

When I got back home last weekend, people were asking: Why did they object? It was for 7 days while you guys work through your differences. Why can't you guys get your act together? Why can't you just do your jobs and, in the meantime, just give us 7 more days?

That is a reasonable request. That is why I am here again to offer a simple, commonsense solution—to extend the expanded \$600 for unemployed Americans through the week while we continue to work through our differences here to provide economic support, relief, and economic recovery for America. Who could possibly be against this? Who could possibly be against this?

Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of my bill at the desk. I further ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered and 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?

Mr. WYDEN. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator for Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President and colleagues, the only thing worse than what the Republicans have done here—cutting off desperately needed unemployment insurance to millions of American families and communities—would be to allow a bill to pass that promises money without actually delivering it. Even if this short-term extension were to pass, State agencies—the experts in this field—have told us and the ranking Democrat on the Finance Committee in very clear terms that States don't have enough time to reprogram their systems and avoid a lapse in benefits.

The State unemployment systems are not equipped to flip these unemployment benefits on and off. Short-term extensions don't work and will not work from an administrative standpoint.

No Senator has to take my word for it. The National Association of State Workforce Agencies has said what I have just said: A short-term extension isn't enough for the hard-working Americans relying on this lifeline who don't have jobs to go back to. What about next week and the week after that?

The only responsible route is to agree to the extension with triggers that will lower the payments only when it is appropriate to do so, and that means when the economy is in recovery, not when the economy is in freefall like it still is now.

Republicans wish to cover for the fact that they refused to come to the negotiating table for months. I looked at the record. Literally, for months—as the author of the \$600 more each month and the expansion to cover gig workers and others—we asked Senate Republicans to join us in negotiations. The

Democratic leader, Senator SCHUMER, and the Speaker, NANCY PELOSI, all made that request again and again, and Republicans were unwilling to do that. So Republicans are trying to cover for the fact that they refused to come to the negotiating table for months.

Our country needs a long-term solution that ensures the extra \$600 remains available for as long as this four-alarm economic crisis continues.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Arizona.

Ms. MCSALLY. Mr. President, I am just picturing, if you are one of my neighbors or one of the people I mentioned who are watching TV right now—this is Washington. These are bureaucratic reasons why we can't just simply do what I am asking, which is extend for 1 week what we all agreed upon in the past while we continue to work together to try and solve problems on behalf of Arizonans. That is all I am asking.

Bureaucratic reasons or posturing or finger-pointing—people are so tired of it. I am tired of it. That is why I first ran to come into this deployed zone and fight in a different way than when I did in uniform but with the same exact oath. We are here to solve problems. We are here to represent the people we represent.

And, while we work through our differences, there is political theater happening. Arizonans. There is political theater. There is unserious negotiations, unfortunately, happening because some people, like the minority leader, think that this is the path to power. Somehow, Arizonans can be hurt, and others can be hurt. Somehow, that is going to work in their favor. I am disgusted by that. I am simply asking for us to do our job.

Maybe I need to offer another bill that all Members of Congress have their pay held until we sit down and solve this. I did that before when the CARES Act was being delayed for political reasons.

This is frustrating. It is disappointing. It is simply a 7-day extension while we work through our differences.

Once again, friends on the other side of the aisle have let Arizonans and Americans down, but we need to keep working to solve this issue and support the people we represent. This is a commonsense request, and it is very disappointing that they are not letting it through.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— S. 4143

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I would like to offer a proposal that really is going to help working families and those who are trying to make rent, trying to pay for groceries, who every sin-

gle day walk an economic tightrope balancing their food bill against their fuel bill.

We just heard a little bit about how we really need to solve the problem. This does that because, under our bill, S. 4143, the American Workforce Rescue Act of 2020, what we wish to do on our side is tie these unemployment benefits to the actual conditions of the American economy on the ground.

We have had this proposal for months now because, to some extent—and I see my good friend from South Dakota. He made an important point in this discussion. He is a member of the Finance Committee, and I saw an article in which he stated, you know, it is important for people who are really hurting in a tough economy—it is important for them to get benefits that let them pay the rent and buy groceries. Then my good friend from South Dakota made a point I agree with. He said: You know, when the economy gets better and unemployment goes down, then—in the words of the Senator from South Dakota—the benefits can taper off to reflect that.

That is essentially what S. 4143, the American Workforce Rescue Act that I have authored with the Democratic leader, Senator SCHUMER, does is it ensures that we are not going to have millions of workers every month or every few months live in fear that Donald Trump and MITCH MCCONNELL are going to pull the rug out from under them.

We would have a benefit that would reflect economic conditions on the ground, and it would deal with this economic challenge for all the months until the economy recovers. That is what Senator SCHUMER and I put forward some time ago. The \$600 would gradually phase down based on the State's average unemployment rate over 3 months. This would provide certainty for families and ensure the broader economy continues to receive the support it needs.

And, especially, it doesn't set up artificial timelines. That is what the Senate ought to be avoiding, to just set arbitrary dates. What we need to do is make sure that politicians—and, certainly, Donald Trump and MITCH MCCONNELL have been willing to pull the rug out from under the unemployed. We need to make sure that there is a plan going forward.

That is what S. 4143 does, the American Workforce Rescue Act. It will provide certainty for families and ensure the broader economic recovery will be our focus, and there will be support until we see that kind of recovery.

So I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be discharged from further consideration of S. 4143, the American Workforce Rescue 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?

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I would just say that the fact that the Senator from Oregon is down here right now instead of the Democratic leader I would characterize as movement in the right direction. And the fact that he is making a proposal that is based upon legislation that, as he mentioned, he has introduced that actually has a trigger, if you will, or a way of phasing down unemployment benefits, I think, is a step in the right direction because, up until now, every time that the Senator from Arizona has come down here to offer up a 1-week extension of unemployment benefits—and, by the way, I think it is very reasonable and, to the Senator from Oregon's point, I find it hard to believe that any State and any computer system which is already paying out the \$600 bonus wouldn't be able to continue that. It strikes me as just really unexplainable that you would have problems adjusting a computer system that is already programmed to pay \$600 to continue to do that for an additional week. That defies logic to me.

So I think that is a very reasonable request. It would allow us additional time to work on proposals like what the Senator from Oregon has suggested. And there are others out there. The Senator from Utah, Senator ROMNEY, has a proposal that would ramp down the unemployment benefits over time. It seems to me, at least, we might be able to find some common ground there between what the Senator from Oregon has proposed and what the Senator from Utah or other Members on our side have proposed.

I do believe that what the Senator from Oregon is suggesting—that is, to lock in the \$600 bonus indefinitely—one, puts it on autopilot; two, sort of takes Congress out of the equation; and, three, it continues to offer a benefit that, for five out of the six people who are receiving unemployment benefits, offers them more in terms of a benefit than what they were making when they were working.

That, to me, is something that I think needs to be addressed. And if you talk to any small business across this country right now, they will tell you one of the big challenges they have is trying to find workers and to compete with an unemployment payment that actually pays them more than when they were working. Trying to get those employees back, I think, has been a real challenge for a lot of the employers across the country.

So I think that is an issue that has to be addressed, and I have heard people on this side of the aisle, both House and Senate, say the same thing. There have been Democratic Governors who say the same thing, that the \$600 benefit needs to be modified in a way that more reflects what people were actually making when they were working.

So I think there is some common ground that we can find, but, again, the idea that has been advanced by the

other side prior to the Senator from Oregon coming down here, which has been put forward by the Democratic leader, is that the Heroes Act should be taken up and passed by unanimous consent. That has been the unanimous consent request now on multiple occasions when Senator MCSALLY or others have come down here to try and get action on this unemployment issue, which is to come over and offer unanimous consent to pick up and pass the Heroes Act, which, as we all know, is not a serious piece of legislation.

In fact, the Democratic leader's paper of record in New York, the New York Times, said: "The bill was more a messaging document than a viable piece of legislation." That comes from the New York Times. Many of the proposals in that legislation had nothing to do with the coronavirus and, in fact, addressed a lot of other what I would call extraneous items on the policy agenda of the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives, to include mentioning "cannabis" more times than it mentioned the word "jobs" in that legislation.

There are studies authorized in the Heroes Act that look at diversity—diversity—in the cannabis industry—more mentions of that than mention of the word "jobs," which I think right there tells you that it wasn't a serious piece of legislation.

It, furthermore, included—if you can imagine this—tax cuts, tax cuts for Manhattan millionaires. Tax cuts for Manhattan millionaires is included in the Heroes Act—again, not something that has anything to do with helping the people who are hurting as a result of the pandemic or get at the point that the Senator from Oregon is talking about; that is, addressing the unemployment issue.

So I view this as progress. I view this as movement in the right direction, the fact that the Senator, not the Democratic leader, is down here offering an unemployment proposal, not the Heroes Act. I hope we can build on that and find that common ground that would enable us to address clearly what are serious needs among lots of Americans who are, through no fault of their own, unemployed as a result of this pandemic.

Having said that, I will object to the request of the Senator from Oregon right now but suggest to him that he and Democrats other than the leader—and I think there are a number of Democrats on this side of the aisle, including those who lead committees like the Senator from Oregon, who is the ranking member on the Finance Committee, a committee on which I serve and with whom I have worked on a lot of issues—can sit down and find common ground.

But as long as rank-and-file members and leaders of relevant committees are sort of locked out and the leaders continue to try and do this behind closed doors, it is going to be very hard, I think, to find those types of practical, real-world, commonsense solutions.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, while my colleague is here, just a brief reaction—and I think my colleague knows that you don't go out and negotiate from the seat of your pants on the floor.

First, I want to be clear on this proposal. This is a proposal the Democratic leader and I, as the ranking Democrat on the Finance Committee, worked very closely together on. It is a proposal that many Senate Democrats think could be the basis of reform, and lots of people who look at the future of these kinds of economic challenges find this idea attractive. That is No. 1.

No. 2, my friend from South Dakota thinks that somehow the benefits can just be turned on with a snap of the finger. The National Association of State Workforce Agencies have said that the proposal offered by the Senator from Arizona would not get benefits that make rent and pay groceries to people anytime soon.

The question is, Are you going to solve a real economic challenge here? The economy has faced, last week, a staggering economic contraction. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the last numbers, there are four unemployed workers for every job. This idea that unemployed folks don't want to work is just insulting.

What unemployed people tell me at home is that if somebody offers them a job on Monday night, they will be there first thing Tuesday morning.

What is really needed are solutions to this question of unemployment insurance that ties the benefits to the real world conditions on the ground. In fact, when you have unemployment like this—well over 10 percent—the \$600 extra per week coverage is clearly what is necessary to make rent and pay groceries. But make no mistake about it—I see my colleague from South Dakota leaving the floor—I listened when he said that there ought to be a benefit for folks when unemployment is high and that when unemployment goes down, the benefits would reflect that. That is the American Workforce Rescue Act.

If my colleagues are saying they want to back S. 4143, I would like to get that message in a direct kind of way.

With that, I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:18 p.m., recessed until 2:16 p.m. when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. CAPITO).

MORNING BUSINESS—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.