

hear that from people across the Roundtable on almost anything and any day. But here is a case where its delayed action on this bill suggests that it isn't always the Senate that isn't considering this legislation.

Each of these bills fills a critical void in our current whistleblower laws, and each one ought to receive consideration and an up-or-down vote before the end of this Congress. Of course, if that is going to happen, Congress needs to pick up its pace. It needs to take a cue from those strong actions taken by the Congress—the Continental Congress, let me emphasize, during the American Revolution, a body that saw the need, took the time, and devoted necessary resources to stand up for whistleblowers in the midst of a war for the very existence of our country.

Today, let's all take a moment to reflect on the high standards that those early Americans set for us back on July 30, 1778, and let's remember never to let excuses or partisan differences keep us from pursuing our common interests in passing strong, meaningful whistleblower laws.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). The Senator from Wisconsin.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST

Mr. JOHNSON. Madam President, back in February 2020, before the COVID recession, there were 158.8 million Americans employed. We have gone through a lot. COVID is probably the most significant event—certainly in my lifetime—affecting people's lives, the tragedies we have seen, affecting our economy, affecting the Federal budget.

At the end of June, there were 142 million Americans employed. That is a reduction of 16.6 million Americans or 10.5 percent. I want people to remember that 10.5 percent.

Over the last month or so, there have been a number of respected economists who made forecasts of how much our economy is going to shrink. These are folks from the IMF and CBO and the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, economists at Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs. The range of what they are predicting our economy will shrink to is somewhere between 4.6 percent and 8 percent. This is causing economic devastation—a real human toll on real people.

As a result of that, Congress acted. We acted fast. We acted swiftly. We acted massively. We wanted to provide financial help to individuals who were unemployed all of a sudden through no fault of their own. We wanted to help provide financial need to businesses that were viable, that can hopefully survive and rehire and help us recover from this COVID recession. We also wanted to make sure we provided enough liquidity in the market so we wouldn't see any kind of seizing up and see real financial devastation.

The result of all that was that within a very short period of time, by the end of April, we had already passed four

different financial relief packages totaling \$2.9 trillion. We just held an oversight hearing in my committee 2 days ago. There is even dispute on that number. Some witnesses said it is close to \$3.6 trillion. I am going to use \$2.9 trillion as a minimum.

To relate that to what I just talked about, that represents about 13.5 percent of our economy. Again, employment is down 10.5 percent. Economists are predicting our economy will shrink somewhere between 4.6 percent and 8 percent. But we acted swiftly and massively. We knew what we were going to enact was far from perfect. We all understood that. It was far from perfect, but it worked, and we had to do it.

We passed an amount equal to 13.5 percent of last year's GDP. Less than a month later, Speaker PELOSI and her House Democrats passed a fifth package out of the House worth \$3 trillion—\$3 trillion. I am sorry. That is not a serious attempt at financial relief. If we add that to the \$2.9 trillion, that would represent 27.5 percent of last year's economy.

Again, employment is down 10.5 percent. Our economy will probably shrink by no more than 8 percent. Yet Speaker PELOSI and House Democrats wanted to increase the amount of debt burden on our children by passing a package that would bring the total relief package up to 27.5 percent of our GDP. It is not serious.

It should surprise no one when Leader MCCONNELL and Chief of Staff Meadows and Treasury Secretary Mnuchin, as they tried to forge a deal with Speaker of the House PELOSI and Minority Leader SCHUMER, that they couldn't reach a deal; that there was probably no goalpost that they will not move to make sure that doesn't happen.

But the problem with that approach—and I would call it a very cynical, political approach, really playing with people's lives and livelihood—is that tomorrow the Federal unemployment extension that we passed as part of the CARES Act—because we realized we wanted to try to help everybody who was unemployed because of the COVID recession—expires.

As I said, the CARES Act was far from perfect. I certainly did not want one of the provisions. I voted against it. I actually supported the amendment of the Senator from Florida to reduce the \$600 flat payment. That is a real problem because it represents something like 134 percent of average wages, and we are creating a very perverse incentive for people to remain unemployed when our economy is calling for more workers.

I want to quote an economic adviser to both Presidents Clinton and President Obama, Larry Summers. He once stated:

The second way government assistance programs contribute to long-term unemployment is by providing an incentive, and the means, not to work. Each unemployed person has a "reservation wage"—the minimum

wage he or she insists on getting before accepting a job. Unemployment insurance and other social assistance programs increase the reservation wage, causing an unemployed person to remain unemployed longer.

We want to avoid that situation. We want to help workers, but we want to avoid the situation where we prolong unemployment or create a sense for people to stay on unemployment insurance. The fact is that, according to a University of Chicago study, 68 percent of people collecting unemployment are making more on unemployment than they made when they were working. CBO estimates something between five out of six people currently collecting unemployment are making more not working than working. The Bureau of Labor statistics at the end of May said there were 5.4 million jobs open—not being filled.

We have a problem. We have two problems. We can't do a deal because I don't believe our friends on the other side of the aisle are serious about doing a deal. But we have unemployment expiring, and the current provision was too generous to create a perverse incentive.

I have introduced a piece of legislation that I have cosponsored with the Senator from Indiana and the Senator from Florida, who would also like to speak to this. It is called the Coronavirus Relief Fair Unemployment Compensation Act. There is no fancy acronym. It describes what the bill does. It extends Federal plus-up for unemployment to the end of the year.

The COVID recession is not ending any time soon. Rather than having to come back and do this over and over again and increase the anxiety on Americans who are unemployed, let's extend this to the end of December. Our bill gives States the option of either a \$200 flat plus-up or a plus-up equal to no more than two-thirds of an individual's average wage, not to exceed \$500. The States have the option. If they can't handle the two-thirds plus-up, they can accept the \$200 flat plus-up.

In case our Democratic colleagues are going to complain about that as not being generous enough, two-thirds of weekly wages is exactly what the House passed in phase 2 of the COVID relief package. Two-thirds of average wages is what they set as the amount of money for paid sick and family leave.

I also want to point out that \$200 a week is eight times the amount the Democrats, back in 2008 and 2009—I think 2009—passed as part of the great recession relief package. They passed \$25 per week plus-up, so \$200 per week plus-up is eight times that.

Again, we, as Republicans, are trying to meet them already more than halfway to do a deal on unemployment. Again, those individuals who are without a job through no fault of their own have the comfort and relief that they will have assistance from the Federal Government.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. BRAUN. Just 5 months ago, we had the hottest economy in 37 years. Running a business—starting it from Main Street as a little company—it was lucky enough to grow over those 37 years. Three of my four kids run it now.

The reason I ran for the Senate was to make sure we had that kind of atmosphere in place for the productive economy, the enterprising, the hard-working Americans who work at companies on Main Street.

Since COVID arrived, of course, it shocked us all. We know it is a tricky foe. It has peculiarities. Yet the one thing that is certain is that we need to get back to the economy that was raising wages for those most in need, was doing it in a real way, and not through government.

Yes, government needs to get involved now and then, and this was the case. Like the Senator from Wisconsin stated, we moved quickly, and we did something.

What I see on the other side of the aisle, with this monstrosity of \$3.5 trillion, is an effort beyond just addressing the displacement from COVID-19. I see it as an effort to try to replace Main Street and the productive economy. It doesn't work through here, and we should have never, back in late March, had something that would have incentivized not working. Of course, we tried to fix it, but friends on the other side of the aisle did not agree with us. If we want to get back to some form of a new normal—sooner or later, when we whip this foe, COVID-19—and back to what it was before, we can't do it through government.

When you look at not only this bill they have but at the other stuff that we need to keep in mind in leading up to the election, we cannot afford it, and it doesn't make sense. It is replacing enterprisers, Main Street—everything that makes this country great—with a bloated Federal Government.

When I heard that this bill was out there—coming from a quick-footed entrepreneur now here in the Senate—I didn't hesitate at all to get on it. We need to do this because we need to cut to the chase. We have hard-working Americans who are still unemployed. They have gotten displaced out of that great economy. This takes care of that without putting into place something that is so broad, so expansive, and that does not address the essence of what is at issue here. It makes sure there is a pathway so that we can get back to that Trump economy—that economy which was working more for everyone than at any time ever before. Don't ask people who have been here in the business of government. Why don't you ask people who have been running businesses, who have been on Main Street, who have been doing it?

That is why we need to get this across the finish line. It addresses the

key thing that we need to do transitionally so that we may get back to where Main Street and the real economy are running things and where there is not an attempt by the other side to replace what has been making the economy work.

I yield the floor.

Mr. JOHNSON. Madam President, I thank the Senator from Indiana for acting quickly in cosponsoring this piece of legislation.

I now yield to the Senator from Florida.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Madam President, I thank the senior Senator from Wisconsin and the junior Senator from Indiana for their hard work in addressing the out-of-control spending of the Federal Government and for finding ways to assist Americans who need help in the midst of this pandemic.

The coronavirus is a crisis that has demanded action to protect Americans, but if we are not careful, Congress is going to create another devastating crisis down the road, one of our own doing. Our national debt and deficits—already at unsustainable levels—have skyrocketed as Congress has spent almost \$3 trillion to address this crisis. Even if you remove the Paycheck Protection Program that has kept workers on payrolls, the total amount spent by Congress to respond to the pandemic and help workers amounts to more than \$50,000 per unemployed American. Do you think any unemployed American has received anything close to \$50,000? Of course not. That is because every dollar spent by Congress seems to be spent in the least efficient way possible.

Now Congress is negotiating a new spending bill of at least \$1 trillion without even understanding if or how the \$3 trillion already allocated has been spent. You would never operate a business like that. You would never operate your household like that. Government should not be able to get away with it.

In June, I and Senators JOHNSON and CRUZ asked all 50 States how they have allocated the trillions of dollars in taxpayer funding they have received from the Federal Government for the coronavirus response. So far, the majority of States has refused our request. Instead of telling us how they are being responsible with American taxpayer dollars, they want more money from the Federal Government. Where is the oversight and accountability? It doesn't exist in Washington right now.

I am thankful that my friends Senators JOHNSON and BRAUN are focused on protecting our future and reining in Washington's excess. Instead of just throwing money at every problem, my colleagues are actually thinking about the impact this spending will have on the future of our children and grandchildren and how we are impacting our ability to fund our military and our

safety nets like Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

Over my 8 years as the Governor of Florida, we completely turned our economy around by making hard budgetary decisions, by cutting taxes and regulations, and by making sure we got a return on every taxpayer dollar. Senators JOHNSON and BRAUN and I all come from business backgrounds, and we understand that you just can't spend without having accountability. You have to invest wisely.

We have to start doing the exact same thing at the Federal level because, at some point, someone is going to have to pay for it. If we don't start acting in a more fiscally responsible manner, our children and our grandchildren are no longer going to have the same opportunities we all have had to live the American dream, and that is actually not fair.

It is time we take this seriously. The best way to help people right now is to get our economy reopened, to support businesses by cutting taxes and regulations, and to ensure that we have ample testing and PPE across the country. That is how we get back on track. That needs to be our focus in going forward.

I thank my colleagues for their hard work in trying to make sure we don't waste people's money and to make sure we take care of the people who actually need help right now.

I yield to Senator JOHNSON.

Mr. JOHNSON. I thank the Senator from Florida for his words of support.

Madam President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of my bill at the desk. I further ask 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 Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, in reserving the right to object, let's talk about how we got here.

For over 3 months, our Republican colleagues have dithered, dallied, and not taken seriously the most enormous health crisis we have had in 100 years and the most enormous economic crisis we have had in 75 years. Now, all of a sudden, in the last day or two, they see the cliff. There are many cliffs, but they see the cliff of unemployment insurance running out.

We have been asking them to negotiate on this for a very long time. We have had nothing. Speaker PELOSI and I asked Leader MCCONNELL to sit down with us almost a month ago, and he would not. So we got here because our Republican colleagues couldn't get their act together. They still don't have their act together, and now they are worried. Yet, instead of being serious about negotiating, they have created a stunt, which shows how unserious the Republicans are at coming to an agreement.

I dare say, if this bill were voted on by the floor, a large number of Republicans—perhaps a majority—would vote against it. It would fail in the Senate by a large margin and would never pass the House.

Instead of engaging in this stunt of trying to get the heat of America off their backs, they ought to do something real, which is to sit down and seriously negotiate with the Democrats about this issue.

This proposal, amazingly enough, is even stingier than the one the Republicans introduced a few days ago. Instead of giving workers who lost their jobs through no fault of their own a 30-percent pay cut, they give them a 33-percent pay cut. It is just so wrong, and if you look at all of the data, it has been rejected by the American people.

My colleague from Indiana says—and I know he is sincere—you can't solve this problem through the government. I have news for you. When you have the greatest economic crisis in 75 years and the greatest health crisis in 100 years, the private sector cannot solve this problem. That is one of the reasons you guys are all tied in a knot—you must have the government get involved, and you don't want to do that.

I hear my friend from Florida talk about the deficit. Well, that didn't matter when we passed a \$1.5 trillion tax break for the wealthiest people and the biggest corporations in America. The deficit didn't matter then, but when it is helping working people who have lost their jobs, when it is helping small businesses get on their feet, when it is helping to feed children, when it is helping to keep people in their homes and apartments, then we hear about the deficit.

Let me tell you what is wrong with this proposal. There are two basic reasons.

One, it doesn't work on its own. As I said, No. 1, it is even stingier than the original proposal. They are moving backward—our Republican friends are—and they are giving workers an even greater pay cut than they had before.

Second, the pandemic unemployment insurance has kept millions out of poverty. We all work to keep people out of poverty. This has worked. If we cut it back, it is estimated that millions will fall back into poverty and that millions will go in it.

The third is one of the few things we hear about to get the economy going. If you talk to our economists—liberal and conservative—they will tell you the No. 1 thing preventing the economy from getting worse is consumer spending. This bill puts money in people's pockets, and they spend it. Even conservative economists say it is very much needed to get the economy going.

Fourth, it can't work. We have called a whole bunch of State governments and State unemployment offices. They cannot implement this plan immediately, and many say it would take months. I know that the Senator from

Wisconsin has given States an option of cutting the thing to \$200 or getting 67 percent. Many States say they will never be able to implement the 67-percent part and that people will be stuck with that big cut.

The main point on that is that many States will not be able to implement this new plan for weeks or even months, and people will not have their money.

So the No. 1 thing that is wrong with this proposal is that, just on the merits itself, it fails by giving a big pay cut, by pushing more people into poverty, by taking money out of our economy that consumers can spend, and because it is fundamentally unworkable.

There is another reason. We have a lot of problems.

In a few minutes, I, the Senator from Oregon, and the Senator from Michigan will ask unanimous consent to pass the Heroes Act.

We have a lot of cliffs. As of Thursday, hundreds of thousands—and soon millions—could be evicted from their apartments. This bill does nothing about that cliff.

As of this week—and next week's being a new month—State and local governments will be running out of money. Already, 1.5 million State and local workers have been laid off, and more will be laid off. That is a cliff. What are we doing about that?

Testing. If you go to any place in America, including the three States we are talking about here, people have to wait days and weeks for their test results, and some don't even ever get their test results back.

We are not going to solve this problem until we solve the coronavirus problem. We all know that President Trump and this administration have failed on testing. Almost every other Western country that has dealt with this issue—in Western Europe or East Asia—is way ahead of us. We should be ashamed. We have a President who has dithered and has not taken seriously the testing regime. The Heroes Act fixes that problem, and we are not going to fix our economy until we fix the healthcare problem, my friends.

The Heroes Act does many, many other things, like getting people back to school, not like Donald Trump does in pushing people back to school even if it is not safe. Well, remember what he did in Arizona? in Texas? in Florida? He pushed the State Governors to get people back. Now look at what has happened. The same thing will happen in the schools if we are not careful. We have help there, which my good friend from Wisconsin's bill doesn't even mention. That is another cliff.

We have a month before school starts, and this bill—skinny or stingy—is not up to the moment. It is not even close to being up to the moment.

It is amazing that we have such a crisis in America and that our Republican friends in the Senate and the White House and the House cannot even face up to the problem. They are obsessed

with saying we shouldn't spend any money. Well, believe me, if we don't spend any money, things will get worse, and we will have to spend more later.

This is the dilemma we are in because of COVID. It is no one's fault, but that is the dilemma we are in, and it is being made so much worse by this President. We don't hear a peep from the other side about how the President has messed this up. Instead, we get this stunt to try to show they want to do something that they know won't pass and know won't solve the problem.

So I am going to offer a unanimous consent request in a few minutes to pass the Heroes Act, which has already passed the House, so it would do some real good. It covers all the areas I mentioned and does a far better job at dealing with the unemployment situation than my good friend from Wisconsin's bill.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON. Madam President, a quick response. The Democratic leader states this is not adequate. Again, I would remind the Senate that in 2009, when they passed a Federal plus-up for unemployment benefits—total Democratic control—they passed \$25 a week. So the \$200 a week is eight times what they passed in 2009. Apparently, they felt that was adequate back then.

There was also a study out of the University of Chicago that a \$200 plus-up on State unemployment benefits coming from the Federal Government replaces more than 100 percent of wages for 20 percent of the workers currently unemployed. The other 80 percent get replacement that ranges up to 100 percent.

Again, this is a very generous proposal. And, of course, the option of two-thirds is exactly what the House passed in phase 2 of the coronavirus relief packages—two-thirds of weekly wages for paid sick and paid family leave. Now, all of a sudden, it is inadequate. And of course their solution—what they are going to offer—is another \$3 trillion, further mortgaging our children's future when we haven't spent about \$1.2 trillion of the \$2.9 trillion we have already authorized.

It is not a serious proposal, which is why Leader MCCONNELL could not negotiate, because they weren't negotiating in good faith. The Democrats are being cynical. This is not a serious offer.

This is a very serious and, quite honestly, more than generous offer to help Americans and alleviate the anxiety they are going to be feeling if the Democrats just simply decide to reject this. It is very unfortunate, but that is the state of play in the Senate. It is very sad.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, first, before I do my UC, I would remind my good friend—I remind myself

to take off my mask—I would remind my good friend that it took us 10 years to get out of the crisis of 2008. Unemployment stayed high. Job numbers stayed high. Looking at 2008 as a model for recovery is not anything anyone would want to do.

In a few minutes, I am going to offer the Heroes Act as a unanimous consent alternative, and I mentioned before the many things it does. But let me just say in the larger sense, we have an enormous crisis in America. We have higher unemployment than we have ever had since the Depression. Today, the 150,000th death was recorded. Thus far, the Trump administration, followed by the Republican Senate, has been an abject failure at dealing with that crisis.

It would have been much better if the President had done what chiefs of state in Europe and Asia did—stepped up to the plate, implemented testing, and put adequate money in people's pockets. We might be more on the road to recovery, like those other countries are.

Aren't my Republican friends ashamed that Europe and Asia did better than us, the greatest country in the world? And do you know why? Because of the very philosophy my colleagues have mentioned—don't spend any money, and, in President Trump's view, ignore the crisis. It will go away when the weather gets warm. Everyone has testing, he said, back in March.

We Democrats feel the pain in America. We feel the pain of people who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own. We feel the pain of small business people who have struggled to build their businesses for decades—my dad was a small business man—and then they lose those businesses. We feel the pain of parents who can't feed their kids. We feel the pain of moms and dads who are worried about whether they can send their kids back to school safely. We feel the pain of people when they get tested and they have to wait days, weeks to get a result, when the test means nothing.

Our responsibility as Democrats and Republicans is to get something done, something real—not a stunt, not something stingy, and not something that is so narrow, it only deals with one aspect of the problem, inadequately at that. That is why we are offering the Heroes Act. It is not perfect. There are a few things some people might add. But it is a heck of a lot better to meet this crisis than what we have seen from our Republican friends—a bill that, as I said, moves backward, is stingy, and probably wouldn't get the support of a majority of Republicans if it were put on the floor, let alone any of us.

Of course we have to do something. The Heroes Act is the right thing to do. But I want to make one prediction for everyone who is worried about the future here. If the past is prologue, something very close to the Heroes Act will be enacted. Look at COVID 2, COVID 3, and COVID 3.5. In each case, the initial

Republican reaction was similar to the reaction we have heard this morning: Can't do it. We will dare the Democrats to block us.

It didn't work. The public was on our side. But more importantly, once the Republicans showed they couldn't bully anybody and couldn't put a proposal on the floor, an inadequate bill, and pass it, they came to the table and negotiated.

We are still waiting for Leader MCCONNELL to go into that room with Mnuchin and Meadows and PELOSI and me. We are waiting for our Republican Senate colleagues to come up with a coherent plan that can get their support. We are still waiting for the President to understand the gravity of this situation and do something about it, for God's sake.

I believe, if this is objected to, within a little while, our Republican friends will feel the pressure from their constituents and from national media to realize that they have to come and negotiate in good faith on a bold, strong, comprehensive bill that will pass.

Before I ask consent for the Heroes Act, I will yield first to my colleague from Oregon and then to my colleague from Michigan.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, this morning showed why we need the Democratic approach to dealing with unemployment insurance and why the pain that was reported this morning would get even worse under the proposal offered by Senator JOHNSON.

This morning, Americans learned that our economy cratered in the second quarter—essentially, GDP dropped by 9.5 percent from April through June. That translates to a 33-percent annual contraction of the American economy. So what you have with today's analysis is a gross domestic product in free fall. If Republicans slash unemployment benefits with this proposal, the gross domestic product is going to fall faster, and the economy will collapse.

Folks, the economists, people who aren't political figures, told us this morning—this is a five-alarm fire. It is the biggest and fastest drop ever recorded, colleagues, wiping out years of economic gains in a matter of weeks.

The fact is, when you take the kind of economic hammering that we learned about this morning, and you have the Democratic approach with respect to supercharged unemployment—what we wrote in the Finance Committee, that Secretary Mnuchin signed off on, the \$600 per week, which finally included those people who nobody even talked about in the 1920s, gig workers and part-timers and independent contractors—they got a fair shake.

The reason we thought it was so important to supercharge those benefits and why we feel so strongly about doing it now, with an additional \$600 per week, is so that people can make rent and pay groceries, while all these folks are out of work. And we learned

again about thousands and thousands of more workers in every part of the country getting hit again with layoffs. When jobless Americans receive unemployment benefits, it becomes one of the biggest booster shots for the American economy. When jobless Americans receive unemployment benefits, and they spend it on food, they spend it on car payments, they spend it on rent, and they spend it on medical bills. It is part of the gross domestic product. It makes no sense—it makes no sense, colleagues—to take that support away, as the Senator from Wisconsin seeks to do.

One point four million people have filed for unemployment benefits this past week. Before the pandemic, unemployment claims had never crossed 700,000 in a single week, not even during the great recession. They have now been at 1.3 million or higher for 19 straight weeks.

So here the Senate is, a few hours after seeing the worst domestic product report ever recorded, and what is the response of the Senate Republicans? To slash unemployment even more than they originally proposed, yanking an economic lifeline from 30 million Americans and delivering an economic wrecking ball directly into our fragile economy.

The last point I want to make—and we have Senator STABENOW, my seatmate on the Finance Committee, here—is to highlight the fact that from the beginning, Senate Republicans were hostile to the idea of trying to give a fair shake to these workers and these families who were hit so hard.

Eugene Scalia—the first thing he said after we did that work in the Finance Committee—the first thing he said was not “Oh, we have to do our job administering the benefits.” The first thing he said was that his big concern is that unemployed people are going to be dependent on government. How preposterous.

I see my friend Senator BROWN here, who spends a big chunk of his waking hours talking about the dignity of work. So much for the dignity of work when you hear about what Eugene Scalia said.

I hosted a nationwide townhall meeting just a couple of nights ago, and there were workers from the Midwest, and they said: People are saying we don't want to work. If I get a job offer at night, I will be there the first thing in the morning, ready to go.

This is not about workers being unable to work; it is about scarcity of jobs, just the way those figures this morning pointed out.

So I think that we are going to have further discussion on other issues, but I just want to mention one last point before yielding.

Today we heard some remarkable comments about how Donald Trump—and I guess this was his musing, but whenever he muses, it actually sometimes is part of a strategy—he talked about putting off the election and that

the problem being that people would be voting by mail. Now, there is not a shred of evidence—that this is a problem.

The reason it is not a problem—and I don't say it just because I am the Nation's first mail-in U.S. Senator; take the word of far-right conservatives—the late Dennis Richardson in our State, about as conservative as you get. One of the last things he did before he passed was he pointed out that there is no voter fraud in our vote-by-mail elections. He said it doesn't happen. A conservative. A rock-ribbed conservative.

So we just heard that comment this morning, Leader SCHUMER. Of course, the law says that he can't change the election, but it shows again why it is so important to have the elections provision from the Heroes Act—which I was honored to work with Speaker PELOSI on—be part of the way in which people vote this fall because they shouldn't have to choose between voting or their health. Most of the poll workers in America are over the age of 60, they shouldn't be put at risk, which is obviously what Donald Trump would be willing to do.

So the Heroes bill—we are now going to talk about, I believe, the nutrition part, which Senator STABENOW has championed so eloquently.

But I wanted to take a moment to focus on the economic numbers that came out this morning and how the Republican proposal would make our ability to fight what was described a few hours ago worse and also talk about the fiasco of Donald Trump's efforts every single day to chip away at people's opportunities to vote-by-mail and in other ways.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I am really proud to stand with a group of colleagues and leaders who understand what is happening to the American people and the hardship they are facing and the fact that they just want some help and they want people to understand that. We are in the middle of a pandemic. It is not done yet. We know we have to wrap our arms around what is happening with the healthcare pandemic before we can do anything else, but in the meantime we have an economic crisis, and we have a hunger crisis in this country.

It is very hard for me to listen to folks—all of us, none of us are worried about going hungry tonight, not one. My guess is, we are not worried about our grandkids or others whom we know going hungry tonight or our moms and dads, but there are 14 million kids right now who aren't getting what they need to eat and could very likely go hungry tonight. They need a safety net.

You know, when I look at what is the priority here with Senate Republicans, you know who gets a safety net? Wall Street gets a safety net. The stock

market gets a safety net. The Secretary of Treasury will say: Hey, what do you guys need? We are backing you up. We got your back. But for the families of our country who, through no fault of their own, have been put into a situation where they have to worry about a roof over their head and food on the table and dollars to be able to pay the bills through help with unemployment, our colleagues say we have the audacity to think that they ought to have a safety net, too; that the majority of Americans ought to know that somebody's got their back.

We are here to say that we are the ones who have their back, and we hope that before this is done, the Senate and the House will come together to do that.

Right now, there are senior citizens—a lot of them—who get a minimum amount of monthly help for their food. It is \$16 a month, not a week—a month. We have the audacity to stand here and want to pass a Heroes Act that would raise that to \$30 a month, and our colleagues will object to a \$14-a-month raise for our poorest senior citizens.

Now, for everyone else, I mean we are looking at about \$1.40 per meal—\$1.40 per meal. I would challenge any of us to try and get a meal for \$1.40. What the United States provides for someone who is in need of help right now is \$1.40 per meal, and we have the audacity to be asking for that to be raised by a little less than \$1 a day. That is what a 15-percent increase in SNAP is. It is a little less than \$1 a day for somebody.

Our colleagues act like this is unbelievable—unbelievable that we would think people should get 90 cents more a day to help with food. That is what we are talking about in this package. It is about getting people help. It is about understanding the hardships that they face and knowing it is not over and not going to be over for too long.

Let me just stress, in closing, that one of the most efficient ways we can address stimulating the economy right now is by putting money in the pockets of people who have to spend it. One of the best ways—in fact, economists tell us the best way is giving somebody \$1 that they have to go to the grocery store and spend it on food. If you give them \$1, it translates into \$1.70 in the economy to the grocery store, the processor, and the farmer. We need to get this done.

We are also deeply concerned about the proposals they put forward on education that I will leave for another day, but it is time—it is time to recognize what people are going through and let them know that somebody cares and somebody is going to help them and somebody is going to have their back.

I would yield to my friend and colleague from Ohio who has been such a leader.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. I want to thank Senator STABENOW and Senator WYDEN.

I will speak for just 2 or 3 minutes. I know that Senator SCHUMER will make another unanimous consent request.

Think about what Senator MCCONNELL wants to do. Senator MCCONNELL is going to cut \$400 in unemployment insurance to tens of millions of unemployed workers, hundreds of thousands in my State alone—in Oregon, Michigan, Illinois, New York, Minnesota, Texas, Florida, and Wisconsin. Thousands of workers are going to lose \$400 a week.

Think about what is going to happen. Around the country, the moratorium on evictions is expiring. Around the country, in community after community, a moratorium on electric and water cutoffs is about to happen. So workers are going to lose \$400 a week. They are going to face eviction.

What is going to happen?

We know what is going to happen. What is going to happen is more people will lose their homes, more people will be in homeless shelters, more people will spend the night in their cousin's basement in the middle of a pandemic.

It is cruel, and it is really stupid policy to cut their income for unemployment for the millions of unemployed workers and then provide no dollars for rental assistance, no dollars for paying their mortgage, and no help for those workers. How can we? We are the United States of America. How can we do such a thing?

I yield to Senator SCHUMER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, just two quick things on what President Trump said today. I know my colleague from Oregon brought it up—the idea that, once again, all he wants to do is divert from his abject failure on the coronavirus crisis. He says: Oh, well, maybe we will not have an election.

That is up to the Senate and the House, Mr. President. President Trump, the election will be in November, on November 3, and you will not change it. Stop diverting attention, President Trump. That is what you have done for 3 months as more people get sick, as more people get unemployed, as we see the numbers we saw today.

Instead of focusing on all these crazy, egotistical, and wrong-headed ideas, focus on COVID-19, focus on testing, focus on unemployment, focus on getting the kids back to school, focus on the many problems we face and understand the moment and largeness of this crisis. I say that to President Trump, and I say that to my Republican colleagues.

We are waiting. We are waiting for you to get your act together and understand the depth of this crisis, the breadth of this crisis, and do something real—not a stunt.

Madam President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 455, H.R.

6800, the Heroes Act; that the bill be considered read a third time and passed, and 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 Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON. Madam President, reserving the right to object, I would like to first respond to the Senator from Oregon about the economic news: yes, on an annualized rate from the downturn in the second quarter, 9.5 percent. But again, I pointed out, respectfully, that economists are predicting a shrinkage of GDP 4.6 and 8 percent because we are in recovery.

The employment has dropped by 10.5 percent. We have already passed \$2.9 trillion. We haven't spent \$1.2 trillion of that at least. So we haven't spent \$1.2 trillion. Yet our Democratic colleagues want to pass a bill that costs \$3 trillion.

We are already \$26.5 trillion in debt by the end of this fiscal year. That would be approaching \$28 trillion. They want to pass a bill by unanimous consent for \$3 trillion when we haven't spent \$1.2 trillion of the \$2.9 trillion we have already passed. That massive amount would represent 27.5 percent of our economy, when economists are saying it will shrink by probably no more than 7 percent or 8 percent.

We don't need to authorize more money. What we need to do is help the American people who are unemployed. I know the minority leader called that stingy. The offer we are making—the \$200 flat payment—does not provide an incentive to stay unemployed. It replaces more than 100 percent of people's wages for 20 percent of the people currently unemployed—a 100-percent wage replacement for 20 percent. That is according to a study by the University of Chicago.

For the other 80 percent, it replaces up to 100 percent. What is stingy about that? Why do our Democratic colleagues want to propose continuing the \$600 per-week plus-up that is preventing people—incentivizing people not to reengage in the economy so that our economy can recover. It makes no sense.

Again, I will point out that the two-thirds option is the exact same amount that the House passed—the Democratic-controlled House passed in phase 2 of the COVID-19 relief packages for paid sick and family leave. So, again, we tried to tailor this to protect those American workers. We tried to tailor this based on what Democrats themselves have proposed and passed. Yet they would rather play politics. They would rather be cynical and object to my unanimous consent request because time is running out—I acknowledge that.

So we are responding, but as in so many other debates—whether it is gun control or immigration—it is their way or the highway. They simply will not

take yes for an answer. It is very unfortunate they are taking this position that they want to indent our children for another \$3 trillion, and they will not say yes to a very reasonable proposal structured on things they proposed and passed in the past.

Madam President, It is very unfortunate, but I have to object to \$3 trillion of additional debt on our children.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The assistant Democratic leader.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader has been recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I believe there are pending requests by several Members, and I don't want to try to preempt it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Would the Senator yield the floor?

Mr. DURBIN. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 4019

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I thank the assistant Democratic leader.

We come back to the floor today, the Senator from Minnesota and I, to reoffer a unanimous consent request that Senator MARKEY, the Senator from Massachusetts, and I offered previously.

After the death of George Floyd and, unfortunately, similar incidents, it has become increasingly obvious that our country is in need of reconciliation—racial reconciliation and personal reconciliation.

One of the things we could do to honor the memory of George Floyd and to attempt to take one small step toward that reconciliation is to make Juneteenth a Federal holiday. We previously had offered this unanimous consent request, and my friend from Wisconsin has his reasons for objecting, but one of the major newspapers in my State said to me: Try again. So I am coming here to the floor to reoffer.

Juneteenth has been a holiday in Texas for 40 years because of the distinct Texas connection. Just to remind my colleagues, Juneteenth was the day when the Union Army Major General Gordon Ganger showed up in Galveston and told people who had previously been slaves that they were no longer slaves 2½ years after the Emancipation Proclamation.

I believe, in all sincerity, we need to remember our history because, you know what, we learn from our mistakes, and if we don't remember our history, we will not learn from our mistakes, and we will commit those mistakes over and over and over again.

The tragic and brutal killing of George Floyd earlier this year has shown a light on the injustices that still exist in our society. Now, for somebody who looks like me, my experiences have been much different from those of our friend TIM SCOTT, the Senator from South Carolina, or the experiences of a pastor whom I encountered

in Houston the other day at a roundtable that Sylvester Turner, the mayor of Houston, convened so that they could share with me their experiences.

This pastor, who was head of the local NAACP chapter, told me: I honor the police. I respect the police. I support the police. But my son, he is afraid of the police.

So, we clearly have a long way to go in treating all people the same, regardless of the color of their skin. And when the perception among some in the minority community is that they are being treated differently, that is a problem that we should all try to address together.

So one way we could attempt to make this small step toward that reconciliation and continue to remind ourselves on an annual basis of how far we have come but how far we still have to go would be to take up this bill, pass it, and get it to the President's desk without further delay.

At this point, before I ask for unanimous consent, I would yield to the Senator from Minnesota.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. SMITH. Madam President, I thank my colleague from Texas. I appreciate his leadership on this.

Juneteenth is among the oldest celebrations of emancipation and is certainly worthy of a Federal holiday. I want to read an op-ed from the Washington Post, written by the musician Usher, which I think eloquently sums up why it is not only important to honor this day as a Federal holiday, but it is also important to recognize it as a part of American history.

I ask unanimous consent to introduce the Washington Post op-ed in full into the RECORD.

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

[June 18, 2020]

USHER: WHY IT'S SO IMPORTANT THAT
JUNETEENTH BECOME A NATIONAL HOLIDAY
(By Usher Raymond IV)

Usher Raymond IV is a musician, actor and entrepreneur.

At the 2015 Essence Music Festival in New Orleans, I wore a T-shirt that caught a lot of people's attention. The design was simple. The words "July Fourth" were crossed out and under them, one word was written: "Juneteenth." I wore the shirt because, for many years, I celebrated the Fourth of July without a true understanding that the date of independence for our people, black people, is actually June 19, 1865: the day that the news of the Emancipation Proclamation finally reached some of the last people in America still held in bondage.

I have no issue with celebrating America's independence on July 4. For me, wearing the shirt was an opportunity to inform others who may not necessarily know the history of black people in America, and who are not aware that Juneteenth is our authentic day of self-determination. It is ours to honor the legacy of our ancestors, ours to celebrate and ours to remember where we once were as a people. And it should be a national holiday, observed by all Americans.

Growing up in Chattanooga, Tenn., I was taught in school one version of U.S. history