecdote—when I was growing up poor in a tenement in New Jersey, the son of an itinerant carpenter and a seamstress, there wasn't always work, which meant that sometimes paying the rent was a real tough choice. And it was a choice of paying the rent or putting food on the table. I saw the anxiety in my mother's eyes. I saw the fear in my siblings not knowing whether that apartment in that tenement was something we were even going to be able to keep. That wasn't in a pandemic. That was just in normal times. Imagine in a pandemic, you are told to stay home, and there is no place to call home. We can do much better than that. We can do much better than that.

July 1, the rent is due. The mortgage payment is due. The Senate's work is due. Let's pass this bill today and make sure every American can weather the pandemic in a safe and affordable place to call home.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Because a lot of my colleagues have been so thoughtful, I will have some brief remarks, and then I would ask unanimous consent that Senator CORTEZ MASTO could follow me because she is facing a tight schedule as well. I know all of my colleagues are.

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

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, I join my colleagues this afternoon in appreciation of Senator BROWN, who has been relentless—absolutely relentless—in prosecuting this cause of trying to get a fair shake for millions of Americans who are walking on an economic tightrope. Every single month, they balance the food bill against the rent bill against the energy bill, and Sen-

ator BROWN—whether it is supercharged unemployment benefits, whether it is housing, whether it is taking on the big pharmaceutical companies—is there again and again and again to stand up for people who don't have power and don't have clout, and I want to thank him especially for giving us this opportunity to focus on the avalanche of evictions that I believe will be headed in our direction in weeks if the Senate doesn't act.

Yesterday, Dr. Fauci talked about soon possibly seeing as many as 100,000 new coronavirus cases a day. You simply cannot have a healthy economy in a country suffering from mass illness and death.

There are already tens of millions of Americans out of work as a result of a pandemic that is only continuing to spread, and it has hit the whole affordability of rent for millions of Americans like a powerful storm.

According to the Census Bureau, 40 percent of Black and Latino renters are worried they will not be able to make the rent this summer due to the pandemic. That in and of itself is an outrage and an injustice.

My question for our Republican colleagues today involves this frightening day at the beginning of the month—the frightening day when families sit around a kitchen table, all across the country, and you can see the anguish in their faces when you talk to them because, around that kitchen table, they are saying to themselves: What am I going to spend our scarce dollars on this month? Is it going to be the rent? Is it going to be groceries? What about that big pile of medical bills that is off in the corner that we have to pay?

It is July 1, and the rent is due. Our question for our Republican colleagues is, What is your plan?

Senator BROWN has been leading us every day—day in, day out—with a set of sensible policies that respond to what those families are saying around their kitchen tables. We fought for the moratorium on evictions that was included in the CARES Act, but it goes poof in a few weeks.

Already this week my Republican colleagues have blocked funding for State and local governments that could have been used to help people who are walking that economic tightrope.

This morning, Leader SCHUMER and I laid out a plan that I think is a path to a dependable safety net in America and, specifically, an extension of supercharged unemployment benefits, which ties the benefit to economic conditions on the ground. It will be a financial lifeline for millions and millions of people. Republicans have been opposed to that. Those benefits are going to expire in a matter of weeks, and as I said to colleagues: Better know what you are going to be looking at when you go home in August if there hasn't been action on our legislation to make sure that there are supercharged unemployment benefits so that people can pay the rent and buy groceries.

If they are home all August long, in the heat with families, and they are going to have nowhere to turn in terms of paying for a roof over their heads and groceries, this is going to be a long, long, hot summer that will never be forgotten.

So let's be clear what is at stake. Long before the pandemic hit, housing cost too much. Homelessness was way too common, and, in my view, the rate of homelessness among children is a true national scandal.

In the wealthiest Nation on Earth, no child should be without a home. But even before the COVID crisis, 1.5 million children were experiencing homelessness—1.5 million youngsters living outside, living in cars, sleeping on floors, sleeping on the ground.

Colleagues, in my home State, they have said that school buses have had to go to the parks. They have had to go to the parks to pick up kids who are living outside with their families.

It rains once in a while in Oregon. It is cold in Oregon. And to think that kids in the richest country on Earth are spending the night in the parks and the school buses have to come and get them while we have huge tax cuts for those who are powerful and have lobbyists shows that things are really out of whack.

What I describe as it relates to those kids living in the parks—those kinds of conditions exist for youngsters all over America, and that was before the joblessness crisis hit and threw so many more working families into economic hardship.

If the Senate doesn't step up to help families stay in their homes, it is going to get much, much worse because there are hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of kids facing this recipe for disaster. They are out of school. They are isolated, and they are more exposed to neglect and abuse. I am so pleased that my friend from Nevada has been talking about those families and talking about those kids.

They are hungry. Their families are facing the threat of eviction. If the Senate just sits back and allows these children to fall into homelessness, they may never have a chance to get ahead.

So what it comes down to is that the Senate has an obligation to help, and Senator BROWN is on target in saying that this is the time to pass his Emergency Rental Assistance Act. I am with him. I think we have a lot of colleagues here in the queue because they, too, want to speak up for the radical idea—what a radical proposition—that in the richest country on Earth, the vulnerable ought to have a roof over their head.

Senator BROWN's proposal is a vital step forward. I think we all agree that much more needs to be done. I am very interested in the proposal I call the DASH Act, the Decent, Affordable and Safe Housing for All Act. I hope we will be able to get serious about that in 2021.

The step to take today is to pass Senator BROWN's bill, and I look forward to

being back with our colleagues day in, day out, focusing on this crisis and making sure that nobody thinks we are going to skip away until the Republicans act.

This country faces a truly horrific eviction nightmare if action is not taken soon, and I am very pleased that my friend from Nevada is here.

I yield the floor to her.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Madam President, I am here today to support my colleagues and our cause to keep Americans in their homes. It is very simple. The House has already passed a number of bills to do just that, and the Senate needs to do the same thing.

In this pandemic, housing is healthcare. I know that a lot of Americans have had their lives upended by this coronavirus pandemic, but I would like you to imagine for a moment how much more chaotic your life would feel if you found out that tomorrow you are going to be evicted. Imagine trying to make sure you are washing your hands while you are living in your car.

We are in the middle of a public health crisis where we need people to be socially distancing, and that means they simply must have a safe, stable place to be at the end of the day.

We realized this months ago in my State, and that is why Governor Sisolak put a hold on evicting residents through August 31 of this year.

And Congress? Well, we passed the CARES Act to provide unemployment benefits and one-time relief. Those funds, plus the ban on evictions, were intended to help keep families in their homes.

We are 60 days away from resuming evictions in Nevada. In my State and across the country, the wave of evictions we have been holding off for a month is going to come crashing down if we do not act now.

Nevada has the highest unemployment rate in the entire country. In May, it was over 25 percent—as high as the national rate during the worst of the Great Depression. On top of that, some Nevadans haven't yet received their unemployment benefits or their pandemic unemployment benefits.

Across the country, almost half of workers earning under \$40,000 a year have lost income. Some people just don't have the ability to fully pay for the rent or mortgage, particularly when we are asking them to shelter in place.

The thing is, in Nevada, we were already in the midst of a housing crisis even before this pandemic hit us. Almost half of Nevadans are renters. That is 45 percent. Of those renters, half are cost-burdened in some way, meaning that they pay more than 30 percent of their income in rent.

Now, the Silver State has the biggest shortage in the country of affordable housing for the very lowest income Nevadans. We have just 19 units for every 100 that we need.

Eviction isn't just a matter of spending a few days scrambling to find a new place. The financial consequences can follow families for years, and as for the effects on children's physical and mental health, well, there is no way to undo that.

Believe me. I know. The foreclosure crisis hit Nevada in 2008, and I saw up close the pain that caused throughout my State when people were evicted from their homes. Lenders took the homes of more than 219,000 Nevada families during that period of time. That is why it is so vital that we pass legislation now to help Nevadans and people all across the country pay their rent and utility bills when they cannot safely go to work.

I support Senator BROWN's Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act, as well as other bills introduced by my colleagues to keep homeowners in their homes. These bills provide essential stability to the rental and mortgage market.

We can't expect landlords to keep shouldering the burden of missed payments. Landlords have bills to pay, as well—mortgages, taxes, insurance, and staff. Without assistance from us, many of them may go bankrupt or can be forced to sell their properties.

Experts estimate that Nevada is going to need nearly \$1 billion in rental assistance to keep families housed this year. Landlords can't lift the load and neither can State budgets that are already stretched too thin.

So let's focus here on the essentials, the basic need for things like shelter. Let's keep people safe and off the streets. Let's pass Senator BROWN's rental assistance bill, Senator REED's housing assistance fund bill to help homeowners avoid foreclosure, and Senator MENENDEZ's housing counseling bill, and the others we need to prevent an epidemic of homelessness.

Across the Nation people are responding to the pandemic by staying at home because we asked them to do so. Now the Senate needs to do its part by making sure those homes are safe and stable so that Nevadans can continue to teach their children, care for loved ones who are ill, and avoid spreading coronavirus to others. In the midst of a global pandemic, housing is healthcare, and we owe this to each other. So let's act now on behalf of the American public and American families.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Madam President, I rise to support efforts by my Democratic colleagues to pass much needed and delayed economic measures by unanimous consent.

It is painfully obvious that the economy is in bad shape. Families and small businesses continue to struggle and there is a real need for further Federal assistance. In order to get our economy back on track, this body must take action in crafting another comprehensive, bipartisan COVID relief

package, and it must include additional help for families and communities including eviction and foreclosure prevention assistance, as well as additional help for State and local governments.

Last night the Senate unanimously extended the PPP application window. This was a tiny but needed step in recognizing the depth of the economic crisis Americans are facing. Now the question before us is, will Republican leaders allow this body to work its will and provide needed, targeted, and effective rescue assistance, or will it continue to delay and deny assistance which will only prolong the pandemic, deepen the financial hole, and make the remedy costlier and recovery steeper?

Strong State and local governments are critical to our economy. Indeed, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, State and local governments provide about 20 million jobs and contributed 8.5 percent to the national GDP in 2019. They did so by not only serving as customers and clients for our local and national businesses, but also by providing the essential services, such as public infrastructure, a strong education system, and other necessary functions that provide the business certainty that make our country attractive to businesses and investors throughout the world. We should do everything possible to maintain our country's comparative advantage relative to other countries.

But today, as a result of the tremendous economic shock created by the coronavirus and the lack of a coherent public health strategy from the Trump administration, estimated State revenue shortfalls will total about \$615 billion over the next 3 fiscal years, not including the added costs of fighting COVID-19. This is just for the States—\$615 billion.

This is why I initially fought for \$750 billion in the Coronavirus Relief Fund when negotiating the CARES Act and introduced S. 3671, the State & Local Emergency Stabilization Fund Act, which would provide an additional \$600 billion to State and local governments to supplement the \$150 billion in coronavirus relief funds I secured in the CARES Act.

Madam President, would it surprise you to learn that the Trump Treasury Department has needlessly created a bureaucratic regulation that makes it difficult for States to use these coronavirus relief funds? And that this regulation is standing in the way of what should have been an immediate \$150 billion boost to our economy, which even the Chamber of Commerce thinks is burdensome. Because of this onerous Trump rule, States can't use the coronavirus relief funds to replace lost or delayed tax revenues in order to maintain public services.

That is what Neil Bradley, the U.S. Chamber's chief policy officer said in an interview, "Part of our conversation with Republicans on Capitol Hill is

that, ironically, if your concern is big State government, then the last thing you need to do is force States to replace one-time lost revenue with permanent tax increases.”

As the primary author of the Coronavirus Relief Fund, I can tell you that it is fully within the Treasury Secretary’s authority and the intent of the CARES Act for these funds to be used to replace lost or delayed tax revenues and maintain public services. To prevent the flexible use of these relief funds is a choice that is neither required nor intended by law.

Unfortunately, this completely unnecessary choice has already created avoidable economic harm.

Since February, State and local governments have cut a total of 1.5 million jobs, an 8-percent drop that is twice the decline seen during and after the 2007–2009 recession. In addition, the Center for Economic and Policy Research reports that “job losses forced on State and local governments by pandemic-related shortfalls will disproportionately impact the African American workforce . . . 14 percent of state and local employees were African American compared to 11.7 percent of private sector employees, a margin of 20 percent.”

As the Wall Street Journal reported in a May 24, 2020, article titled “State and Local Budget Woes Create Drag for Economic Recovery Prospects”:

Based on evidence from the last recession, Mr. Chodorow-Reich, a Harvard economics professor, estimates that every dollar in cuts costs the economy \$1.50 to \$2. He also said every additional dollar in spending adds \$1.50 to \$2 to the economy.

Of all the regulations that this administration seeks to cut, it should start with this one if it really wants a healthy economy. With just one stroke of the Treasury Secretary’s pen, our economy can receive a direct multibillion dollar jolt today.

But to be clear, this administrative fix is by no means sufficient because of the massive revenue shortfalls our State and local governments are facing. Congress still needs to provide additional and flexible fiscal relief to our State and local governments as part of its next fiscal package, and it is my hope that S. 3671, the State & Local Stabilization Fund Act, is included.

As I indicated earlier in my remarks, keeping families in their homes also must be included in the next package.

According to Nicholas Chiumenti, with the New England Public Policy Center in the research department at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston:

If current economic activity does not improve substantially, without an extension of the CARES Act, unemployment insurance or additional stimulus money or other fiscal relief, up to 13 percent of homeowners and 33 percent of renters in Rhode Island are at the risk of being unable to pay their mortgage or rent payments. This represents over 80,000 Rhode Island households.

Nationally, according to census survey data, 23 percent of all adults reported being housing insecure in mid-

June, meaning that they had missed last month’s rent or mortgage payment or had slight or no confidence that their household could pay next month’s rent or mortgage on time.

We know that behind each one of these numbers is a family that can be homeless at the worst possible time in the middle of a public health emergency.

For some, given their current health situations and age, there will be an additional human toll that we surely should strive to avoid. We implore our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to work with us to keep our constituents in their homes so that they too can make it to the other side of this public health emergency.

In that spirit, I draw your attention to S. 3620, the Housing Assistance Fund. This legislation expands the existing “Hardest Hit Fund” model and provides it with additional resources for each State to keep families in their homes, the utilities on, the internet connected, and the property taxes paid. As a result, landlords who are also struggling to pay their own bills would receive some assistance.

Madam President, it is not every day that the Independent Community Bankers of America and the Credit Union National Association support the same legislation with consumer rights and affordable housing organizations, such as the National Housing Conference, the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the Center for Responsible Lending, and the National Consumer Law Center, among others. As we work toward this next fiscal relief package, I hope you and our colleagues will consider joining with us in enacting S. 3620, the Housing Assistance Fund.

But we can’t stop there. We must also immediately, among other needs, increase SNAP benefits to help the almost 150,000 Rhode Islanders who are food insecure during this crisis; boost public health efforts to help keep the virus at bay, from more testing and contact tracing to supporting our healthcare providers, to developing effective vaccine deployment systems; help childcare centers, public schools, and college campuses to safely reopen and support libraries in keeping our communities connected; provide relief for the hardest hit small and mid-sized businesses, many of which will continue to be shut down for the foreseeable future; and safeguard our election infrastructure, as Russia and other foreign actors seek again to use voter suppression, hacking, and disinformation in the 2020 elections.

What exactly are we waiting for? Is it not enough that, according to a June 29 CNBC article, “the employment-population ratio—the number of employed people as a percentage of the U.S. adult population—plunged to 52.8 percent in May, meaning 47.2 percent of Americans are jobless, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics?

Is it not enough that 46 percent of Business Roundtable CEOs expect em-

ployment at their companies to decrease in the next 6 months?

We don’t need to inflict any further unnecessary economic pain and suffering. I would also urge my colleagues to consider the costs of inaction.

Indeed, during an April 29, 2020, press conference, Federal Reserve Chairman Powell stated:

I have long-time been an advocate for the need for the United States to return to a sustainable path from a fiscal perspective at the Federal level. We have not been on such a path for some time, which . . . just means that the debt is growing faster than the economy.

This is not the time to act on those concerns. This is the time to use the great fiscal power of the United States to do what we can to support the economy and try to get through this with as little damage to the longer-run productive capacity of the economy as possible.

This week we are also considering the National Defense Authorization Act, and every year for the last 59 years, Democrats and Republicans have come together to strengthen our national security and to help all Americans. We have proven that we are more than capable of working together productively on the most complex and controversial issues in service of our constituents, and we would like to continue that not just in the context of national defense but in the context of economic prosperity and security.

One final point. We also need to extend unemployment compensation insurance because we know it will run out, and everyone has told us that unemployment rates will not drop dramatically. They will stay persistently high. People will need this assistance going forward.

We must do more, and I hope we can do much more going forward.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAMER). The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I have a motion to be made, but before making it, I yield 3 minutes each to Senator KLOBUCHAR from Minnesota and Senator SCHATZ from Hawaii.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I thank Senator INHOFE so much for his allowing me to say a few words. I know it is his time. And I thank my friend JACK REED.

Today is July 1, which means that rent and mortgage payments are due, and as I speak today, so many families across this country are being forced to make the difficult decision about how they will make this month’s payment to stay in their homes.

Even before the pandemic began, almost one-fourth of all renters, or 11 million households, were forced to pay more than half of their income for housing—half of their income. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, more than half a million people experienced homelessness on a

given night before the pandemic, and that has just gotten worse.

That is why I am a strong supporter of Senator BROWN's Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act, which will provide \$100 billion in emergency funding. I am also proud to support Senator REED's bill as well as the work of Senator MENEDEZ.

The pandemic, as we know, has wide and longstanding racial disparities in housing. We had a 30-percent gap in Black and White ownership rates before the pandemic due to discriminatory practices, and it has only made it worse.

St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter, a leader and a good friend, has repeatedly reminded us that this means investing in programs like section 8 housing, which still remains unavailable to so many families.

Yes, we need to address this shortage of affordable housing. We need to take action now. I thank my colleagues. We have an opportunity. The Fourth of July is at the beginning of July, but by the end of July, we had better have gotten something done, and that means help our State and local governments; that means funding for elections; and that means making sure we are responding to the crisis in housing.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, today is the 1st of the month, and that means the rent is due, but for the 9 million renters who have lost their jobs, they may not be able to pay.

Now, in March, we made sure that the CARES Act included cash assistance, unemployment benefits, and suspensions on evictions and mortgage forbearance to help the people who have been hurt the most by this pandemic. Lots of States and counties have set up their own programs, either subsidies or prohibitions on evictions themselves, but we are now 3 months later, and unemployment benefits stand to expire at the end of this month and moratoriums that allowed families to stay in their homes are ending. Eviction courts are reopening. Think about that. Eviction courts are reopening.

So what we are facing is a ticking timebomb. We are facing the fact that it is true that people got forbearance on their rent or forbearance on their mortgage, but I remember very well in March and April, as I explained to the people of Hawaii, you are getting forbearance not forgiveness, which means you just simply don't have to pay your mortgage or your rent this month. You do have to eventually pay your mortgage or your rent.

So what is going to happen is, for the most economically challenged among us in the United States, they are going to face a huge backpayment at the beginning of August or the beginning of September, and they are going to lose the place they live in.

Now, I am very, very hopeful that cooler heads will prevail and that we

will intervene in July and incorporate the legislation Senator BROWN is leading because the rent is going to be due, and we are going to—just as we faced this pandemic square in the eyes, we are going to be facing a massive eviction crisis. We have to take action.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, while we continue negotiating an agreement on amendments, I think we need to move forward and start voting on some of the amendments we know need votes.

Therefore, in just a minute, I will call up the Paul amendment regarding the withdrawing of troops from Afghanistan. While I disagree with the substance of the amendment, I think the Senate should vote on it. So, at 5:30 today, I will move to table the amendment. We have talked to Senator PAUL's office about this.

AMENDMENT NO. 2011

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I call up the Paul amendment No. 2011 to the text proposed to be stricken.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Oklahoma [Mr. INHOFE], for Mr. PAUL, proposes an amendment numbered 2011.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To withdraw all United States Armed Forces from Afghanistan)

At the end of subtitle B of title XII, add the following:

SEC. 1216. WITHDRAWAL OF UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES FROM AFGHANISTAN.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The Joint Resolution to authorize the use of United States Armed Forces against those responsible for the attacks launched against the United States (Public Law 107-40) states, "That the President is authorized to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001".

(2) Since 2001, more than 3,002,635 men and women of the United States Armed Forces have deployed in support of the Global War on Terrorism, with more than 1,400,000 of them deploying more than once, and these Americans who volunteered in a time of war have served their country honorably and with distinction.

(3) In November 2009 there were fewer than 100 Al-Qaeda members remaining in Afghanistan.

(4) On May 2, 2011, Osama Bin Laden, the founder of Al-Qaeda, was killed by United States Armed Forces in Pakistan.

(5) United States Armed Forces have successfully routed Al-Qaeda from the battlefield in Afghanistan, thus fulfilling the original intent of Public Law 107-40 and the justification for the invasion of Afghanistan, but public support for United States continued presence in Afghanistan has waned in recent years.

(6) An October 2018 poll found that 57 percent of Americans, including 69 percent of United States veterans, believe that all United States troops should be removed from Afghanistan.

(7) In June 2018, the Department of Defense reported, "The al-Qa'ida threat to the United States and its allies and partners has decreased and the few remaining al-Qa'ida core members are focused on their own survival".

(b) PLAN REQUIRED.—Not later than 45 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense, or designee, in cooperation with the heads of all other relevant Federal agencies involved in the conflict in Afghanistan shall—

(1)(A) formulate a plan for the orderly drawdown and withdrawal of all soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines from Afghanistan who were involved in operations intended to provide security to the people of Afghanistan, including policing action, or military actions against paramilitary organizations inside Afghanistan, excluding members of the military assigned to support United States embassies or consulates, or intelligence operations authorized by Congress; and

(B) appear before the relevant congressional committees to explain the proposed implementation of the plan formulated under subparagraph (A); and

(2)(A) formulate a framework for political reconciliation and popular democratic elections independent of United States involvement in Afghanistan, which may be used by the Government of Afghanistan to ensure that any political party that meets the requirements under Article 35 of the Constitution of Afghanistan is permitted to participate in general elections; and

(B) appear before the relevant congressional committees to explain the proposed implementation of the framework formulated under subparagraph (A).

(c) REMOVAL AND BONUSES.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act—

(1) all United States Armed Forces in Afghanistan as of such date of enactment shall be withdrawn and removed from Afghanistan; and

(2) the Secretary of Defense shall provide all members of the United States Armed Forces who were deployed in support of the Global War on Terror with a \$2,500 bonus to recognize that these Americans have served in the Global War on Terrorism exclusively on a volunteer basis and to demonstrate the heartfelt gratitude of our Nation.

(d) REPEAL OF AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF MILITARY FORCE.—The Authorization for Use of Military Force (Public Law 107-40) is repealed effective on the earlier of—

(1) the date that is 395 days after the date of the enactment of this Act; or

(2) the date on which the Secretary of Defense certifies that all United States Armed Forces involved in operations or military actions in Afghanistan (as described in subsection (b)(1)(A)) have departed from Afghanistan.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, as I said earlier, I will move to table the Paul amendment at 5:30 today, and Senators should expect a rollcall vote at that time.

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

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

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, Congress has taken action in response to the coronavirus pandemic and its significant effects on workers, families, and the economy. It is because the State, Federal, and local governments shut down the U.S. economy for the first time in the 240-year history of our country.

We enacted four laws in March and April, which CBO says has increased the deficit by at least \$2.4 trillion, but that doesn't measure the entirety of the relief. If you add in support from programs initiated by the Fed and the Treasury, you would add trillions more of relief.

One of the recent pieces of legislation, the CARES Act, devoted \$150 billion of direct Federal relief to governments of the States, localities, territories, the District of Columbia, and Tribes. That is around 16 percent of the total fiscal year 2020 State general fund expenditures enacted prior to the public emergency.

In addition to the \$150 billion, CBO has identified hundreds of billions more from the various relief programs that are directed to State and local governments. From the \$340 billion of emergency funding in the CARES Act alone, the Senate appropriators have told me that more than 80 percent, or roughly \$275 billion, goes to States and localities.

So, you can see, the CARES Act alone provided \$150 billion of direct aid to State and local governments, and the emergency funding added \$275 billion. That means that \$425 billion in the CARES Act is directed to governments of the States, localities, territories, Tribes, and the District of Columbia. That happens to be 47 percent of the total State general revenue expenditures enacted prior to the public emergency for fiscal year 2020 and about the same percentage of enacted total State revenue.

On top of that, the Fed has allowed use of municipal securities as collateral for bank lending to help ease borrowing costs for local and State governments. Treasury and the Fed also established a Municipal Liquidity Facility. The purpose of it is to "help state and local governments better manage cash flow pressures."

The Fed will buy up to \$500 billion of debt from State, counties, and cities. As others have noted here on this very floor, a significant amount of the funding directed to States and localities and the like are still in the pipeline and remain unspent or even unallocated. Some States, as I understand it, have not even allocated any money downstream to their own local governments from the \$150 billion of direct aid provided under the CARES Act.

Despite all that, we have heard a number of calls for massive amounts of additional spending. The reason, ac-

ording to most people asking for more, is that the direct aid for States and localities in the CARES Act is too restrictive and cannot be used to replace lost revenue. I am sympathetic to the idea of giving States and localities more flexibility in how to use \$150 billion of direct relief provided in the CARES Act if it is not needed for the virus health issues. Beyond that, I want you to know I am more skeptical, until we get more solid numbers on unrealized State and local revenue and the impact of the CARES dollars not yet allowed.

I recently heard the minority leader here on the floor attempting to scold us Republicans for not doing exactly what he wants, exactly when he wants it, and saying we need to immediately spend more, including more direct aid to States. Of course, in his partisan political analysis, Republicans are blamed for not wanting massive amounts of additional aid for State and local governments because what he believes is ideological opposition to government in general.

Now, that is quite a stretch, even for the minority leader. Republicans supported four pieces of legislation in recent months providing hundreds of billions of dollars in relief to State and local governments in various ways.

I heard the Governor of California instruct Congress on moral and ethical grounds, saying that it is our duty to give more funding to States and localities or else first responders will be the first ones laid off by cities and counties. It is almost like the first argument when we were just about ready to shut down the Federal Government, if we don't finance everything, first thing we are going to do is shut down the Washington Monument.

While that may have been a subtle threat from the Governor of California to use as leverage to pressure Congress to provide more funds to California, it is unfortunate that State and local governments laid off so many of their workers in recent months. That doesn't seem to be much dedication by government to its workforce.

I heard from associations of Governors, associations of counties, cities, and other municipal governments that they need between a half a trillion and a trillion more in direct aid from the Federal Government. Usually, they cite a need to "replace lost revenue."

Many have asked for funds to cover lost revenue as far out as two additional fiscal years beyond fiscal year 2020. Most of those requests are based on forecasts of what the pandemic and the economy will look like for the rest of the year and even in coming years.

I think you have to take those forecasts with a grain of salt. Just look at what the last employment report looked like relative to the forecasts, and you can tell how cloudy people's crystal balls are right now.

I heard from some here on the floor that Moody's thinks States and localities may need hundreds of billions

more in direct relief. People haven't been very careful, though, in reading the Moody's reports that are the basis of their arguments.

Moody's Analytics, which makes very clear in the report that it is not an arm of Moody's that rates bonds—though, I am not sure everyone is clear on that—Moody's Analytics said in April that under their most severely adverse assumptions about the future, State and local governments would have a budget shortfall of around \$172 billion over the next 15 months and more than \$450 billion if you extend out to cover the years 2022.

Again, this is all based on shaky forecasts, and it is not at all clear that the ratings on municipal bonds done by the Moody's ratings agency align with the forecasts of Moody's Analytics.

More recently, Moody's Analytics' chief economist, Mark Zandi, who is a regular proponent of Keynesian stimulus for the Democratic Party, upped the estimate of the needs to about \$500 billion. That number remarkably matches what we heard from the National Governors Association about 6 weeks ago. Dr. Zandi promises so-called bang-for-the-buck magic to save States and localities, but the government will have to pony up perhaps a half a trillion more just to start that magic. So I am skeptical, to put it mildly.

If you remember, it was that kind of reasoning that led to the Obama stimulus promising vague and relatively quick unemployment deductions following the financial crisis but failed to come even close to these promised results.

Finally, regarding funding requests, there is the Heroes Act over at the House. State and local aid in that act provides nearly \$1 trillion to States and localities inside a liberal wish list in their bill.

That, along with what we have already done, would put State and local relief at more than 75 percent of all combined State and local tax collections for a year, depending how you measure things. That is more of a Federal bailout than the partnership that we are asked to finance.

I have heard a lot of calls for massive amounts of additional direct aid to our States, funded by Federal debt. Yet there still is a lot of money in the pipeline that hasn't even been used yet. And future needs of States and localities are highly uncertain—too uncertain, in my view—to commit the Federal Government today to half a trillion dollars or \$1 trillion more to States and localities, on top of the \$425 billion or more of funding already in play and up to \$500 billion of credit support.

I am highly skeptical of schemes to index future aid to measures of the incidence of COVID-19 cases, since we already have had controversies surrounding those measures, and some of them are political controversies.

Of course, I do understand budget rules that States and localities operate

under. They do provide constraints. I also believe that proponents of massive amounts of additional Federal aid to States and localities overstate the severity of those constraints. I think State budgets are more flexible and fungible, for example, than some would have us believe.

We have seen that flexibility recently in legislators' consideration of altering police funding or using taxpayers' funds to erect barriers in occupied zones of lawlessness as just one example of that flexibility.

There are also many issues about incentives associated with massive new amounts of direct Federal funding of State and local governments. Sending massive amounts of additional Federal funds to States that were responsible in good times and built up rainy day funds means that they are treated the same as States that didn't build much, if any, in rainy day funds, as I said, Illinois and New Jersey, for examples. Those States that acted irresponsibly then get rewarded.

Since funds in State and local governments are fungible, sending massive amounts of additional Federal dollars to States and localities means that hard-earned Federal tax dollars coming from Iowa, as an example, can end up helping financially unsustainable pension promises of fiscally irresponsible States, and it means that Federal tax revenues get channeled to States run by politicians who will not even enforce existing Federal laws and who use taxpayer resources on lawless occupied zones or sanctuary cities to provide benefits to undocumented residents. There are many of my constituents in Iowa who do not support those uses of Federal funds.

So, as I wind down here, I am highly skeptical of sending massive amounts of additional funds to States and localities, since future needs are so highly uncertain and there is still unspent money in the pipelines.

I am, however, sympathetic to providing additional flexibility for funds we have already provided in the CARES Act so that State and local communities can make broader uses of those funds. And I believe that if the pandemic and the economy worsens, under those circumstances, future needs can be addressed when needed.

I understand that there are a range of views regarding additional funds for States and localities. At this point, I believe it may be useful to entertain more flexibility in what has already been approved, and there may be a need to make sure that States get shares of money they have received to counties and cities. There may even be a reasoned case for limited additional funding to States and localities in the near term, although, as I said, I am a bit skeptical.

But approving half a trillion dollars to \$1 trillion of additional funds for uncertain future needs right now to cover unknown State and local needs as far out as 2 years down the road just isn't

the responsible or prudent action to take.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to complete my remarks.

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

AMENDMENT NO. 2011

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, Senator UDALL and I are pleased to present a bipartisan amendment that will finally end America's longest war. Our amendment will finally and completely end the war in Afghanistan.

Over 4,000 Americans have died in Afghanistan, and over 20,000 have been wounded. It is time to bring our soldiers home.

I supported going into Afghanistan originally. Had I been in Congress at that time, I would have voted in favor of it. But the people who attacked us on 9/11 have all been killed or captured. Most of the people fighting us today are their successors or children or the children of their children. In fact, we now have soldiers who were born after 9/11 serving in Afghanistan.

The cycle shows no sign of ending. The war shows no sign of ending. It is not sustainable to keep fighting in Afghanistan generation after generation. We have been fighting in Afghanistan for so long that our youngest soldiers fighting there weren't even born at the time.

We have spent about \$1 trillion to establish an Afghan Government—a government that is rife with corruption and dysfunction. We spent more to rebuild Afghanistan than the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe after World War II. We have built infrastructure in Afghanistan and then watched it deteriorate and watched the Afghans be unable to even maintain the infrastructure we built for them, and then they ask us for more money to maintain the structure. Meanwhile, our roads and our bridges crumble here at home as we rebuild the infrastructure in Afghanistan.

One example is, several years ago, we reportedly hired a local security consultant to help secure the roads at a cost of \$1 million per year. But according to the report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, American officials came to suspect that the money was being funneled to insurgents to stage attacks on our infrastructure to justify the security contract. So our money was going to a guy who was paying insurgents to pretend to attack him so he could provide security for their infrastructure. It is crazy.

We spent \$43 million on a natural gas station. Guess how many vehicles in Afghanistan run on natural gas. Zero. You can't even find the gas station. My staff went there to see if the money had been spent, and they couldn't go there because it was too unsafe. Now the report is that the gas

station has been abandoned—\$43 million.

We spent nearly \$80 million on a luxury hotel. Why is the American taxpayer building luxury hotels in Kabul? Guess what. A contractor ran off with the money. It is a skeleton. The Taliban are now said to climb up into the structure and shoot down at our Embassy. What kind of foolhardy nature of government are we that we continue to stay there?

These are just a few of the many examples that have had us spend more than we spent in Europe on the Marshall Plan.

We continue to pour good money after bad into Afghanistan, hoping that the outcome will somehow change, hoping that maybe the first 20 years will produce better results than the last 20 years did.

This NDAA, this defense authorization that we are debating here in the Senate, even has the sense of the Senate in it opposing a precipitous withdrawal from Afghanistan. We have been there for 20 years. How can we characterize withdrawal after 20 years, after we defeated the enemy, as precipitous? It is crazy. The American people say "Come home," and this is your chance.

Many people have said that we should end the war. Today, you get to vote. Are you for staying in Afghanistan for another generation? Are you for continuing a war that has lost its purpose? Today, we get to vote up or down: Are you for the war or against the war? Does the war still have a mission?

The American people know better. They are ready to declare victory and come home. It is why President Trump's message resonated with so many. He said "It is time to come home," and the people agreed.

Not only is it time to end the war and focus on our needs at home, but it is time to reward those who fought the battle. We are spending \$50 billion a year over there.

From the savings in the first year, in our amendment, Senator UDALL and I will provide a \$2,500 bonus for anyone who has been deployed in the long War on Terror. That is a pretty good bonus. Our soldiers deserve it, and they also deserve to come home because there is no military mission left.

Instead of spending another \$50 billion in Afghanistan next year, let's give some of that money to our soldiers who fought the war, and let's begin saving some money from the massive deficit we face here at home.

This is the Senate's chance to show that it is time to declare victory. It is time to come home.

I urge support for my amendment, and I also remind Senators this is your chance to vote to end a war.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I thank you for the recognition, and I thank Senator INHOFE. I talked to him.

I would ask unanimous consent, as Senator PAUL did, to complete my remarks and unanimous consent to complete my remarks right here on the floor before we have the vote.

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

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I am a strong supporter of the AFGHAN Service Act, which I introduced with Senator PAUL.

It has been nearly 19 years since the United States entered this war in Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks, and we have had several Presidents—one a Democrat, one a Republican—say they want to end this war. They announced: We don't want endless wars. We want to end this war.

Our current President has said he wanted to do this for the last 3½ years. He hasn't gotten it done. President Obama wanted to end it.

This is the way—the responsible way—to end this war. We give a year timeframe. We make absolutely clear we are not against our American soldiers. We give them a bonus, and we say: You have done a good job.

So don't listen to the distortions that will be talked about what this amendment is about.

We have soldiers who are heading to fight in this war who weren't even born when it began, and most of the soldiers I have talked to who have come home from Afghanistan believe we should be out of there. That is one of the most persuasive things I have seen. Several of those soldiers have been elected to the U.S. Congress and have spoken up very, very strongly about continuing our war in Afghanistan.

It has been nearly 10 years since I first came to the Senate floor in 2010 to call for the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Afghanistan. We have accomplished our goal of routing al-Qaida and killing Osama Bin Laden. Those were two of the big things that were talked about originally when President Bush went in and basically said: We have these short-term objectives, we are going to get them achieved, and then we are going to be out.

We have achieved those objectives. There is no reason for delay and to continue this endless war. The longer we stay with an ill-defined mission, the greater the risk of a wider war in the region. Believe me, I listen to people back home. They don't want a wider war. They want us to bring our troops home.

The recent news that has gripped the Capitol only underscores that our men and women in Afghanistan remain in harm's way. They should be brought home and focus on our core national security.

After 19 years of war, peace in Afghanistan will need to come from negotiation, and the United States can and should continue to play a role in those diplomatic efforts.

This legislation ends the U.S. involvement in the war in a responsible

way, with a yearlong timeframe. It also sunsets the 9/11 AUMF, which has been stretched beyond recognition to justify wars we never considered.

Even to this day, some in this administration envision using the 2001 AUMF to justify a war with Iran rather than actually standing on the floor and introducing a proposal, as required by the Constitution to get in a war, as is Congress's authority.

On the AUMF, this isn't something sudden either; it would give Congress a year to consider a new AUMF, if needed.

It is long past time for Congress to make the difficult decision and stop ducking the votes on whether to send our troops into harm's way.

Finally, this amendment rewards the veterans of these wars. We owe a lot more to them, but this is a start.

I hope you will join me in supporting the end of the U.S. war in Afghanistan and support the restoration of congressional war-making authority and vote against tabling this amendment. This amendment deserves an up-or-down vote, not a tabling vote, so vote no to tabling this amendment. I say this in great respect to Senator INHOFE, and I know that Senator INHOFE has been very courteous in terms of the time.

At this point, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

MOTION TO TABLE

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, there is another side to this story, and I think, when you hear those promoting this particular amendment, it is one we all agree—we want an end to the war. We want this to happen. But there are some other reasons that this probably is not the best way to do it.

First of all, the amendment directs a calendar-based withdrawal from Afghanistan rather than a conditions-based. We have talked about this quite often. It is something that you can't just say "It is going to happen by this date" but, rather, under these certain circumstances.

It undermines peace negotiations and the Trump administration's Afghan strategy. He has talked about that publicly. I think a lot of people agree with that. I do.

It would also undermine the February 2020 U.S. agreement with the Taliban that tries to map out a path to peace. According to the plan, U.S. forces' reductions must be tied to Taliban counterterrorism commitments. That is part of the plan.

Repealing it—the 2001 authorization for use of military force—would undermine the authority of the President of the United States for countering terrorists in Afghanistan but also would undermine the GITMO detention and other global counterterrorist efforts.

The DOD and the White House would oppose this because it removes an authority for using military force and would significantly undermine counterterrorism authority.

So I move to table the Paul amendment No. 2011, and I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI), the Senator from Mississippi (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH), and the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), and the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote or change their vote?

The result was announced—yeas 60, nays 33, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 129 Leg.]

YEAS—60

Alexander	Grassley	Risch
Barrasso	Hassan	Roberts
Blackburn	Hawley	Romney
Blumenthal	Hoeven	Rosen
Boozman	Inhofe	Rounds
Capito	Johnson	Rubio
Carper	Jones	Sasse
Cassidy	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Collins	King	Scott (SC)
Coons	Lankford	Shaheen
Cornyn	Loeffler	Shelby
Cotton	Manchin	Sinema
Cramer	McConnell	Sullivan
Crapo	McSally	Thune
Cruz	Menendez	Tillis
Ernst	Moran	Toomey
Feinstein	Murphy	Warner
Fischer	Perdue	Whitehouse
Gardner	Portman	Wicker
Graham	Reed	Young

NAYS—33

Baldwin	Durbin	Peters
Bennet	Gillibrand	Sanders
Booker	Harris	Schatz
Braun	Heinrich	Schumer
Brown	Hirono	Smith
Cantwell	Kaine	Stabenow
Cardin	Klobuchar	Tester
Casey	Leahy	Udall
Cortez Masto	Lee	Van Hollen
Daines	Merkley	Warren
Duckworth	Paul	Wyden

NOT VOTING—7

Blunt	Hyde-Smith	Murray
Burr	Markey	
Enzi	Murkowski	

The motion to table was agreed to; the amendment was tabled.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

COVID-19 INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE AND RECOVERY ACT OF 2020

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise to speak to S. 3669, the COVID-19 International Response and Recovery Act of 2020.

As of this weekend, there are an estimated 10 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 worldwide. More than 2.5 million of those cases are right here in the United States. The disease has claimed over 125,000 American lives.

For anyone who questioned why we should care about what happens elsewhere in the world, this pandemic has certainly been most assuredly a wake-

up call. The virus didn't start here, but it came here and Americans are now suffering from the effects of an epidemic that shows no signs of stopping.

Even if we bring it under control in the United States, in the absence of U.S. leadership for a truly global response, the virus can and will return. We cannot safeguard American lives without one, but we cannot lead or even meaningfully participate in a global response when we don't have a coherent and effective domestic strategy.

The President's desperate denial, his refusal to take this pandemic seriously, and his seeming inability to care about the health and well-being of all Americans are as shocking as they are dangerous.

As opposed to a pandemic response strategy, the White House seems to have a dangerous public relations strategy focused on perpetuating a false narrative that insists the pandemic is almost over, blames China and the World Health Organization for its own preparedness and response failures, overstates the administration's domestic and international response, and refuses to be candid with Congress and the American people about the consequences of its irresponsible actions.

Make no mistake, contrary to what the White House would have us believe, the COVID-19 threat is far from over. As Dr. Anthony Fauci testified, it is a lack of serious response—not as some in the White House would have us believe, more tests—that is leading to the skyrocketing case numbers and hospitalization rates we are seeing today.

Unfortunately, the haphazardness that has characterized the White House's response at home has also shaped its response abroad.

Secretary Pompeo is right. The American people are the most generous on the planet, but that belies this administration's actual response. The reality is that when it comes to discussions about what it is doing to end the pandemic globally, the administration is trumpeting programs it has spent 3 years consistently and aggressively cutting, which explains perfectly why Secretary Pompeo, to this day, refuses to come before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to defend his proposed fiscal year 2021 budget.

America, the world needs a strategy to end this pandemic, not a PR blitz to cover inaction. The blame game will not help us either. Yet, instead of taking care of the business at hand, the administration is channeling its energy toward fault finding and divisive, racially inflammatory rhetoric.

First, the White House tried to say that the U.S. epidemic was the World Health Organization's fault, despite the fact that the United States was regularly communicating with and receiving information from the WHO, including through U.S. Government employees embedded at the WHO headquarters in Geneva.

In May, the administration announced a 30-day plan to review the organization's handling of the pandemic response. But less than 2 weeks after it announced that sham review, the President said he was going to withdraw from the organization—so much for the 30-day review.

Next, the administration doubled down on blaming China. The President, the Secretary of State, and the Deputy Administrator of USAID have all used racially stigmatizing language to describe COVID-19, in direct contradiction to guidance issued by our own Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And the insistence that the rest of the world agree to use such language has prevented us from reaching consensus on statements at the G-7 and in the U.N. Security Council and seriously weakened our standing.

If this administration is truly concerned about China's malign intent at the WHO and elsewhere, there is a simple answer: Take action. If the United States leads, others will follow. If we leave the field open, others, like China, will step into the vacuum.

Isolationist, go-it-alone tactics are not the way to end a pandemic. At a time when the United States should be leading the global response to one of the greatest threats we face in the 21st century—and this pandemic will, most certainly, not be our last—I have to wonder if, instead, what we are witnessing is the death of American leadership and the end of American exceptionalism, brought about by the inattention and ineptitude of the Trump administration, both here and abroad.

Meanwhile, the rest of the world is stepping up and stepping past us. For example, when Chinese President Xi Jinping addressed the World Health Assembly in May, he pledged \$2 billion over 2 years to combat COVID-19. Secretary Azar used the opportunity to attack the WHO and cast blame on China for the pandemic.

The European Union held a pledging conference on vaccines in May, at which \$8.2 billion was raised. The United States was invited to participate, but the White House declined the invitation. Is this what the President means by "America first"?

Well, if this EU consortium comes up with a vaccine before we do, it will mean America last, as we wait for them to share it with us.

This approach is not only isolationist, shortsighted, and foolish; it is dangerous.

It is clear that the administration's response is not keeping the American people safe, and it is just as clear that there are actions we can take to effectively respond to this pandemic and better prepare for future pandemics.

Since the administration doesn't seem to have any ideas, Democrats on the Foreign Relations Committee introduced a bill to provide some. S. 3669, the COVID-19 International Response and Recovery Act, or CIRRA, presents

a clear strategy to confront the ongoing pandemic—the ongoing pandemic—and prepare the United States to deal with the next.

It compels the Trump administration to constructively engage with other countries, international organizations, and multilateral fora to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

Specifically, our bill authorizes an additional \$9 billion in funding to fight the COVID-19 pandemic through contributions toward vaccine research at the Coalition for Preparedness and Innovations; a contribution to the Global Fund for Aids, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, for its COVID-19 response mechanism; additional funding for emergency overseas humanitarian assistance in response to the pandemic, ensuring that these funds are provided both to the U.N. for its global response plan, as well as directly to NGOs working on the frontlines; and a new surge financing authority at the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, or DFC, that will allow the DFC to expedite decisions and make strategic investments quickly to aid in COVID-19 reconstruction efforts.

CIRRA also puts in place mechanisms to help us prepare for the next pandemic. It requires an annual national intelligence estimate on pandemic threats, and it establishes a White House adviser for global health security to coordinate a whole-of-government U.S. response to global health security emergencies, aimed at improving both domestic and international capacity to prevent, respond, and detect epidemic and pandemic threats.

It clearly delineates the roles for the State Department, USAID, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in responding to pandemic threats, and it directs the U.S. Executive Director at the World Bank to begin negotiations to establish a trust fund at the World Bank designed not to compete with or supplant the World Health Organization but to work in tandem with the WHO on incentivizing countries to mobilize their own resources for epidemic and pandemic preparedness.

Now, my Republican colleague on the Foreign Relations Committee finally did introduce a modest bill in response to the pandemic. In keeping with the Republican effort to pretend that the pandemic is over, it completely ignores the current crisis.

Instead, it focuses on giving legislative cover to elite proposals from the White House that seem to strip essential pandemic response functions from USAID and put them in the State Department, and sets up a structure at the World Bank that would allow the White House to channel funding meant for the WHO into another multilateral mechanism.

Colleagues, to say that that approach is inadequate to meet the crisis of the century would be so much of an understatement as to almost be a lie in and of itself. The chairman's legislation

completely ignores the current pandemic while setting us up for failure when we are confronted by the next pandemic. We quite simply must do better.

More than 700 Americans a day are dying. Neither the finger-pointing, blame-game, race-baiting statements linked to the origins of the disease, nor a strategy centered on denial will win the battle against COVID-19.

It is painfully apparently that Congress will have to lead in this effort, just as it led in domestic relief and recovery efforts. If we fail to develop a proposal that boldly and robustly addresses the current crisis, ensures that we are adequately prepared for the next one, and aids countries around the globe with recovery, we will have failed the American people and fallen painfully short of the legacy created through initiatives such as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the Marshall plan, to name a few.

We must understand that there is a recent report that came out of a potential swine flu. Well, whether it is that or something else, we have the risk of the next pandemic. Our engagement globally is not just about being a good global citizen. It is about security and health here at home.

When we can engage abroad to stop the flow of a virus, then, we ultimately achieve the success on behalf of the American people, and we leave the world with a better response. That is what we are seeking to do, and we will come back to the floor at the appropriate time to seek to move that legislation.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 5084

Madam President, turning to a different topic for the moment, one that my colleague from Louisiana is also here to join me in—and I appreciate his being here—I come to the floor today, in addition to speaking about the COVID-19 international legislation, to seek unanimous consent on H.R. 5084, the Improving Corporate Governance Through Diversity Act of 2019.

This is a bipartisan piece of legislation aimed at increasing transparency in America's corporate boardrooms and ultimately lead to greater diversity in the upper tiers of America's companies.

We know that corporate America has a diversity problem. Boards and executive offices across the United States do not look like the customers they serve.

Multiple studies, including my own, have demonstrated this hard fact. Since 2010, I have conducted four surveys focused on the Fortune 100 companies looking into this problem. They had very big response rates, for which I am grateful to the companies who participated.

My latest survey revealed that since 2010, women and people of color have made only marginal gains in representations on corporate boards. For example, in 2018, women held only 25 percent of corporate board seats on Fortune 100 companies. Despite making up over half of the entire U.S. population, they

held only 25 percent of corporate board seats, and only 5.8 percent of that 25 percent were women of color. While men make up 75 percent of Fortune 100 corporate board seats, only 13.7 percent of those are men of color.

If we wanted to take a broader look, the picture is even bleaker. Latinos and Latinas make up 25 percent of the U.S. population, yet they held only 2.7 percent of corporate board seats in Fortune 100 companies. I could go on, but I think I have made the point.

I was originally hopeful that the Securities and Exchange Commission would help address this problem through its 2009 diversity disclosure rule, but the 2009 rule failed to even define diversity and gives companies far too much discretion on what they report. That is why I introduced a bill last year with Representative MEEKS to improve the SEC rule.

The bill does three main things. No. 1, it requires public companies to disclose specific information related to the racial, gender, ethnic makeup and veteran status of corporate boards and senior management—simple disclosure. No. 2, it requires public companies to disclose whether they have policies in place to promote diversity in their leadership. No. 3, it requires the SEC to establish a diversity advisory group composed of government, academic, and private sector representatives to study strategies for increasing gender, racial, and ethnic diversity in corporate America.

Let me be clear. The bill does not force companies to be more diverse, but it does require them to be more transparent about their numbers and their practices. That is valuable information that the public and potential investors should have when deciding where to put their money.

The House passed this bill on a bipartisan vote in November, and it enjoys bipartisan support here in the Senate. It is supported by a fantastic coalition that includes the NAACP, the National Urban League, the Latino Corporate Directors Association, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Corporate diversity is not just morally right; corporate diversity makes financial sense. McKinsey & Company studies have consistently found that greater diversity on executive teams has led to greater profitability. The need for increased corporate diversity is not an act of benevolence; it is a necessity for businesses looking to compete in a diverse 21st century economy.

Before I proceed to my unanimous consent request, I would like to yield to Senator KENNEDY for some remarks he has on this issue, and then I will proceed to that consent request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, thank you to my colleague from New Jersey for yielding me some time.

I sit on the Banking Committee with Senator MENENDEZ, and it is my privilege. I have learned a lot from listening

to him, along with our chairman, Senator CRAPO.

While convictions are important to us on the Banking Committee, so is data. I believe that as much as we can be, America is and should be a color-blind meritocracy. I believe in that.

I also believe in data. I believe in facts. This is a data bill. This is a fact bill. This doesn't make anybody do anything except be transparent.

This bill applies to public companies. Some may call them Wall Street companies, but they are spread throughout America. I make that point simply to reaffirm that this does not apply to small, publicly held companies we sometimes call Main Street businesses.

This bill is endorsed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. This fact and data bill passed overwhelmingly in the House with a bipartisan coalition, and as Senator MENENDEZ eloquently pointed out, it simply requires public—usually large, but not always—publicly held corporations to report data with respect to their Board of Directors, nominees to the Board of Directors, and their executive officers.

The data that these companies are being asked to report is data with respect to gender, data with respect to veteran status, data with respect to ethnicity, and data with respect to race to the extent that the board members, nominees, and the executive officers themselves report that data.

Frankly, and I will end on this note, I was very surprised that we didn't have this data. In fact, when I first read Congressman MEEKS' bill and Senator MENENDEZ's bill, I thought: This can't be necessary; we must have this data at the Securities and Exchange Commission. We do not, but we will if this bill becomes law. For that reason, I rise in support of Congressman MEEKS' legislation and Senator MENENDEZ's legislation, and I support it.

With that, I would yield to Senator MENENDEZ.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. I thank the Senator from Louisiana for his words and for his support, and I wish we had this already. It is not very difficult—transparency, information for which consumers can make decisions and investors can make decisions, and you would think in the 21st Century, that is not a problem.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be discharged from further consideration and the Senate proceed to H.R. 5084; I further ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, the purpose of the Securities and Exchange Commission

is to protect investors and to maintain orderly and efficient markets. This bill would change that deal. It would change the entire premise of the SEC. It would use the SEC to pressure people to disclose personal information that has no connection to the financial health of the company, information that many people understandably, justifiably, and with really good reason prefer to keep private. Why? Because it is not the public's business; it is theirs.

The bill requires businesses to probe the race, gender, ethnicity, and veteran status of not only those already on the senior payroll of their companies but also anyone who is even considered for those positions.

Secondly, the free market already provides a way to achieve these goals. If investors prefer to invest in companies that have certain kinds of people on their boards and certain kinds of people in executive positions, then companies have a financial incentive to disclose that information. No one is stopping them from doing that. Many companies do, in fact, disclose that information. Many companies are already providing this information because their customers and their investors are demanding it.

Government is neither omniscient nor omnipotent. It is not a deity. It is just force. It is just organized, collective official force. That is all it is. We should not use the heavy hand of government for things that the American people already have the opportunity to do on their own and in many, if not most, cases already are doing on their own.

Finally, the bill co-opts Federal employees at the SEC to create a diversity advisory group of government bureaucrats and academics who would advise Congress on policies to increase ethnic and gender diversity on corporate boards.

We already have a diversity advisory group. We already have it. It is the millions of Americans whom we represent. To think that bureaucrats at the SEC could inform Congress of the importance of inclusion and diversity better than the American people is wasteful, and to think that it is appropriate to vest in the SEC an entity designed to protect investors from fraudulent activities of those running these enterprises is just the wrong conception, not only of the SEC but of government in general.

For these reasons, Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. I am not surprised, but I am deeply disappointed that my colleague takes that position. First of all, the SEC has had a diversity rule since 2009. It has a diversity rule, but the diversity rule as they devised it doesn't do anything about transparency of information. So we are not creating something at the SEC that the SEC itself wasn't pursuing in the protection of investors.

If I were an investor, I would like to know whether a company is diverse or not. Latinos represent 25 percent of the population, the fastest growing, largest minority in the Nation. I would like to know if the money I am going to put into a stock—buying a stock of a company—does it reflect the understanding of that community in any way? African Americans—does it reflect that understanding? Does it reflect the understanding that 50 percent of the population are women?

The free market—yes, the free market works on information. You make decisions in the free market based on information, but when the information is hidden from you, when you can't find out, in fact, what is the diversity of the corporate board, senior executive management, procurement and other things, then the free market doesn't work very well, does it?

The heavy hand of government—oh, my God—to disclose, to be transparent—that is the heavy hand of government? When the government doesn't work to make our systems more transparent so that investors and consumers can make decisions, who will do that? The free market? I don't think so.

The Senator from Utah, I know, has been very much an advocate of transparency in other matters; somehow, in this one, it seems to be a problem. And to protect investors—yes, we ought to protect investors because investors who would be making investments in a company that is devoid of African Americans, devoid of Latinos, devoid of the representation of who America is today may think twice about the large pension funds and other entities. They may say: Wait a minute. Maybe that is not the type of company I want to invest in.

But the investor will not know that unless they have that information. I would think, in the 21st century, when we see the national debate that is taking place today on the questions of race, on questions of ethnicity and other things, we would want to at least have the data so that we can make intelligent decisions.

By the way, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce—the Chamber of Commerce is normally not on my side. They came and testified specifically in support of this provision. They represent business in America, and they came forth and said: We believe that, in fact, this is good for business. If it weren't good for business, they wouldn't be there. They wouldn't be advocating for it.

So we will succeed at this. We may not have done it today by this process, but we will succeed at this because the Nation requires it. It is good accountability. It is good transparency. It is good for the free market to know what the information is so people can make decisions. It is certainly, at the end of the day, about protecting investors. So I look forward to making that happen at the appropriate time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I have deep affection and adoration for my friend

and colleague, the Senator from New Jersey. I do respectfully but strongly disagree with his position on this.

He made the point several times that if he were acting as an investor, he would very much like to know the composition of a corporate board or an executive team within a corporation, which is great. A lot of people feel the same way. That isn't the question. No one is stopping a corporation from disclosing that information. In fact, a whole lot of corporations do.

Some may not want to do that. Some might want to disclose some of this information but not all of it. Some might not want to be in a position of asking probing questions regarding the gender and ethnicity and race of their employees, understanding that it will then be disclosed to the public under the crushing force of Federal law.

There are legitimate reasons why a company might not want to do that, some of which have to do with that company's own ability to treat its employees and its board members and its executive team with dignity and respect. In some circumstances, not everything is the government's business.

Transparency, yes. It is absolutely something that I believe in. Transparency usually refers to what we need when it comes to government action. Transparency is what we demand when we require open public hearings when government does business. Transparency is what we require when we allow government documents to be made public and allow the public to see what the regulatory process is doing.

Transparency doesn't mean that everything that everyone does in America that has a tie to economic activity is the public's business. The fact that it is publicly traded doesn't mean it is owned by the government.

So the statement made by my colleague to the effect that when information is hidden from you, then the free market doesn't work very well—I don't understand what that means. If what he is suggesting is that it is hidden in violation of law, that is not the case. If what he is suggesting is that the free market can't punish those who refuse to disclose information about the boards and reward those who do, that is exactly what the free market does. The free market has every opportunity to work here. It is not as though nobody is providing this information, but it is not their business.

As to the suggestion that because the Chamber of Commerce supports this, therefore it is pro-business, and because it is pro-business, we should all support it, I respectfully but strongly disagree. I know that as a Republican, I am supposed to automatically agree with what the Chamber of Commerce says. Sometimes I do, but, you know, a whole lot of the time, I don't.

This goes back a long time. It goes back to the time when the U.S. Chamber of Commerce opposed a massive tax reform bill that was proposed by President Calvin Coolidge. I found some relief in the fantastic, eponymous book

“Coolidge” about President Coolidge and his proposal of that reform—a reform that, by the way, helped build America’s middle class and resulted in explosive economic growth. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce opposed that reform.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce gets a lot of things wrong, and it is wrong here. This isn’t the government’s business. These businesses are not government. They can do what they want, and it is not our place to say otherwise.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I appreciate the intellectual exercise we are going through on the floor. I will just make two final comments because I know that my colleague is anxiously waiting to talk about the need for people to be able to put food on the table.

Look, the Securities and Exchange Commission exists, yes, to protect investors and also the marketplace, but they make all types of demands upon the companies that are publicly traded in terms of disclosure of information, so I don’t know what is so difficult about that.

I will say this: The Nation will have a rude awakening if it thinks it can continue with business as usual—a rude awakening.

Something as simple as simply knowing the information about diversity on corporate boards, which every study shows actually improves the bottom line and which investors should be able to have to make those decisions—and we are not talking about the employees; we are talking about the corporate board members, my God, the people who make billions of dollars of decisions, who ultimately decide whether they go to a community or don’t go to a community to invest in, who ultimately get the dollars from the communities that I like to see represented. It is good enough to take our money, but it is not good enough to have us have any representation. And evidently this body is not even good enough to have the information so I know who is taking my money without representation. That cannot be. That cannot be the American way.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, as my distinguished friend and colleague from New Jersey says, the fact that they make all types of demands on publicly traded companies is not a substitute for an actual logical or legal argument as to why they are entitled to information that is not theirs—information these companies may or may not choose to collect because that is their business. It is not the government’s business, and it sure as heck isn’t the government.

So the fact that they make all types of demands on publicly traded companies doesn’t prove the point here. We have to remember something, and, yes, we have to remember it right now in

this moment—not in spite of this moment but because of it. Government is for. We have seen the catastrophic consequences of people who lose sight of what government is for and what its limitations are.

The fact is that we don’t have access to angels, as James Madison described it in Federalist 51. If men were angels, we wouldn’t have a need for government. If we had access to angels to run our government, we wouldn’t need all these rules. But because we are not angels, we don’t have access to them to run our government. We have to have rules, and there have to be limitations on what is and isn’t the role of government.

Now, look, there are all kinds of businesses that keep track of this information on the corporate board members and those considered for those positions and their executives and those considered for those positions. It is not our role to tell them the information they have to extract from each and every person they interview for those positions and demand that it be publicly disclosed. Why? Well, because, among other things, it is none of their darn business, and in many cases, it is none of ours. That is the business of the individual.

We shouldn’t be punishing companies, businesses, and hard-working Americans. Yes, some of them are rich, and a whole lot of them are not rich. We shouldn’t be punishing them just because they don’t happen to share our view of how they ought to be operating.

I find it curious that he says over and over again that this is how they will be more successful and this is how they will make more money. It is not our place to decide. They are free to operate their business in a foolish way and in a way that might cost them money. It doesn’t make it our place to decide this.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise today to be joined by my colleagues as well. I am very grateful to see the Senator from Ohio here.

Thank you so much for being on the floor.

Other colleagues will join to speak this evening on behalf of millions of American families who are struggling to make ends meet and feed their families at this incredibly challenging time.

The COVID-19 crisis is taking a profound toll on our economy and the quality of life of millions of families. As businesses have closed and millions have lost their jobs, the number of people in need of food assistance has soared. Food banks have seen a 70-percent increase in demand—70 percent increase in demand. We have all seen the photos of lines of families in cars stretching on and on for miles, waiting in parking lots with moms and dads, trying to get food for their children.

And even though donations have gone up—we are a generous people in this country—donations have gone up, but the need has far outpaced the funds that are available.

As the pandemic swept across our Nation, one in five adults experienced food insecurity—one in five. More than 3 months later, even more Americans in every State are struggling to put food on the table. These are laid-off workers who lost their jobs due to the pandemic and aren’t sure they will be able to find employment. Many of them need food assistance, and it is for the first time in their life that they need to ask for that help.

These are single moms and dads who are worried about getting their kids fed before they even think about themselves.

These are veterans who are willing to put their lives on the line for the country. Now they are struggling to find work and make rent and just need a little extra help getting the food they need to survive.

These are senior citizens who are at high risk of COVID-19 and have had to make drastic changes to their day-to-day life just to stay safe.

These are children who relied on school meals for breakfast and lunch, possibly after school as well, who have gotten used to the pain of an empty stomach since their school closed.

To these people, hunger is not a partisan issue. It is not a political issue. For them, it is a daily reality that they face. For many of them, SNAP is the vital lifeline that keeps them fed in times of need, and today that need is even greater. If we are looking at the direction of COVID-19 and what is happening across the country, I am concerned, but I think it is realistic to say that the need is going to go even higher.

In any crisis, it is just common sense to make sure affected families have their basic needs met. When I think of my friend from Ohio, who is our champion on housing—we talked about housing as being a basic need. I don’t know anything more basic than a roof over your head and food on the table. Food and housing are pretty basic. We would all suggest that those are things that you start with and that you want for yourself and your family.

When people’s lives are turned upside down through no fault of their own, Americans come together to provide a temporary safety net to help them get back on their feet. That is what the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is, SNAP. It is not there for when folks don’t need it; it is there for when they do need it.

During every past disaster, we have acted to make sure, as Americans, that people don’t go hungry. On a bipartisan basis, we have increased SNAP benefits when families are in need and in cases of natural and economic disasters, like after the 2008 financial crisis.

I do note that my dear friend, the chairman of the Ag Committee—who I

think is on a different side of what we are going to be asking for tonight—he and I have come together over and over again on a bipartisan basis and will continue to do that to work together on these issues.

We provide additional help to people in need. That is the first thing we do. Yet we know that increasing SNAP benefits, in addition to helping people in need, should be No. 1. Put people first—that should be No. 1.

The great news with SNAP is that it also boosts the economy. This is a twofer. According to the USDA, SNAP is one of the best investments we can make. For every dollar we put into SNAP benefits, when somebody walks into the grocery store and buys food, we see roughly \$1.70 more in the economy. It is the most efficient way to help farmers and to help the food industry, is to allow people to have money to buy food for themselves and their kids and for their parents.

We know that every additional billion dollars in SNAP supports nearly 14,000 jobs.

Usually families spend their benefits immediately, so it is very quick. I mean, you don't spend a lot of time—if you are hungry, you are not going to be waiting a couple of weeks before you use your SNAP benefits; you are going to immediately go to the store. That is an immediate economic impact.

When families buy food at grocery stores and markets, as I said, they are strengthening their local economies and the supply chain as a whole, from the farmers to the truckdrivers, to the stockers, to the cashiers, to the folks who invest in the stock markets.

In fact, farmers understand better than anybody that families are their customers. That is why, when we write a bipartisan farm bill, which I am proud that we have been able to do, we make sure it helps both farmers and families.

Farm bills are about a farmer safety net. Farmers need additional help right now. It is also about a family's safety net, and families need help right now. Families across the country need help right now, and this time is no different. Nearly 2,500 farm and food advocates agree with that. In a letter to Senate leadership, these groups, including the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, the National Milk Producers Federation, the National Farmers Union—thousands of organizations—have urged us to increase SNAP benefits for families in need right now with what is happening right now in this crisis.

We are asking for something very simple and very reasonable, a 15-percent boost in SNAP benefits. This increase means an additional \$25 a month per person. That may not seem like much, unless you don't have any food, unless you can't feed your children, unless you are a senior, and you can't get food.

The fact is, it may mean that a mom can actually give her children some

fruits and vegetables so they can stay healthy while they are staying at home through this crisis. It means maybe one less skipped meal at the end of the month. One less skipped meal, that is what we are talking about.

This modest increase will help ensure that families most affected by the pandemic will be able to cover the cost of food while they stay safe, while they look for work, and while they rebuild their lives, which many families are needing to do.

We also need to increase the minimum amount of SNAP from \$16 to \$30 per day. Again, for all of us, that doesn't seem like a lot. The reality is, this may be lifesaving—lifesaving—this difference, especially for our seniors who live alone.

We must also waive the Trump administration's harmful regulations that will take food assistance away from hungry Americans when they need it the most. At a time when our neighbors and our economy are struggling, it is unconscionable to move forward with rules that would cut and deny benefits to millions of Americans, rules that would take away school meals from up to 1 million children.

The Senate has the power to provide quick help to millions of people in every State across the country right now, right now. What a great way to spend a Wednesday evening to be able to help millions of families during this crisis.

This is urgently needed. This is urgently needed help for the millions of families who are wondering where their next meal is going to come from. This is urgently needed help for the millions of people who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own in this crisis.

When an unprecedented emergency has put American lives and livelihoods in danger, we have an obligation to act. It is not only our sworn duty; it is the right thing to do. It is just, plainly, the right thing to do.

Boosting SNAP benefits is a tried-and-true, effective way to strengthen the economy and help Americans put food on the table. The U.S. Senate should not look away in the face of so much need.

Therefore, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of my bill to make temporary modifications to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which is at the desk. I further ask that the bill be considered read three times and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. I rise to respond to this unanimous consent request to call up and pass a bill to make modifications to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as SNAP.

Over the past few months, through the enactment of both the Families First Act and the CARES Act, Congress has provided both funding and flexibilities for nutrition assistance during this pandemic emergency. The funding from the Families First and CARES Acts has included the following: \$15 billion for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; \$8.8 billion for the School and Child Nutrition Programs; \$1 billion in food distribution programs, like The Emergency Food Assistance Program, TEFAP, and the Food Distribution Program for Indian Reservations; \$500 million for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, or the WIC Program.

In addition, Congress provided emergency SNAP benefits, allotments, and pandemic EBT benefits for children while schools are closed.

The Department of Agriculture has been steadily distributing both food and benefits, and the Department has granted and extended many flexibilities to State and sponsoring organizations to get food to those in need.

The distinguished Senator from Michigan, for whom I have a great deal of respect and friendship—we have a history of working together on the Agriculture Committee to help those in need.

In fact, just last week, we wrote the Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue, about some of the WIC flexibilities, and the Department of Agriculture has already acted to extend those flexibilities. This is just a recent example of the good work we can accomplish together, but I respectfully object to this unanimous consent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I agree with my friend from Kansas that we work together in many ways and have been able to get a lot of good things together by working across the aisle. I want to focus on just a couple of things to expound on what he said, though.

While we, in fact, did add dollars for some emergency SNAP in the original Families First Response Act, unfortunately, about 40 percent of the households didn't get any extra help at all. These were our poorest citizens. These were those who were already getting—because their income was so low—the maximum benefit, and they got no help at all. So 40 percent of the folks didn't see anything that was just described, and, for others, we are very concerned about the temporary nature of this and the fact that it was not enough to sustain what is happening for families.

The 15 percent that we are talking about, which is something that was done back during the economic recession and has been done in various ways in the past, is an important response to make sure that every single family and

individual who needs food assistance—not just some but that every single one can get the help they need at this time.

What has been done up to this point was a start. It is surely not enough—surely not enough. At the very beginning of this process, it was not clear how long this was going to go or how deep this was going to go.

The U.S. Senate needs to respond to what we are seeing now and how families are being affected across the country.

I am going to now yield to Senator BROWN and then Senator KLOBUCHAR. I believe I saw her on the floor as well. Yes, Senator KLOBUCHAR and then Senator WYDEN as well—three tremendous advocates.

Thank you so much.

Senator BROWN.

Mr. BROWN. Thank you, Senator STABENOW, and thank you for introducing this bill and your leadership on all issues agriculture, especially the importance of SNAP and feeding people.

This is the United States of America. One specific thing Senator STABENOW said that really caught me was, it is pretty simple: People should have a roof over their head, and people should have food on the table.

Think if you don't. I don't think that probably most of us know, intimately, people who don't have enough to eat and people who get evicted. I don't think we feel the anxiety they feel every night, wondering about the next meal. Today is July 1, wondering about the rent payment.

Senator KLOBUCHAR said this earlier today; that before the coronavirus, 25 percent of Americans who rent spend more than half their income in rent. So if one thing goes wrong in their life—one thing goes wrong: their car breaks down; they have a problem and their roof leaks; their child gets sick; they get hurt on the job and miss 2 weeks of pay, their life turns upside down.

Do we think about them? Do we think about their anxiety? Apparently not.

Today, this could have been a really, really, really good day for workers in this country—for fast-food workers, for the people who change the linen in hospitals, for custodians, for data entry people, for home care workers—people who are on their feet all day long working for little pay. It could have been a big-deal day. It could be a red-letter day for them because we could have assured them that they will not get evicted; that they will not get foreclosed on if their hours have been cut back or if they are laid off; and we could have assured them that they would get a little food on the table. But under the leadership of Senator MCCONNELL, we don't ever do that.

Senator MCCONNELL's office is back there. I don't know if he ever thinks about people like that. One of my favorite Lincoln quotes is he said: I have to get out of the White House and get my public opinion baths. I have to see

how people are living. I want to hear about people's lives.

I can't imagine Senator MCCONNELL does any of that; otherwise, he couldn't make these awful, hard-hearted decisions to eliminate unemployment when it ends at the end of this month. Maybe he will decide to compromise, but, right now, if you are an unemployed worker, and you can't find a job in Detroit or in Portland or in Eugene or in St. Paul, you wonder if your unemployment is going to just stop, and you are going to get evicted. You don't have enough food, and we don't do a damn thing about it here.

This is the United States of America. Couldn't we help hard-working Americans? Instead, we see an objection to rental assistance. We see an objection to increasing food benefits. I don't get it, the United States of America, that this would possibly happen.

We should take up and pass Senator STABENOW's bill right now to increase SNAP benefits.

At a time when the country is finally focusing on racial injustice, we have to recognize these issues are all connected.

You all know that this pandemic has been the great revealer. It has revealed income inequality. It has revealed racial disparities. It has revealed life expectancies. If you look like me, your life expectancy is a good bit longer than if you are African American or Latino in this country; that our earning power is more and that our educational opportunities are greater. We know all that. Are we doing anything about it here? No, we are not.

The President of the United States has put all of that behind him. He doesn't care about the pandemic. He never mentions the 120,000 people in this country—our brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers and children and grandparents who have died from this. He never mentions them. He has forgotten about that. He just doesn't want it to affect the stock market.

It goes on and on and on. Increased demand at food banks, we hear it all the time. We see the stress on employees and the volunteers at food banks.

Governor DeWine, to his credit—a Republican, and I appreciate that he is doing this—sent the National Guard in to help at food banks. Why? Because many, many food bank volunteers are older, and they couldn't risk getting exposed to so many who are coming in for food. The lines are hours and hours and hours long. Food insecurity rates have doubled since March, almost.

We are realizing why we have a safety net in this country. We are realizing the importance of government. But, apparently, my colleagues, under Senator MCCONNELL and President Trump, don't want to recognize that government has a role in our lives.

The House did its part. It passed the Heroes Act, which has a 15-percent across-the-board increase of SNAP benefits, but, as always, Leader MCCONNELL is standing in the way.

Leader MCCONNELL says no to rental assistance. He says no to helping State and local governments. Wait until the layoffs in Michigan and Ohio and Oregon and Minnesota and North and South Dakota. Wait until the government and the local government layoffs come. Then what are we going to do?

People shouldn't have to always fend for themselves in the middle of a crisis. We should not have people starving or risking their health to get food. People shouldn't be hungry in this country—in this rich country.

It is time for us to step up. It is time to lead where the President has failed. It is time for Senator MCCONNELL to let us do our jobs—debate this; let's pass it; and let's move forward.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I want to thank Senator BROWN for his eloquence and advocacy, and I want to thank him also for being an incredibly effective member of the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee, as is our next speaker, the senior Senator from Minnesota—two Members that I am so proud to have as partners of mine on the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee.

I yield time to Senator KLOBUCHAR.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I want to thank the Senator from Michigan for her leadership on the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee, helping to pass and leading the last farm bill in the Senate, along with Senator ROBERTS and so many of us who are on that committee.

We understand that rural America is hurting right now, and rural America is actually part of the solution as well for so many people who are hungry and who need help.

This pandemic and its economic impact has left 41 million Americans unemployed and strained the financial security of hundreds of thousands of families across this country.

I have always worked to ensure, from the minute I got on the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee, that we focus on nutrition. Programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—or, as it is known, SNAP—are the place to do this: to provide meaningful relief to families, children, senior citizens, veterans. People all over this country, people who never thought they would be out of a job, people who used to—and I heard this story in Minnesota—volunteer in food banks, now they are standing in line at food banks because they unexpectedly lost their jobs.

Many of us have seen this. I have visited these food banks. Even before the pandemic, more than 37 million people, including more than 11 million children, were living in a food-insecure household.

Analytics released by the national nonprofit Feeding America in April

projected these numbers to increase this year to more than 54 million people, including 18 million children.

The 350 food shelves in my State operated by Second Harvest Heartland are seeing double or triple the number of visitors. So this weekend, on Sunday, I visited one of our biggest food shelves, Second Harvest Heartland, with Director Allison O'Toole, with a number of people who were working there around the clock. They just released a study. What the study said is that before the pandemic 1 in 11 Minnesotans were living with hunger. Now, they project for August—only a little over a month from now—that one in eight Minnesotans will be food insecure—one in eight.

They said, tracking our State's history back to the Great Depression, they have never seen anything like this since the Great Depression—not even the economic downturn 10 years ago, not the ups and downs in unemployment that we have seen in our rural areas, the farm crises up in Northern Minnesota—nothing like they are projecting to happen.

July begins with the Fourth of July. The Fourth of July is when we celebrate our country. We celebrate what America means. My hope is that we will end July by actually passing the Heroes Act. I know we are going to negotiate it, colleagues. I know we will make changes over what passed in the House, but we cannot let our States go bankrupt. We must help local areas.

I was on the phone today with our friends in the Fargo-Moorhead area, and we have seen it there too. We have seen it all over our State.

The SNAP program was originally designed to respond to changes in the economy by expanding to meet increased need during economic downturns and contracting as economic recovery alleviates the need for food assistance.

Under the farm bill that was signed into law under Senator STABENOW's leadership in 2018, we preserved this critical lifeline. The conference report, which passed with 87 votes in the Senate and 369 votes in the House of Representatives, avoided making cuts to benefits or changes to eligibility that would take away benefits or create obstacles.

At this difficult time, we should ensure that we are getting assistance to all of those who need it, not put up new barriers—not with what we are seeing with more COVID cases in the southern part of this country and in the western part of this country.

In fact, the facts and the numbers bear out that we should be increasing those benefits. The House has taken action to do just that by passing a 15-percent increase in SNAP benefits during the pandemic. That is what they did in the Heroes Act. That is what we should do here.

At the same time, the middle of a pandemic is the wrong time to be cutting SNAP benefits or kicking partici-

pants out of the program, and that is why I have called on the administration to withdraw rules that would take these benefits away from families in need.

As for food deserts, again, the pandemic has simply put a big, fat magnifying glass on a problem that already existed, and that is that 23.5 million Americans live in a food desert where the absence of a grocery store within 1 mile of their home makes it more difficult to purchase fresh, nutritious food.

Low-income Americans and people of color are much more likely to live in a food desert, and people in rural areas live in these food deserts all over America.

That is why Senator BROWN and I wrote a letter with 20 Senators urging the Department of Agriculture to prioritize these programs intended to minimize food deserts and support local and regional efforts for these projects.

We cannot overlook the capacity needs of food shelves, and that is something I talked about with our friends at Second Harvest Heartland just this weekend.

The WORK NOW Act is something that—I appreciate Senator WYDEN is here as one of the cosponsors, along with Senator BROWN and Senator SCHATZ—supports nonprofit organizations, to make it easier for them to hire people who are actually out of work, who could then help other people.

It is why I joined Senator STABENOW and several of my colleagues in the Agriculture Committee in introducing the Food Supply Protection Act to help food banks increase their capacity and strengthen partnerships to prevent food waste while feeding more families.

One of my predecessors, Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, whose desk I stand in front of today—his name is carved in the desk—served on the Agriculture Committee. He grew up in a small town in South Dakota. He became a professor eventually, but his father was a pharmacist. He understood the importance—growing up in that family, seeing the ups and downs of rural America—of stable government policy for both agriculture producers and families struggling to put food on the table.

He was a leading advocate of Federal nutrition programs and played an instrumental role in the passage of what was then called the Food Stamp Act of 1964, which turned what was then just a pilot program into the permanent program we know today.

He knew that the moral test of government is how government treats its most vulnerable citizens: those in need, those who are seniors, those with disabilities.

He once said this: "We will be remembered not for the power of our weapons but for the power of our compassion, our dedication to human welfare."

In these times of uncertainty and with rising food insecurity, we need to work to ensure that the nutrition needs of our most vulnerable citizens are met.

I yield the floor.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I want to thank my friend from Minnesota for her wonderful words. Again, we think about all the need that is there, and we are here just trying to make sure that people can get their basics, such as food on the table for the kids.

We are very fortunate, and I feel very fortunate to have both Senators from Oregon here on the floor this evening. I am going to first yield now to Senator WYDEN, but I want to say first: Senator WYDEN is the ranking member of the Finance Committee, as we know. I think that is a pretty powerful committee, and we are grateful for his leadership.

I am particularly grateful for the work the Senator is doing and has done on unemployment compensation and what needs to be done and the importance of tying all of this together—for somebody having enough income to be able to pay the rent and then getting enough help to put food on the table.

I am proud to be his partner and very much appreciate all that he is doing to put people first—Senator WYDEN.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I thank Senator STABENOW, my seatmate on the Senate Finance Committee. We are a bit more socially distant now, but we still have spent this time plotting and thinking and trying to imagine a future that provides the kinds of priorities that we have been talking about today.

Senator STABENOW's reports particularly—these wonderful reports that document the cost of inaction—I have almost made them a reference tool on my desk so, when I have to look at a particular area, I can turn to one of those Stabenow reports. They are always understandable, always cutting right to the heart of the issue, which is this: How are you going to give the opportunity for everybody in America to get ahead—not just the people at the top but everybody in America the chance to get ahead?

I am not going to take but a few minutes. I do want to note that I believe that Oregon is the only State to have produced 100 percent of its U.S. Senators on behalf of the cause tonight. This is something Senator MERKLEY and I enjoy doing when there is an opportunity to speak for justice.

I want to reflect for a minute on how the day started, because I guess it was almost 12 hours ago our Democratic leader, Senator SCHUMER, stood right there; I stood where I am; and he outlined the Schumer-Wyden proposal for the next steps on dealing with this crushing unemployment we have in our country—30 million people.

The number is almost so large that the experts can't get their arms around exactly how many people are unemployed, but what we know is that every

week it goes up far more than that kind of similar period during the great recession.

We talked about what is going to happen July 31. July 31, if the Senate does not act, we are going to have a tsunami of evictions. We are going to have families, just as Senator STABENOW said, basically sitting in their living rooms, sitting in their kitchens, and trying to figure out how they are going to make ends meet that month.

Without supercharged unemployment, without the SNAP benefits that Senator STABENOW is talking about, without the help Senator BROWN is talking about with respect to housing and evictions, there are a lot of people who are just going to fall between the cracks.

I thought, it being 12 hours since we began this, that I might just connect the dots for a few minutes.

In the face of this historic public health emergency, we know that millions of Americans have their health on the line, and because Donald Trump has failed to get the COVID-19 virus under control, we have now got jobs on the line. Now many people are being forced to choose between feeding their child or paying the rent to keep a roof over their head.

So you have housing, you have healthcare, you have unemployment, and we are trying very hard to be creative. I know, for my colleague from Michigan, hardly a day goes by when she doesn't talk to me about the benefit of Work Share, a creative way to make unemployment dollars stretch. By the way, Senator MERKLEY talks about it almost as much as my friend from Michigan because he feels very strongly about it.

So as we connect the dots, as we have over the last 12 hours, and we talk about housing and healthcare and unemployment, I also want people to understand that those challenges were serious last week and the week before.

We ought to put in context what we heard yesterday from Tony Fauci, who said that the trajectory as of right now is one where our country may possibly see 100,000 new cases a day.

So let's picture what that means for the SNAP program and how hard Senator STABENOW's work is going to be, because we have heard Chairman ROBERTS—and you all have worked very well—and the like, and hopefully we can get that worked out because I don't even want to begin to imagine how much hunger and unemployment and housing challenges we are going to face with 100,000 new cases a day.

So the work that Senator STABENOW is doing is urgent business. It really also brings us back to this: How can it be, in a country as strong and as good as ours, that we have all these kids going to bed hungry at night?

In our home State—the State Senator MERKLEY and I have the privilege to represent—one out of every four Oregonians worries about putting food on the table. Our Oregon Food Bank, run

by the inimitable Susannah Morgan, is doing a fabulous job. But the fact is—and I was really struck by this—the Oregon Food Bank has told my office that demand for emergency food has doubled in Oregon over the past 2 months at Oregon Food Bank's five branches.

Recently, I was home. Whenever Senator MERKLEY and I are home, we try to get out and talk to a variety of community groups. I was helping distribute food baskets. I was struck because we were all being socially distant. They were handing me the bags, and I was putting them in the back of the cart. I got a chance to have a little bit of a conversation with those people. The cars were backed up for blocks and blocks on the east side of our community, where Senator MERKLEY and I both live.

There were people who had not faced this kind of challenge before. You looked at them, and they looked at you, and you could see in their faces that they never expected this, particularly the seniors.

My colleague has heard all the Gray Panthers stories. Senator MERKLEY heard them 50 times; you only heard them 25 times. But a lot of those seniors going through in their cars, it was clear, also, that was the big outing for the day. They didn't get really dressed up, but kind of, and the car was perfectly clean. They came through, and they wanted to visit. But you knew that, without that food, they wouldn't have a chance to make it through the day.

What this comes down to is what Senator STABENOW is basically doing, is being in the Tikun Olam business. That is a phrase Jews often use; it is about perfecting the world. It is about the moral obligation we have in America to do everything within our power to make sure that kids and families do not go hungry. Susannah Morgan was real clear about the things she wanted Senator MERKLEY and I to talk about on the floor of the Senate and make sure they got out. She wants to make sure that people can get assistance through a regular EBT card.

The Trump administration, of course, has pushed to impose strenuous work requirements, which don't make any sense—particularly in a public health crisis—in workplaces and can be dangerous. We want to expand ways to get food to SNAP participants, like home delivery, curbside pickup. We want to extend what has come to be known as the pandemic EBT through the summer and any future school closures.

This is so important because, even before the pandemic, I often would go to various kinds of programs run by community groups, and they would be serving a lunch. I would shoot baskets with kids for a bit. I would see the kids drift away, and they would take at least two lunches—at least two. I would go and visit. It was clear that they were just ravenous; they were incredibly hungry. This was pre-COVID. I would ask: What did you have to eat

since you were here yesterday to shoot baskets with a Senator?

They would look at you and say: Well, I had a Milky Way.

That is what we are dealing with in America right now. What Senator STABENOW is doing with these programs is so incredibly important. When we have our priorities straight, kids who are eligible for free or reduced-cost meals would be able to get that food. I know that my colleague from Michigan has worked hard to make sure that those meals include more fresh fruits and vegetables. I heard her talk about it. She is trying to reach out to so many communities where often—and Senator KLOBUCHAR talked about it—it is kind of a food desert. If you don't have the program Senator KLOBUCHAR is working for, you are just going to have a lot of people like those kids I met going hungry.

I am going to close with one last thought that is important to us in our part of the country. The reality is that, for many years, none of this was at all partisan. We have all heard about Bob Dole and George McGovern and the history books, and they made their common cause with respect to agriculture, and they would round up urban legislators. We read about that, various historical figures from the East, they weren't partisan.

In our part of the world, when we talk about the practical, commonsense ideas that Senator STABENOW is offering for feeding hungry people, we just call them the Oregon Way. People always ask: Well, where is this Oregon Way, Ron? Where is this thing? Is it on the top of the capitol dome or Pioneer Square in Portland? I say: No, it is what we have tried to do for years.

I want to thank Senator STABENOW for bringing heart and a pragmatic approach to this. We saw how you just reached out to Senator ROBERTS. By the way, I am on the Intelligence Committee. I am not going to give out anything classified, but Senator ROBERTS walked by, and he said: We are going to get this worked out. We are going to figure this out.

I am going to end on a little bit of an upbeat note because that happened maybe only half an hour ago, and having watched my seatmate in action with Chairman ROBERTS often pull together agreements where nobody thought an agreement was possible—no pressure, don't feel like we are singling you out, but just know that a lot of us are going to be your allies in this fight because it is a fight for fairness, it is a fight for kids, it is a fight for families that are hurting, and it is a fight for an America where everybody gets a chance to get ahead.

Thank you for doing that.

Ms. STABENOW. I am going to yield to Senator MERKLEY in a second. First, I want to say to the senior Senator from Oregon, when you talk about the Oregon Way, this needs to be the American way. This is the American way.

Right now, the average food benefit under SNAP is \$4.17 a day for a person.

Think about going to the grocery store—\$4.17 a day. We are asking for a 15-percent increase during this pandemic. We ought to all be looking at these numbers and going: Come on, the America way ought to be to make sure somebody can put food on the table for the children and that they are not eating a Milky Way until they can get to school.

I am going to now turn to Senator MERKLEY. I want to give a shout-out to Senator MERKLEY, who is the ranking Democrat on the Agriculture Subcommittee of Appropriations, extremely important. He is such a wonderful partner and advocate on all of the food access issues and healthy food issues and so on. We are so lucky to have Senator MERKLEY in the position that he is in. I will turn to Senator MERKLEY.

I yield time to Senator MERKLEY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to engage in colloquy with my colleague from Michigan.

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

Mr. MERKLEY. Senator STABENOW, it is a pleasure to be here with you in this fight for something as fundamental as hunger. As I was listening to the conversation, your words and our colleague's from Ohio, SHERROD BROWN, who was speaking, and our colleague from Minnesota and partner from Oregon, I thought: How many Senators have experienced hunger this last week, the inability to have a meal? What is your sense of that?

Ms. STABENOW. My guess would be that everyone is like me, and, no, I have not experienced a sense of it.

Mr. MERKLEY. No one in this Chamber is missing a meal.

Ms. STABENOW. We are all extremely fortunate; we don't have to experience that.

Mr. MERKLEY. I am pretty sure, down the hall in the House of Representatives, nobody is missing a meal; yet so many people in each of our States are missing meals. In my State of Oregon, hunger has doubled since March. I imagine hunger has increased in your home State of Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Absolutely—at least doubled, absolutely.

Mr. MERKLEY. It is being driven by massive unemployment. The estimate in April was for families who earn less than \$40,000 a year, 40 percent had lost their job. I think that was April. Now, maybe it is well over 50 percent. Half of working America of modest incomes lost their jobs, and it wasn't that easy to sign up for unemployment benefits.

We still have a couple hundred thousand people in Oregon who are waiting for unemployment benefits. I can guarantee you they are very hungry. I know there are those in Michigan as well.

The majority leader has decided to send the Senate on vacation for 2 weeks. I guess my question to you is:

Does hunger take a vacation? Do those who are hungry in Oregon and hungry in Pennsylvania, is it going to take a vacation for 2 weeks?

Ms. STABENOW. I don't think hunger ever takes a vacation, if it is in the middle of the night, early in the morning, all the way through the week. I mean, the reality is, when we are here, there are people around this country who are hungry. When Senator MCCONNELL adjourns the Senate for the week and we are not here for the next 2 weeks, people are going to continue to be hungry and probably getting more and more hungry as the economic situation gets worse.

Mr. MERKLEY. We might think of hunger as kind of a temporary discomfort, something you get through, but my understanding is, when children are hungry, when they don't have the basic nutrients on a regular basis, it damages the development of the mind.

Is that something you heard?

Ms. STABENOW. Absolutely.

Mr. MERKLEY. We are talking about millions of American children who are suffering not just discomfort but damage to their minds because they don't have enough to eat. The majority leader is sending us on vacation rather than addressing it.

Thank you to my colleague for coming to the floor, organizing, carrying this forward, the work you do, and authorizing the work the Appropriations Committee does and the funding.

We have got to address this. We have to recognize how bad the situation is, how bad things are nationally. More than 40 million people have lost their jobs; 120,000 people have died. The rate of infections are exploding across the country—and how bad things are in my home State—243,000 people are out of work. We have an unemployment rate of over 14 percent, higher than it was any point in the great recession. Food insecurity and hunger have doubled since March. Food is at the top of the hierarchy of needs for human life.

All we have done is come to the floor and say: Let's help in a pretty modest way with a 15-percent increase—the \$4 and change that the Senator talked about—60 cents? We probably should be doubling it.

But that 15-percent increase in the maximum benefits does make a difference. It makes a difference. Hunger doesn't take a vacation and neither should we.

As Senator STABENOW proposed, we should debate a bill now—pass now a bill. We should effect these changes at this moment and not leave this Chamber until we have gotten the work of the American people done for the most important need any human being has, and that is basic nutrition.

When Martin Luther King was accepting his Nobel Peace Prize, he said that he had “the audacity to believe that people everywhere could have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their

spirits.” Let this Chamber have the audacity not just to believe that people can have three meals a day but to make it happen.

I am fully in support of your efforts, a full partner on behalf of all those who suffer hunger in the United States, on behalf of every child who wants a basic foundation to thrive here in the United States of America. We are failing in our job. Hunger doesn't take a vacation and neither should the Senate. Let's get the act passed now.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I want to thank my friend from Oregon for his comments and his ongoing leadership on the Appropriations Committee. It is incredibly important.

Now, I am going to turn to the Senator from Pennsylvania, Mr. CASEY, and thank him on so many different issues, which range from children and what they need, in terms of healthcare and being able to have the support they need to be able to grow and be successful, all the way up to our older citizens and those in nursing homes, where he is providing such advocacy now as we look at what needs to be done to support our seniors and those in nursing homes.

Thank you for always putting people first and for joining us tonight.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I want to thank the senior Senator from Michigan for her leadership. I will say more about her work in a moment.

We would not be here tonight talking about this program that we know by the acronym, but the words are all important, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—SNAP—what we used to call food stamps. We wouldn't be here without her leadership and those who made food insecurity and anti-hunger initiatives a priority.

This is a program that I believe is core to our responsibility to support American families during this national crisis—the public health crisis and the jobs crisis. This program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, is a lifeline for millions of Americans to access the food they need to survive. I think that is an understatement. As the junior Senator from Oregon, Mr. MERKLEY, just said, this is about life itself. This is about being able to live and being able to survive. No human being can survive without food, and so many go without food on a regular basis. So many others are food insecure, but that doesn't mean they have not felt the pain we are talking about.

I wanted to say just a couple of words about Senator STABENOW because this has been not just an issue for her, not just a program, the SNAP program, and not just a cause of food insecurity, but it has really been a passion for her. Some people are mission-driven in their work. She has been one of those Senators who has been mission-driven to make sure we are doing everything

we can with every opportunity, every budget, every season of the Senate; that we do everything we can to help the most vulnerable.

Someday, many years from now when many of us may not be around, there may be folks who are chronicling or summarizing the history of the Senate on particular issues. I am sure, just as we make reference to work that has preceded us or Senators who have preceded us—I have no doubt when a Senator stands up on this floor years from now, maybe even decades from now, and they talk about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, if they start to itemize or catalog or list the Senators who had the most profound impact on this program, Senator STABENOW will be one of very few who will be listed in such a chronicle of the advocacy done for the SNAP program.

William Jennings Bryan said a long time ago, in a different context, but he said it well about a cause, about how one person can make such a difference on one issue or one cause. We have seen some of that lately with Americans demanding action on a range of issues—marching and protesting for criminal justice reform or changes to policing or advocates for healthcare or whatever issue, whatever cause. William Jennings Bryan said it well. I think he said it in 1896: “The humblest citizen in all the land, when clad . . . in a righteous cause, is stronger than all the hosts of error.”

“When clad . . . in a righteous cause, is stronger than all the hosts of error.”

I think what he meant by that is that one citizen can have a huge impact. What we have even with Senator STABENOW’s work is one Senator who can have an impact. This has been for her, I know, her righteous cause, and the country is better for her service and better for her work on this issue.

What are we talking about here? When we say food insecurity, that may not sound too threatening to a lot of people. That means you are hungry. The person we are talking about might be an adult, but all too many times it is a child. When a child is hungry, it is hard as an adult to really fully understand what that means. I never lived a day of my life when I was hungry the whole day or the second day or the third day, so I really can’t explain it. I never experienced it. I think that is probably true of most Members of Congress. Maybe growing up for some, they were, but many, of course, now don’t feel that sense of food insecurity.

It is a devastating reality for tens of millions of Americans. That was the case before the jobs crisis, before the COVID-19 public health crisis. It is ever more so now in the aftermath of the onset of the virus and while we are still in the grip of this COVID-19 disease—what we know and are describing worldwide as a pandemic.

The pandemic has only made this crisis worse. Even more urgent is the crisis of food insecurity and economic insecurity. The unemployment numbers

that we see now are further exacerbating what were already the undeniable realities of hunger, poverty, and food insecurity in this country.

I know, for example, in my home State of Pennsylvania—I haven’t seen the May numbers yet, but April numbers were high: 15 percent unemployment, 975,000 people out of work, heading toward a million people out of work in one State. I am certain that number will be lower in May, and thank God for that, and I hope lower in June again.

When you are saying in one State there are hundreds of thousands more on top of the unemployed numbers from March, you can understand the terrible impact. When we talk about unemployment, that often leads to food insecurity, and that may lead to the kind of desperation that hunger can bring. You are talking about real pain in the lives of people—physical pain in an adult but especially in a child who may not be able to articulate the pain they are feeling. They may not be able to function, literally. They may not be able to function in any way. They certainly can’t learn in school. No human being can learn and grow if they are hungry all the time—no one, not the strongest person we know.

I come from a heritage of people who left Ireland because of hunger. They called it the Great Hunger at the time. When policies were put in place or actions were not taken and hundreds of thousands of people starved, millions left Ireland, just like people leave their homelands today to escape hunger, to escape poverty, and even famine itself—the most extreme version of hunger around the world.

We are talking about real physical pain. We are not just talking about a casual missing of a meal or being a little bit hungry, as so many of us have never experienced. It is pain, but it is also fear. Imagine the fear of a parent. I can’t even begin to imagine as a parent knowing that, for a lot of different reasons—job loss or other adverse circumstances in your life—you cannot afford to feed your children. That one person might have both the pain of hunger and the total fear of not being able to feed your children. If we are not doing something about that in the Senate, we are just not doing our job.

We say: Oh, the CARES Act did this and the CARES Act did that. Well, do you know what? We have been trying for months now, on the Democratic side of the aisle in the Senate, to get a couple of things done.

What are they? No. 1, increase in SNAP benefits by 15 percent. Why can’t that be done in the Senate when we know the pain and the reality of hunger? Increase the minimum benefit level. Why can’t we do that in the Senate? We passed, what, five bills for \$3 trillion, and we can’t add more money to the SNAP program? I know, we did it in an earlier bill. Let’s stop patting ourselves on the back for that.

Let’s do something transformative or at least do something substantial.

Let’s not even get to transformative. Let’s get to substantial help for Americans who are hungry right now, folks who are low income and are hungry; folks who had a job and lost their job are hungry. They may benefit from a food pantry or a food bank. We are not doing enough for them either. We are certainly not doing enough for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the most vulnerable among us.

Thirdly, in addition, increase the benefits overall by 15—the minimum benefit level. We should put a stop to the rules the administration has been cramming down the throats of Americans so that less people will get the benefit of the SNAP program. The administration is dead wrong about that. They haven’t just doubled down on pushing these draconian changes to the program, but they recently appealed a court ruling that put a temporary pause on one of the rules. I don’t know the words for that—heartless, callous—but it is not good for any of us. It is a stain on the moral fabric of America when any administration does that.

I know Senator STABENOW and her colleagues on the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee—we should use the middle word more often than we do. It is not simply the Ag Committee. It is the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee. The nutrition part of it has been the subject of some good working relationships on the committee.

I want to thank Senator STABENOW for her work again. I appreciate the work she has done with Senator ROBERTS. We have to do more than we have done on this program.

I was proud a couple of years ago to finally—after attempt after attempt, year after year—finally, to get the Global Food Security Act passed. People have been waiting for that from the time Dick Lugar served in the Senate all the way through the time I teamed up with former Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON.

We got the Global Food Security Act done, which meant that the Feed the Future Program—that great program the Bush administration started and the Obama administration brought to fruition—was codified in law. That was a good day for world food security.

That was a good day for the world when America showed that we know how to do this, that we know how to help countries grow their own food and provide food security. Yet we haven’t done enough here. We never can say we have done enough here if we are not funding at an adequate level in the middle of a pandemic, in the middle of a public health emergency, and in a jobs and economic emergency. We can’t say we are doing enough if we are not going to invest in SNAP.

I have a lot more to say, but I know I am over my time. Let me make one final point.

The moral case is unassailable here. There is no disputing the benefit of this program, especially now. So I

think the moral question is settled. I just hope folks will consider it.

How about the economic case?

Say that you are a Member of Congress and that you don't like this program. There are not many people who would admit to that, but you don't like it, and you don't want to add more funding to it. That is your position. That is a morally objectionable position, but let's say that is your position. You could also be for an increase to the SNAP program because it is a good bang for the buck, OK?

So if all you are interested in is going back home and saying "Do you know what I did today? I voted for a program that will more than pay for itself, and it will help everybody"—if that is what your game is and if that is what makes you happy, your going back to your community, to your State, then fine. This program, the SNAP program, is a great bang for the buck.

If you spend a buck on SNAP benefits in an economic downturn—and I will make sure I cite the source here. It is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service. Guess what. You will get \$1.50 in return, maybe even as high as \$1.80. Let's go with the current number of \$1.50. That is a pretty good ROI, return on investment.

If that is all you care about, is a return on investment, and you don't care about the program—you are not really troubled by food insecurity, and you are not really persuaded by the pain of hunger—then support it because it is a good bang for the buck. That would make sense. That is the American way to consider what we should be doing here. Consider the moral case, which should be enough, but you can also consider the efficacy of the program—the effect, the value—in an economic sense.

We are all better off when SNAP is funded at an adequate level—all of us—because of that bang for the buck and because when people get SNAP dollars, they spend them. Guess what. That is good for all of us. It is good for our local economies, and it is good for our State economies. It is good for producers, for the people transporting the food, and for the people marketing the food. That is why farmers and people in the ag sector of our economy are sometimes the biggest proponents of the SNAP program.

This is the right thing to do to try to ease some of that pain—that awful pain—that children feel in the middle of the night, in the morning when they wake up, at lunchtime when other kids are eating something and they may not be eating, especially now that they are away from school, at night, and when they go to bed at night.

So let's come together and get something done. There is some good news in that we might be considering another bill, but let's meet our obligation on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. If others who have been re-

luctant to do that vote for this and support this, then you can do all the pats on the back that you want, but let's do the right thing for America, especially for those suffering from the pain of hunger.

I yield the floor to the senior Senator from Michigan.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, first, I thank my friend from Pennsylvania for his passion and for his being such a wonderful partner on these issues. I very much appreciate his speaking about the fact that there is an economic benefit.

If nothing else, if someone wants to look at how we can help our farmers, how we can help our grocery stores, how we can help those in the food chain—all of whom we want to help as well—you do that in the most efficient way possible, which is by giving people the funds to go buy food directly in the grocery stores so that they are able, when they have a need like this, to support their families.

The great thing about SNAP is that it is set up so that when the economy gets better, the food assistance goes down. When the economy gets worse, the food assistance goes up. The challenge for us right now is that there is such a crisis and there are so many more people needing help—people who never in their lives thought they would need help—that we are in a situation in which we are called upon to meet that need and to be able to increase what we are doing.

There was a small effort at the beginning to provide some additional help, but it nowhere near met the need we have now—nowhere near. When I think about negotiating the CARES Act and the fact that, again, the average benefit for food assistance in this country per person is \$4.17 a day, the White House said no to any increase to the \$4.17 a day. Leader MCCONNELL said no to any increase in the CARES Act—to the \$4.17 a day for people.

There is something wrong with that, so we are here on the floor to say we have to do better. The Senate has to do better. The House did better when it passed the Heroes Act. It gave some additional support and help. The Senate needs to do the same. The Senate could have done the same tonight rather than to now wait 2 weeks, as we will not be in session. We haven't really started negotiating what comes next, and it will take weeks after that.

Every single day, there are people going hungry. The pain that Senator CASEY talked about is something being experienced by people tonight and being experienced by people in the morning and every single day going forward. That is the reality for too many families in America—in the United States of America—and it doesn't have to be that way.

We can at least give some help. I wish we could do more. We couldn't get a 15-percent increase in the CARES

Act. I would love to be able to do more than that, but at a minimum, we should be doing that. That is what the House did. That is what has been done in other economic downturns, and that is what we should be doing to help families in America who, frankly, just want to know somebody has their backs right now when everything is coming at them and when they are trying to figure out how they are going to keep their heads above water and care for their children and make sure that the older adults in their lives have the help and support they need as well.

We are going to keep working on this until we get it. There is just no excuse not to be able to meet the need that so many millions of families are feeling right now.

This is a moral moment for the Senate. It could have been a moral Wednesday. If there had not been an objection, we could have gotten it done tonight. Wouldn't that have been a great way to go into the Fourth of July weekend—being able to provide some small, additional food assistance for millions of Americans who are in need right now? This is not going to happen now because of the objection, but we are going to keep going until we can get families the help they need.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

RUSSIA

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, before we close tonight, I want to talk about a story that is troubling a lot of Americans—one that we have just learned about in the last couple of days—and that is the recent events regarding the U.S. presence in Afghanistan and some of the reporting.

Like many of my colleagues—and I am sure this is a feeling shared by tens and tens of millions of Americans—I am alarmed, as I know they are, by reports of the intelligence community's discovery that the Russian Government offered to pay Taliban and Haqqani Network militants to target American troops in Afghanistan.

The New York Times broke the story on June 26. Since then, several questions have emerged regarding how the intelligence has been handled, how long decisionmakers within the U.S. Government have known about this, and thirdly, what measures the administration is taking to hold Russia accountable.

Obviously, there are a number of stories by other news outlets in addition to that by the New York Times. I will just refer to one excerpt from the New York Times' June 26 report.

It reads: "An operation to incentivize the killing of American and other NATO troops would be a significant and provocative escalation of what American and Afghan officials have

said is Russian support for the Taliban.”

The story later goes on to read: “Any involvement with the Taliban that resulted in the deaths of American troops would also be a huge escalation of Russia’s so-called hybrid war against the United States, a strategy of destabilizing adversaries through a combination of such tactics as cyberattacks . . . and covert and deniable military operations.”

We have learned in recent days that these reports have been circulating through the U.S. intelligence community since early 2019, but there was little to no action taken. The timeline regarding these events is of particular concern to me and, I know, to many Americans but especially to those who represent a State in which there is a direct connection.

In April of 2019, three U.S. marines were killed in a car bomb near Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan. There was speculation that this may have been a bounty attack that had been carried out by the Taliban for the Russians.

There has been further reporting on this—tracking the dollars—by the New York Times and maybe by a few other outlets, but I know the New York Times did.

One of the marines killed in that April 2019 attack was a Pennsylvanian. If there had been credible intelligence regarding the Russian plot and if that intelligence had been acted upon, one question I have is—and it is only a question; I don’t know the answer to this question, but I ask it—could the death of this young Pennsylvania marine and his brothers in arms have been averted?

That is a question. I don’t know the answer to it. I hope, in the coming days and weeks—and I hope not longer than weeks—we will have an answer to that question, among many, as it troubles so many Americans.

As of the close of last year, December of 2019, 294 servicemembers from Pennsylvania had been killed in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—the third highest toll of any State. Our State has sacrificed a lot. If Russia had had any hand in contributing to these losses, to say that it is offensive, enraging, and deeply problematic is an understatement and warrants a close look not only at the U.S. engagement in Afghanistan but also at how we respond—how the United States of America responds—to Vladimir Putin’s efforts to disrupt U.S. efforts overseas and take American lives while doing it.

Accordingly, I have several questions about how the intelligence has been handled and what measures have been taken to hold Russia accountable for these horrific, incendiary, unlawful actions contrary to international law.

The administration must brief all Members of Congress immediately. I think Americans are offended when the administration briefs one side of the aisle. All Members of Congress should be briefed. Those briefings should occur

immediately and in close proximity to the reporting. The briefings should include when they received the intelligence—when the administration received it—when the President was briefed, and what actions were considered in response. I also call on the administration to report to Congress on a process for protecting our troops in moving forward.

You could be justifiably offended by inaction by the administration or for the knowledge that preceded that inaction, that they did nothing in response to it.

It is especially offensive now to a lot of Americans that this information now is in the public record and there seems to be no evidence of any kind of a response, any kind of an action.

So I think the administration should report to Congress not just on who knew what when, but also on what we do going forward.

The families of these fallen soldiers deserve answers. The American people, obviously, deserve answers as well.

We cannot let Russia and Vladimir Putin get away with this.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I want to thank all my colleagues and my partners, my partner Senator REED, for working so hard today to come to an agreement. It has been a tough day. We think we have created a package that is acceptable to everyone and we will be hotlining it tonight.

The Senate will come back into session at 10 a.m. tomorrow morning, and hopefully, we will be able to lock in our deal here.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise to clarify a point concerning my amendment No. 2270 to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, S. 4049. This amendment would establish in law the position of the Special Envoy for Hostage Affairs at the State Department and provides that the Special Envoy shall have the rank and status of ambassador. Under article II of the Constitution, the

President’s power to appoint ambassadors is subject to the advice and consent of the Senate. Accordingly, it is my view that the appointment of the Special Envoy with the rank and status of ambassador, pursuant to this amendment, requires the advice and consent of the Senate.

FOURTH OF JULY

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about our Nation’s independence.

Some 244 years ago this Saturday, the Founding Fathers of this country voted to declare our independence from Great Britain.

All Americans know the basics of this story, but not everyone knows the story behind one of our Nation’s founding documents.

Thomas Jefferson was just 33 years old when the Second Continental Congress commissioned him to draft a declaration of independence. When he sat down in a rented room in the heat of the Philadelphia summer to write it, the American Revolution had already begun.

On one level, he was simply putting the reasons for independence into words. The first shot had been fired over a year earlier, after decades of increasingly tyrannical British abuses had culminated in open revolt in Massachusetts.

Even so, it was not yet clear whether the delegates from all 13 colonies would put their names to a formal document declaring our independence. They had to be persuaded.

After 17 days of writing and rewriting, struggling to find the right words, Jefferson presented his work to Benjamin Franklin and John Adams. He then submitted a draft to the Congress on July 1, which officially adopted it three days later.

Each year on the Fourth of July, we celebrate this moment—the moment that we declared our independence from the British Empire and began to see ourselves as our own nation.

I love Independence Day celebrations in Nebraska. Like many people, my family often spends the day enjoying the great outdoors before hosting friends and neighbors for a barbecue.

But the Fourth of July is about more than food and fireworks or parades and pancake feeds. It is an opportunity to reflect on the nearly two and a half centuries of our nation’s history and remember what it means to be an American.

To me, America is a nation based on an idea. It is the idea, as Jefferson wrote, that “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Belief in this creed is what unites us as Americans. And while we may not always live up to this idea, we can never stop trying. We should count ourselves fortunate to live in the greatest nation on earth, where the notion