

COVID debacle—falls on the shoulders of President Trump, who failed to prepare our Nation for the initial surge, failed to organize a national supply chain of PPE, failed to develop a national strategy for testing and contact tracing, and failed to even communicate the depth of the challenge our country faces. And much of this still proves true today.

The Washington Post reported this morning that Arizona, which has experienced a huge surge in cases, still doesn't have the testing supplies they need because of a national supply chain failure.

Even after 2.6 million infections and 120,000 American fatalities, the President said yesterday:

I think we're going to be very good with the coronavirus. I think at some point that's going to sort of just disappear.

Can you imagine the bubble this man is in? He is only concerned about scratching and stroking his own ego and not about what is going on in the country, so he can just dismiss the seriousness of this—the most serious health and economic crisis we have had in decades. It is amazing.

That is what President Trump said yesterday: “We're going to be very good with the coronavirus”—on the same day the United States reported the most new cases of coronavirus in a single day ever. The President is so eager to declare victory and pat himself on the back and then move on that he is ignoring reality completely.

The June jobs report showed modest growth, but we know conditions have worsened since the survey was completed in the middle of the month. Experts believe 10 percent of the workforce has lost their job permanently, with Americans of color counting for a disproportionate share.

Again, in terms of the long-term health of the economy, the most concerning and important number is the number of new COVID cases. The number of COVID cases, health-related, is the No. 1 effect on the long-term health of the economy. President Trump seems oblivious to the fact that almost everyone who studied this issue knows. The President's own CDC Director says the number of cases may be 10 times higher than reported. Imagine that. We could have 26 million people infected and likely many, many more to come, but the President assumes that the coronavirus—and the economy—will just take care of itself.

If President Trump reacted to the jobs report like he has reacted to COVID and says, “We're in the clear; we don't have to do anything,” then we will soon be in even worse trouble than we are today.

Here in the Senate, the Republican majority has been out to lunch since we passed the CARES Act way back in March. It has been over 3 months since the Republican Senate has considered major COVID relief legislation. Weekly unemployment claims are measured in the millions. States are shedding pub-

lic service jobs in the tens of thousands. The number of new cases is accelerating in nearly half our States.

Still, the Republican majority, in the words of its majority leader, “has yet to feel the urgency of acting.” Still, the Republican leader says we must “assess the conditions” in the country before providing relief to our citizens. Just how much more assessment do we need when we remember those two numbers—52,000 new cases and 1.4 million people applying for unemployment?

Every day this week, Senate Democrats have come to the floor to plead with our colleagues to take up legislation to help millions of American workers and small businesses that are struggling right now. Every day this week, Senate Republicans have blocked our requests: rental assistance, blocked; food assistance, blocked; moratorium on evictions, blocked; resources for schools, nursing homes, State and local governments, Indian Country, and elections—blocked, blocked, blocked, and blocked. Just how long will this Republican Senate majority prevent the American people from getting the aid they so desperately need?

Now Republicans are saying we have to do another bill before August. I am glad they are finally talking seriously about a fourth phase of coronavirus legislation, though the need has been obvious for months. But the Republican leader at the moment insists that the next bill will be “written in his office.” Written in his office? That is the same one-party, “take it or leave it” partisan approach that delayed the CARES Act and utterly failed on policing reform.

Leader MCCONNELL likes to remind us that we need to make a law, not a point. To make a law, leader, you need both parties, you need both Chambers of Congress, and you need the signature of the President. Starting the next phase of COVID legislation in the majority leader's office is exactly what you do if you wanted to make a point, not a law.

The House of Representatives already has a bill that it has passed. It needs to be part of the equation here. In order to make a law, both parties in both Chambers should have a seat at the table. That is how we got the last phase of COVID-19 legislation done, and it is the best way to get it done this time.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA STATEHOOD

Mr. President, we have serious disagreements here in Congress. We trade in passionate words, but words sometimes get a little too hot under the collar. There are times when we need to take a step back and really think about what we are saying.

Yesterday, speaking in opposition to DC Statehood, the junior Senator from Montana said lawmakers should “go out to where the real people are across the country and ask them what they think.”

“Go out to where the real people are.”

Over 700,000 people live and work in the District of Columbia, 46 percent of them are Black. They hold jobs just like everyone else. They teach, deliver groceries, care for our sick, and work in our restaurants and churches. Many of them work here in the Capitol, providing essential services to some Senators who, obviously, don't consider them “real people.”

My friends on the other side of the aisle would have you believe that every member of this city is a lobbyist or defense contractor or a reporter. Not only is that comically false, but I don't remember the part of the Constitution where it says your rights as American citizens only apply if Republican Senators approve of your line of work.

I have noticed that it has become fashionable for elements of the political right to accuse Democrats of ignoring “real Americans.” It seems that the political right has a clear idea of which Americans are real and which Americans are not.

When Republican Senators are outright dismissing the personhood of thousands of American citizens—most of whom are Black—it is time for the political right to look in the mirror.

DC residents fulfill all the obligations of citizenship. They pay Federal taxes. They can be summoned for jury duty. They have served in every war since the Revolutionary War. But they are denied real representation in Congress.

We can have a real conversation about Statehood without denigrating or dehumanizing these citizens, but the far right is so afraid of losing political power and so unwilling to appeal to anyone who doesn't already agree with them that their strategy has become: restrict voting rights and deny equal representation in Congress to hundreds of thousands of Americans.

Self-governance and equal representation aren't Democratic issues or Republican issues. Voting rights shouldn't be a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. These are issues of fairness, of equality. It is not about right or left. It is about right and wrong.

SENATE RULES

Mr. President, for a minute on rules changes, I heard the Republican leader come forward and decry any attempt to change the rules. He is not a good one to give advice. Leader MCCONNELL has shown that he will change the rules when it suits his purposes and defend the rules when it suits his purposes. He is no icon standing in the way of any rules change. We all saw what happened in the last few years.

So please, Leader MCCONNELL, don't give us advice on rules changes when you are so inconsistent about which rules are OK to change and which rules are not.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. President, governing is a matter of priorities. In this moment of national crisis, as the COVID-19 pandemic rages on, economic hardship deepens and the centuries-old struggle for racial justice is waged anew. Our national priorities have never been clearer to everyone, it seems, but President Trump.

This week has been one of the most out-of-touch weeks of an out-of-touch Presidency. As the citizens of ruby red Oklahoma voted to expand Medicaid, President Trump, this week, advanced his administration's lawsuit to eliminate our healthcare law and Medicaid expansion along with it. As protesters continued to march in the streets for racial justice, President Trump, this week, attacked a program designed to end racial segregation in housing. As the State of Mississippi decided to take down the Confederate flag, President Trump threatened to veto the national defense bill, including a pay raise for our troops, in the name of protecting the Confederacy.

This week, the President of the United States seemed more concerned with protecting the names of dead Confederate generals than doing anything to help living American citizens. The President is so out of touch that it is as if he was dropped into the Oval Office from another planet, unaware and uncaring of anything going on around him. Whether it is the resurgent COVID killing Americans, a faltering economy, a righteous movement for racial justice, or Putin's malign actions endangering our troops, President Trump has the same reaction: stroke his own ego, then stick his head in the sand and do nothing.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

PROTESTS

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I rise to briefly discuss a matter that is contained within the NDAA bill that is currently pending before the Senate, a matter for which I sponsored as an amendment, in the Committee on Armed Services' markup on the bill, that received the unanimous voice vote of my colleagues, and I just wanted to stress its importance.

A few weeks back, on a Monday in May, peaceful protesters assembled in Lafayette Square to protest against police violence. They were peaceful, and they were in full compliance with a curfew ordinance that was in place. It was before the curfew. Federal law enforcement officials fired tear gas at them to disperse them, which I found very, very troubling, as, I know, many people did. What concerned me even more was the President's indicating that he might use Active-Duty military against the protesters. That was happening during the same week that we were submitting amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act.

So I wrote up a very simple amendment that read: No funds under this

Act shall be used for any military program or personnel to infringe upon people's rights to peacefully assemble or petition government for a redress of grievances. It was a very simple amendment.

There is an act, the Insurrection Act, that sets forth specific circumstances under which the military can be used to do law enforcement activities for domestic purposes, but I wanted to have the strong statement that the military should not be used to infringe upon people's rights to peacefully assemble and petition the government. I was proud, when I presented that to my committee colleagues within a week after this event, that they agreed and, by a unanimous voice vote, included it in the base bill.

I want to just stress why I think this is so very, very important, and I appreciate my colleagues' support to this point. Peaceful protests are protected in the First Amendment, and I think the Framers of the Bill of Rights, when they protected something, they sort of encouraged it. I think the Framers of the Constitution got some things wrong, but they also got some things right.

One of the things I have always been interested in is that, while elections are important—and elections and campaigns are in the Constitution as being every 2 years for the House, every 6 years for the Senate, and Presidential elections—the Framers knew elections wouldn't be enough to protect this great democracy. If they had thought elections would have been enough, they wouldn't have said that people need to be able to peacefully assemble and that people need to be able to petition the government for a redress of grievances. If elections had been enough, they would have said: Well, if you are mad, just wait 2 years, and then you can vote out somebody bad and bring in somebody good.

The Framers had been through the experiences of things like the Boston Tea Party and other events. They knew that to have a more perfect Union and really preserve the democracy, they needed to have elections, but they also needed to give people the room and the space to be able to peacefully assemble and say: Hey, I don't like this. Can we make these changes?

It is a value that is so important, like the freedom of religion and the freedom of the press, and were put in the First Amendment for a reason.

Those in the military, just as Senators, take vows to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. Yet, in particular today, 2020, we have a significant issue that I see cropping up sometimes, which is, thank goodness, that we as civilians appreciate the military—that the “thank you for your service” attitude, I think, is widely shared. There is often a gulf between the military and civilians because, in the time of an all-volunteer military, only 1 percent of people serve in the military. That means, for those of us

who haven't served, often, we might have a general appreciation, but we don't really have an understanding, and there can start to be a gap, or a gulf, between civilians and the military.

Former Secretary of Defense Mattis has commented about this a lot, about this gap that can grow. I am not challenging that an all-volunteer military is a good thing, but there can be a gap of misunderstanding. We would never want to widen that gap, and we should always do things to narrow that gap. There would be nothing that would widen the gap more than if people were to perceive that the military were now being arrayed against them, against the civilian population. It would not only endanger important First Amendment rights, but it would also potentially lead to a wider canyon between the civilian and the military, and we should not do that.

There can be uses of military assets in protest situations. A sort of standard way of thinking about it, for example, would be to use Guard troops. The Guard is often called up to protect protesters, and then local law enforcement is used to police bad actors. One would use a group like the Guard to protect protesters, to keep them safe, and to make sure they are not doing things to or are being harmed by others, but the law enforcement activity should be carried out by police and not by the military.

This is something we promote in the Committee on Foreign Relations all the time. I see my colleague from Wyoming who is here, who is on the Committee on Foreign Relations with me and does such a good job there. We are often encouraging foreign nations: Don't use your military to do police work. Have a professional police department. Use your military to defend the country. The professionalizing of police is an important thing, because that is not what a military should do.

That was the reason I introduced the amendment. It was not solely to protect First Amendment rights, which are really important, but it was also to not allow a gulf that exists between civilians and the military to get even worse if civilians feel like the military is arrayed against them.

The last thing I will say—and then I will conclude—is that I lived in a military dictatorship when I was young. I took a year off in the middle of law school to go to Honduras and work with Jesuit missionaries in 1980 to 1981. It was a military dictatorship, and people could not vote for anything. It was a shock to me, my seeing a society where people could vote and, maybe, sometimes even choose not to vote, and then my going to a society where people couldn't vote. People prayed for the day that they might be able to finally vote for their leaders, but they couldn't because the military was running the country at the time.

There I saw the reaction that the people had toward the military, and