

stop a massive wave of evictions that will displace families right in the middle of a global pandemic. My colleagues understood the stakes in March when Congress passed the existing eviction moratorium into law. I urge them to join me now in continuing this life-saving protection while providing emergency rental assistance to keep renters housed, landlords paid, and most of all, to keep families safe.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 4143

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be discharged from further consideration of S. 4143; 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 with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, the CARES Act provides an additional \$600 per week to those who are receiving, through their States, unemployment insurance. In Wyoming we have a generous unemployment insurance program to help people who are out of work, and the CARES Act adds to that, essentially, a bonus payment of \$600 additional per week. For a 40-hour workweek, that comes down to an average of about a \$15-an-hour bonus for not being able to go back to work, and that is on top of their regular unemployment benefits.

Well, since the CARES Act has passed, what we have seen is that this additional \$600 per week means that most recipients are paid more for not working than they would make if they actually were on the job working. This fact has been confirmed by news reports, by academic researchers, and by the Congressional Budget Office.

Even former Obama administration Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner, along with President Obama's Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers, agrees that \$600 per week on top of unemployment insurance through the States is too much.

We have "help wanted" signs all around my State. I talked to the people at unemployment insurance, who run the program. They tell me that they are having many people who are getting paid much more than if they would work, if they would take the jobs where you have employers out there hoping, looking for employees to come and work.

You can't continue to pay people more to not work than to work. Yet instead of trying to address this identifiable and correctable problem, today my colleagues are asking that we vote to extend the \$600-per-week bonus payments and continue these untargeted payments for many months into the future.

As a matter of fact, NANCY PELOSI, Speaker of the House, living on Fantasy Island, wants to extend these for 6 more months, all the way until the end of January. The CBO and other researchers and economists have looked at this and said this would be a heavy wet blanket on the economy. It would prevent 10 million people from going back to work—going all the way until the end of January.

It is likely that such a proposal would cost \$1 trillion—\$1 trillion—and much of that is we are talking about paying people to not work instead of helping people work.

So I hope my colleagues will join me in better targeting help to the unemployed in a way that doesn't pay people more when they are sitting at home not working than they would make at work.

We are working on a plan now to provide additional help for the unemployed if they can't go back to work because their job isn't there, isn't available; if, for health purposes, they can't go back to work; but do it in a way that the Democrats have claimed that they want to do but haven't even proposed. We need to make it much more closely aligned with lost wages.

So we are going to be introducing this plan shortly, and I hope my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will engage with us in that effort.

For these reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I am going to get into the substance of my colleague's arguments in a moment, but I just want to be clear to all the people in America, the 30-plus million who are having problems making rent, having problems buying groceries, who in just 2 days—2 days—come Saturday, are going to be in a position where, based on what they tell me, they are telling their kids: Hey, you probably have to eat a little bit less because the unemployment is ending.

The fact is, the other body passed a bill so that folks would be able to make rent and buy groceries. On this side of the aisle, the Democratic leader and I introduced legislation to tie the benefits to economic conditions on the ground. One of the reasons we did is my colleagues on the other side said that benefits ought to taper off if unemployment goes down. That is what our bill does.

But here is the message that I think folks who are walking on an economic tightrope this weekend need to hear. On this side of the aisle, we have been ready to go for weeks—essentially, months—to have bipartisan negotiations to work this issue out. As of this afternoon, with benefits expiring in 2 days, the other side of the aisle has no piece of legislation on offer. Let me repeat that: no piece of legislation on offer.

Let me repeat that—no piece of legislation on offer. On this side of the

aisle, they write lots of bills to help multinational corporations—lots of bills to help the powerful and the special interests, but as of this afternoon, there is not a bill to help those folks who this weekend are going to be saying: We are not going to be able to make rent in a few days. We are not going to be able to feed our families, not going to be able to pay for the car insurance. People aren't spending this money on luxuries. They are spending it on essentials. To a great extent, they kept the economy afloat for the last few months.

The other point I want to make is that this did not have to happen. Not only do we have legislation ready to discuss with our colleagues that incorporates some of their ideas, we have been reaching out again and again. Yet MITCH MCCONNELL, who took all of July off when he could have been getting this piece of legislation together—those big 2 weeks, and he could have been getting the legislation together—basically, actively—didn't happen by osmosis—actively gave short shrift to the needs of the unemployed and made no effort, none whatever, even though we reached out continually to Republicans, saying that this weekend—and the pain that working families have this weekend didn't have to happen. We wanted to do everything we can, working with our colleagues, to prevent it.

Now, for purposes of this discussion, I want to make sure people understand what this discussion really means to working families in this country. I was at home, at food banks and the like—lines for blocks—people who had never needed to go to a pantry or a food program were waiting in line because they had been hit by this economic wrecking ball.

There are people who are worried about losing their homes and losing their cars, being unable to fill their prescriptions. As I mentioned, think about what it means when you have to tell your kid you ought to eat less because they don't know whether they will have enough cash to stock the pantry next month.

As I said, Republicans' response to this over the last few days—last few weeks—I went to school on a basketball scholarship, and I remember when you could basically play stall ball, go into four corners offense, basically run down the clock. And then at the end, as my distinguished colleague from Wyoming tried to do, say: Well, it is the fault of the poor people. It is the fault of those poor people. I am going to touch on what this really is all about.

When we began the negotiations—and I was the point person for the Democrats—in the Finance room—I offered basic wage replacement as our position for dealing with this issue. Secretary of Labor Scalia said: It can't be done. The States can't administer it. Western civilization is pretty much going to end if we try to do this. And then he folded his arms, and, for days, basically refused to negotiate about alternatives.

Understand that we started with the approach of basic wage replacement. Secretary Scalia said it can't be done. States are stuck with old technology. I didn't disagree with that. Gave a billion dollars to the States to help them update technology too. I said: We are not going to tell those workers, Mr. Scalia, to pound sand.

I basically said we are going to average the benefit—\$600. Some people will get a bit more than they would; some people are going to get a bit less, but families are going to have a chance, based on what the State employment offices told us, to actually get benefits.

I know that it hasn't worked out too well in the State of Florida—the President of the Senate, and I am sure he will want to talk about this in the debate—but at least millions of people in this country got a chance to make rent, buy groceries, pay medicine because we said we are going to take a sum of money that the States told us they can actually, for the most part, administer.

The Finance Committee held a hearing on unemployment insurance this summer. I particularly wanted to know how we might look at administering these benefits in the future because I knew that we would all want to hear if there had been reforms and what the case might be for changes. During that hearing just a few weeks ago, the National Association of State Workforce Agencies—the experts on this issue on how the benefits are to be administered—said that—their words—any reduction or change in benefits will absolutely lead to a lapse in benefits.

You would think colleagues on the other side would say: My goodness. We don't want that to happen. These State workforce agencies said there would be a lapse in benefits no matter what you cut, \$100, whatever the amount was, there would be a lapse in benefits. The gap in benefits could last a week or two, potentially, up to a month. I have been pointing out to Senators you can't eat retroactivity. And yet, everything I have heard that colleagues want to do now—remember, they don't have a bill. They do not have a bill. They are taking the weekend off. We have a bill on this side. The Democratic leader, myself—supported by our caucus—we have a bill. We are ready to talk. They don't have a bill to do anything for those people who are going to be hurting this weekend.

After that hearing, you would have thought people—Republican Senators on the other side—would say, you know, we have to figure out what to do. We have to make sure that people aren't going to fall between the cracks, through no fault of their own. Remember, so many of them are at home because of government policies, the quarantine, and the—of course, the pattern is particularly ominous now because folks who were furloughed at the beginning, then got brought back, and now with the spike, they are getting laid off again. There you have it—National As-

sociation of State Workforce Agencies says that any change can lead to a lapse in benefits.

I guess my colleagues on the other side walked out there and said: No big deal. It is just a few weeks. Tell that to the people who aren't going to have enough money to make rent and buy groceries next week. Tell that to their face rather than just leave town and say: We will talk about it another time, and we will see about 2, 3, 4 weeks and what people are going to have to do without this lifeline, which I believe is going to be a disaster.

The lapse that is being forced on this country right now is because Senate Republicans would not step up. They would not step up along the way—after the hearing, during the July break. They did not step up. The lapse is going to lead to eviction; it is going to lead to hunger; it is going to lead to desperation for millions of Americans. And the only way to avoid it is by acting now, by passing the American Workforce Rescue Act that Senator SCHUMER and I introduced. We just tried to pass it.

If our bill had passed, the people who are going to be hurting this weekend, who aren't going to be able to make rent, who aren't going to be able to buy groceries—would have some sense of security. They would be able to go to bed at night this weekend, had our bill passed, knowing that there would be an opportunity to work with the other body and get this resolved and get it resolved quickly.

Now those people know one thing, and that is that they better plan for yet more uncertainty and more pain. As my colleagues say, maybe it will get worked out in a few weeks—even though what they are talking about working out—and remember, there is no bill. We have never seen a piece of paper, but they are talking about cutting the lifeline over 50 percent. That is their proposal—cutting it more than 50 percent.

At a minimum—at a minimum, I believe, that what the Republicans are now looking at is some kind of approach that after Secretary Scalia has told the Senate that the States can't do full wage replacement for individual workers; that they are not capable of doing it; the technology is too old; it can't get the math; it can't get individually tailored benefits out in a timely way—apparently, my colleagues are using that model for their so-called idea that they want to talk about.

I have already mentioned the fact that they believe the argument for this is that it could be done in a few weeks. People are going to be hurting for those few weeks. Nobody has an answer to that. Everybody ought to understand that I was the first one to offer full wage replacement—I would say to the President of the Senate—and it was Secretary Scalia who said it couldn't be administered and has never changed his mind on that point.

My view is, the proposal that adds a whole lot of complexity to the unem-

ployment system is a proposal designed to fail. That, apparently, is what Senate Republicans are talking about.

At a minimum, this delay in the Senate is going to cause a lapse in benefits. On top of that, it has been reported the Republicans could attempt to cut the benefit by well over 50 percent.

I just ask, how can anybody look at the State of the country and how powerful people and special interests can be doing so well and then decide to cut the economic lifeline for working families by well over 50 percent when the country is in the middle of a pandemic, when there are 60- or 70,000 new COVID cases every day and climbing, when there are 800, 900, 1,000 COVID cases every day and climbing, when the number of new unemployment claims, which before this year had never crossed 700,000, has been 1.3 million or higher for 18 straight weeks, and, in fact, the number of new claims went up this week for the first time since April—a sign that the recovery is going in reverse.

As I mentioned, what I am hearing about at home are businesses that reopened in May and June and are laying off their workers for a second time.

One-third of Americans couldn't make their last rent payment. Parents who lost their jobs are wondering how they are going to feed their children. I just say to my colleagues who may be who may be following this, this is an unthinkable level of pain and suffering and uncertainty to needlessly inflict on 30 million Americans.

It is not just about those who have already lost work. It is about the millions of others who are worried that their pink slip might come in August or September or October. They need support too. In fact, the papers are full of stories of small businesses closing and closing permanently. I expect that all those people are worried that they haven't been laid off yet, but a pink slip may be coming their way in August or September or October. They may have a word or two for their Senators who are able to find plenty of time to write bills to help multinational corporations but can't find the time to stand up for unemployed folks who are hurting.

Before I wrap up this afternoon, I want to touch on this argument that Republicans have been flogging away on for months now that these unemployment benefits are way too generous, and, somehow, they are convinced that it makes sense to insult the American worker and say that all these workers are sitting around lazily at home instead of going back to work. That argument does not pass the smell test.

I am going to be very specific about why that argument trotted out again by my friend from Wyoming is way off base.

First of all, the same Republicans who celebrated the May and June job reports are now talking about how lazy

workers are by refusing to go back to their jobs. You simply cannot have it both ways.

Second, not one of my Republican colleagues brought forward real evidence to suggest that workers across the country are turning down work. These anecdotes just don't hold water. According to one recent analysis, more than two-thirds of workers who were hired in June went back to jobs that paid less than supercharged unemployment benefits.

Third, it is an insult to American workers to say that they would rather sit at home than to earn their pay at work.

If any one of my Republican colleagues were to go out and meet the Oregonians I have spoken to and who have been furloughed or laid off during the pandemic, they will hear from people who desperately want to go back to their jobs when it is safe. These are people who believe in the dignity of work and people who want to provide for their families. It is an insult to call them lazy.

I want to inject a note of reality into this because my Republican colleagues have been so fixated on this argument. I have talked to a lot of unemployed workers. I said: Back east, the Senate Republicans say all unemployed folks are lazy, and they don't want to work and all the rest.

So many of the unemployed look at me incredulous, and they say: Ron, ask them how in the world have they come up with that completely wrong idea.

They usually say: If I am given a choice between unemployment or the chance to have a job in the private economy, where I have a future and where I can build upward economic mobility—they usually say: Ron, tell those Republicans in Washington, DC, it is a no-brainer; of course, I am going to take the job that gives me an opportunity for a future, the chance to work in the private sector and climb the ladder of economic mobility. I am going to take that every time, rather than unemployment, which has been uncertain.

That is my response to the off-base kind of argument presented by Senator BARRASSO. If Republicans want to go home this weekend and insult the work ethic of millions of Americans who believe in the dignity of work, that is their constitutional right.

The country, obviously, is nowhere near the end of this pandemic. Businesses are going to keep closing—some temporarily, others permanently. We are looking at the worst unemployment crisis since the Great Depression.

The benefits we put together initially, the supercharged unemployment benefits—and I am especially proud that we said that as for the law, which really hadn't been updated since the 1930s, that we would modernize the law and allow gig workers and the self-employed and independent contractors and part-timers to be brought into the system. Those supercharged benefits

that we negotiated in the Finance Committee room—which, by the way, were signed off by Secretary Mnuchin. This was not done in the dead of night with only one side going along with the effort. These were negotiated with Secretary Mnuchin, who actually endorsed it at a press conference. These supercharged unemployment benefits have been the one thing that has kept millions of families—millions of families—from being in a position where they couldn't feed their families, couldn't make rent, and, literally, facing the kind of despair, the kind of fear that has made the number of requests for mental health services go through the stratosphere because people are so worried. And this question of their economic future is just one reason.

Supercharged unemployment benefits have helped keep the economy afloat and have helped prevent true economic meltdowns. And even with the lifeline, so many are barely hanging on. They fall behind on their bills. I mentioned the threat of hunger. Senator BROWN just talked about how important it is to act on housing assistance.

It would be a historic failure, morally and economically, to slash this lifeline that is so important to getting workers through a pandemic. The Democratic leader, Senator SCHUMER, and I listened carefully to all sides. We thought about the need, given the fact that there are predictions of high unemployment for some time to come. We said: Let's come up with a dependable safety net that provides some measure of predictability with respect to how the government is going to approach these issues in the future.

My colleagues have said that they want a system that has the benefits taper off as unemployment goes down. Well, what the Democratic leader and I have proposed does exactly that.

I believe that yesterday there was a story in the Washington Post where, I think, they were talking about unemployment at 15 percent. When unemployment reaches those kinds of levels—and we saw that story of people waiting and waiting for hours. In fact, I don't have the exact percentage.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the story about the unemployment calamity in Oklahoma be printed in the RECORD at this point.

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

[July 20, 2020]

'A VERY DARK FEELING': HUNDREDS CAMP
OUT IN OKLAHOMA UNEMPLOYMENT LINES
(By Annie Gowen)

TULSA.—John Jolley never thought he'd be sleeping in his car awaiting unemployment benefits. But there he was, the owner of a once-successful advertising agency, taking a sweaty nap in a Subaru wagon in a convention center parking lot at 1:45 a.m. on a Wednesday.

The pandemic sent his business into a free fall, and now Jolley wanted to be first in line for an unemployment claims event beginning in five hours. He barely dozed, afraid that if

he fell into a deep sleep, he would miss the early-morning handout of tickets for appointments with state agents.

There would be just 400 tickets handed out for that day's event. When those ran out, there would be 400 more for appointments the following day.

"I just didn't want to be number 803," Jolley said.

In the four months since the pandemic began, nearly 50 million workers have filed unemployment claims nationwide, a flood that's overwhelmed some states, freezing antiquated computer systems and jamming websites and phone lines for days. State benefit agencies in some parts of the country have evoked memories of Great Depression bread lines.

Many have been struggling to get their regular unemployment benefits as well as the \$600-a-week federal pandemic unemployment assistance passed in March that begins running out for millions of Americans later this week. Congress returned Monday to begin hammering out the details of another massive coronavirus bill, with Republicans assembling a \$1 trillion package that probably will extend but reduce the size of that benefit. Democrats are backing a more wide-ranging \$3 trillion relief bill passed by the House in May.

In Oklahoma, one of the poorest states, unemployment—which reached a record 14.7 percent in April—has pushed many to the point of desperation, with savings depleted, cars repossessed and homes sold for cash.

Even though the unemployment rate dropped to 6.6 percent in June, the backlog has created unprecedented delays. Oklahoma had approved 235,000 of about 590,000 filed claims by June 21—a total \$2.4 billion payout, far more than in previous years. About 6,000 state claims are pending.

The Oklahoma Employment Security Commission staff has tried to combat the delays by holding mega-processing events at large arenas in Oklahoma City and Tulsa this month, with masks and social distancing required. So far, they've managed to help 6,200 people. Jolley's unemployment claim was approved in March but had been stalled, a problem that hadn't been fixed after nine phone calls and hours on hold with the OESC.

The 58-year-old single father arrived in the parking lot of the River Spirit Expo center in Tulsa around 9 p.m. on a sultry night with a heat index approaching 100 degrees. The landmark 75-foot statue of the Golden Driller—a nod to Tulsa's oil and gas hub—towered over one side of the dark parking lot, his face painted over with a surgical mask.

Dozens more sat in the parking lot overnight with Jolley, unable to get their questions answered through the unemployment agency's overloaded phone system. Some said they had been notified that their claim was denied as fraudulent. Jolley quickly bonded with the woman in the next car over, a manicurist named Cindy La, 60, the two swapping tips on how they thought the event would unfold.

That afternoon, as Jolley gathered up the paperwork he'd need for his claim, he felt a sense of sadness as profound as anything he'd felt since the pandemic began.

"It's a very dark feeling," he said. "You just kind of feel like you're in a boat without a rudder and you're riding the waves. After all these years you worked hard at your company, tried to be a good guy and be fair to your clients, you just feel like you're losing control of your future."

OLD COMPUTERS, NEW CAREERS

At 4:30 a.m., several OESC staffers emerged from the convention center to hand out the appointment numbers. The process quickly

degenerated into a free-for-all, the crowd growing restive, pushing and shoving to get the limited supply of appointment tickets. Jolley moved to the front of the line, trying to protect his new friend, La, by reaching down and plucking two tickets—No. 69 for her and No. 64 for him.

Others were not so lucky. The numbers quickly ran out, and people were told they had to return the following day. Eventually, staffers referred people to the three new events added for the coming week because of the demand.

Ashley Love, 31, a former customer advocate for Enterprise Rent-A-Car, had risen at 4 a.m. to take her 2-year-old daughter to her mother's home before heading to the convention center, only to be told she had to come back the next day. She was laid off in March, when the pandemic nearly obliterated the travel industry. Her benefits inexplicably stopped four weeks ago, the agency website saying only she was on a "verification hold."

"It's appalling, I don't understand how they can do this to people," Love said. "One day, I called 15 times in two hours, and they either don't answer or take your calls and hang up on you."

Love was getting down to the last she has, having run through \$4,000 in savings. Even before her benefits froze, she was getting only about \$137 a week, plus \$600 a week from the federal government's pandemic emergency assistance program, due to expire around the end of the month. Her regular monthly bills—rent, car payment, insurance—are \$2,091.

She has continued her search for a job, even contemplating whether she should "Find Something New"—as the White House's new ad campaign suggests—researching how she could get certification to start a career in teaching.

Shelley Zumwalt, the interim director of Oklahoma's unemployment agency, said the state's system uses a mainframe computer from 1978 that was quickly overwhelmed by the volume of claims. "My first day, I sat down with one of the claims agents and said, 'Show me what you do,' and a green screen popped up and she pushed F9," Zumwalt said. "That was the clearest thing to me that I was dealing with a technology that was older than I am."

She launched the series of more than a dozen mega-events July 1 after several days in June when desperate people began showing up to the OESC office in Oklahoma City and waiting in line with coolers, camp chairs and tents.

"I'm not okay with people having to camp out to get their claims processed," Zumwalt said.

Some who showed up at the event had received notes from the OESC that they had been approved for unemployment benefits when they hadn't yet applied, convinced they had been victims of fraud. Zumwalt said that about 90,000 claims have been flagged as fraudulent.

Last month, the U.S. Labor Department's Office of Inspector General, working with the OESC, said it had stopped payment on 3,800 unemployment insurance claims, including 1,300 filed from IP addresses in London, saving the state nearly \$16 million.

Many real Oklahomans in need of assistance are suffering through the complicated unemployment process, too. The state has rejected more than half of the unemployment claims filed through June 21, some for gig or self-employed workers who must be denied regular unemployment insurance before they can qualify for the federal government's Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, Zumwalt said.

Many who showed up at the Tulsa convention center were navigating government as-

sistance for the first time, such as Sarah Miller, 29, a single mother of three who was told not to come back to her job as a nursing home aide after she experienced symptoms consistent with covid-19 in March. Her unemployment claim has been pending since April 12.

"I need this. I need it," she said. "I've never been one to do unemployment, but with all that's going on, I don't really have any other option. I have to be home with my kids; I can't afford to pay a babysitter or do day care. Got to do what I got to do."

'WE'RE ALL GLITCHES'

Jolley had time to go home before his 6:30 a.m. appointment, shower and change into cargo shorts and a shirt printed with tiny steaks and barbecues. He was among the first into the cavernous Expo center, where claims seekers sat down in folding chairs six feet apart.

Staffers handed out bottles of water, Kind granola bars and a flier that advertised drive-up distribution at the local food pantry, "Soup's On at the Community Kitchen." Jolley tucked the flier along with other documents in a blue folder he labeled "Unemployment."

As he waited for his name and number to be called, Jolley looked around at the others sitting in their socially distanced chairs and was reminded of the animated Disney movie "Wreck-It Ralph," which he watches with his 7-year-old, Pearl. In it, Ralph is a lumbering video game villain who hopes to restart his life by helping a video game princess stuck in a computer glitch.

In a way, everyone in this room is a glitch, he said, just like Princess Vanellope in the movie.

"People that are here, we're all glitches," he said. "We fell through the cracks. The computer system didn't work for us."

Jolley has a degree in petroleum engineering but started Big Guys Inc. advertising in 1995 as a hedge against the ups and downs of the oil market. For a long time, the company provided a good living, even during the 2008 recession. He sells ad space for mom-and-pop businesses—tree trimmers, DUI lawyers—posted in bathrooms in airports, restaurants and concert venues.

"It's a captive audience with disposable income," he quipped, that old joke. "Or it was before this."

He had always thought he would do this until he retired, especially after life dealt him the surprise of Pearl and he became a single dad at 50. Now, he was just hoping his misfortune would be temporary, that business would revive as things normalized, with concerts and other events supposed to restart in Oklahoma in August.

When his name was called, he went behind black curtains where claims agents were working on their ancient computer program. He gave a written summary of his many contacts with the agency to Ashley Testerman, an agent in a black cotton mask.

"I brought a cheat sheet," he said.

"You have no payments; let's see if you are in the system," she said.

In the end, after all that—the numerous phone calls, the hours wasted on hold, the evening spent sleeping in his car—all he needed was a working PIN number, and Jolley was able to file claims for all the weeks he had missed since April.

"I feel so relieved," he said afterward, joking that he might do a Jed Clampett-like jig in the parking lot on his way out the door. But the joy would be temporary. His last sobering exchange with the claims agent stuck in his mind.

"We don't know what the future holds," he had said. "What happens if everything shuts down again?"

What then?

Mr. WYDEN. I close by way of saying that I came to the floor some time ago to ask unanimous consent to make sure that this weekend, when millions of people are hurting—remember, the suffering starts in 2 days. It starts on Saturday—2 days in Florida, in Oregon, in Wyoming, and all over the country. MITCH MCCONNELL's response was: Let's take a break; we can take off. He didn't seem to see those hurting people in Kentucky. Maybe they will have something to say to him this weekend.

I will tell you, I think it is a big mistake for Senate Republicans to have frittered away weeks on end, when we could have had a dialogue and we could have talked about ideas.

The Presiding Officer has talked to me a number of times since he has been here about healthcare. I enjoy talking to my colleagues and working on ideas to try to find a way to address concerns and solve problems. There wasn't one single effort—not one—to pick up on any of the ideas that I have been discussing here. In fact, I tried to reach out to colleagues on the other side and told them that I heard them say repeatedly that benefits should taper down as the unemployment rate goes down. Well, that is the heart of our bill on this side.

The hurt and pain that working families are going to face this Saturday and Sunday—2 days from now—did not have to happen. It didn't have to happen. Our side has a bill to work on. The other side, I gather, has some ideas. We have not seen a single piece of paper, but I know that all those people who are hurting can't eat retroactively. They can't eat all the Republican theories about delay and haggling.

I believe these working families deserve a whole lot better. They deserve some predictability and certainty that when they are hurting—through no fault of their own—their government isn't going to turn its back on them and say: We don't care if your kids can't eat and you don't have a roof over your head. Our country has always been better than that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

CARES 2

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, as I said on Tuesday, our Nation stands at a critical midway point in our fight against the coronavirus. We made it through the springtime lockdowns. Americans' sacrifices saved our medical system. The Senate's historic CARES Act helped millions of families make it through, but this terrible virus is still with us. It kills more Americans every day. Some areas that have reopened have seen cases spike. Our hospitals, healthcare providers, and especially our vulnerable citizens are nowhere near out of the woods.

Meanwhile, although the early days of our economic recovery have beaten expectations and surprised the experts, we have really only begun to repair the