

when the food chain in rural America goes bust—because that is what we are on the verge of—this whole country will be diminished by that.

So it is important that my colleagues here in the Senate work with Senator GRASSLEY and me to fix this problem. It will not be fixed by not doing the things we need to do in this body. Senator GRASSLEY and I have a bill, and Senators ROUNDS and KING have a bill, and we need to get those two bills passed and move on to ensure fairness in the marketplace.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President, I rise to address the issues regarding the COVID crisis. Now, as we know, the COVID crisis is a public health crisis which has led to an economic crisis and, in turn, an educational crisis.

Today, I am going to speak about an aspect of the economic crisis—specifically State and local governments, which have had to shut down their economy and, in turn, have lost all the tax revenue they otherwise would receive and, because they have lost that tax revenue, have put the jobs of firefighters, police officers, teachers, sanitation workers, and other essential frontline workers at risk. So let me proceed.

Senate Republicans have unveiled a proposal for a second line of support for American families and small businesses as our Nation continues to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. The virus is an unprecedented challenge, but we shall overcome, and the HEALS Act attempts to do that.

The introduction of this proposal signals Republicans' commitment to seeing America through this challenging time, as was with the CARES Act. The ultimate safety of the people of Louisiana and the United States are my top priority, and the HEALS Act, as with all major bills, is a starting point of negotiations to build consensus among Members of both parties for the best path forward.

The HEALS Act includes stimulus checks for Americans, support for small businesses, and billions to help schools reopen. While these are critically important to economic recovery, so, too, are the essential services provided by States and local communities. I am talking about police officers, firefighters, teachers, sanitation workers, and other municipal workers. Because of this economic lockdown, State and local governments have seen their tax base erode, which threatens their ability to keep these very people we need employed—these people who keep our communities running.

I don't want to see, for example, a situation where cities slash police budgets and force layoffs of those who put their lives on the line to keep us safe. That is why Congress should in-

clude additional relief for State and local communities in this relief package.

Senator BOB MENENDEZ—and his staff has been a wonderful team to work with—and I have offered a bipartisan proposal called the SMART Act to help communities through this pandemic. I am privileged to be joined today by Senator MENENDEZ and Senator COLLINS to speak on its behalf.

The SMART Act calls for \$500 billion in funding for State and local governments, and it would be dispersed in thirds. One-third is based on a State's population. Clearly, California needs more than Alaska. One-third is based upon the COVID-19 impact. My State has had one of the highest per capita incidences of coronavirus infection. We have been terribly impacted. One-third is based upon revenue lost, which, again, my State, as well as the States of my colleagues, has been very impacted. It is a fair formula that prioritizes funding to the hardest hit.

The need is great. S&P Global released a report detailing the State susceptibility to fiscal distress in a COVID-19 recession. There were 38 States that had a high or very high risk of economic exposure. S&P's findings echo a Moody's report that also predicted dire effects to States and cities if nothing is done. Moody's found that 34 States will see tax revenue fall by double-digit percentage points, the worst of which are Alaska falling 80 percent, Louisiana at 46 percent, and North Dakota at 44 percent.

According to the National Association of Counties, local communities—not States; local communities—anticipate a \$202 billion impact to budgets through 2021. Their report shows that 71 percent of counties have delayed capital investments, including infrastructure and economic development projects; 68 percent have cut or delayed county services—or parish services in the case of Louisiana—human services, public safety, and community development support; and 25 percent have cut the county workforce. Moody's estimates that 1.3 million have already been laid off, and an estimated 1.4 million more State and parish county workers and municipal workers will be laid off in the coming fiscal year. Sixty-six percent of counties receiving CARES Act coronavirus relief indicate that the funding will not cover the COVID-19 budget or they are uncertain if the budgetary impacts will be covered. This is the impact of what has happened.

By the way, we spoke earlier of \$202 billion, and this is how the breakdown is in terms of lost revenue and lost State funding, et cetera. The impact upon State and county and municipal governments is huge. All told, the National Association of Counties predicts a loss of 4.9 million jobs and \$344 billion lost in GDP. It does not have to be that way. We can save jobs for police officers, firefighters, teachers, and others by including State and local support in the act we are considering.

As I mentioned before, Louisiana, my State, is facing serious shortfalls. We are still struggling with a second wave of COVID cases. Yesterday, we had the No. 1 per capita incidence of coronavirus. The State is having to continue in a phase 2 lockdown, which strains not only my folks in Louisiana but also the revenue of the local communities where they would otherwise spend their money.

Folks back home know the consequences if they don't receive support. There were 22 parish presidents who signed a letter supporting the SMART Act. They wrote:

As elected leaders with parish populations ranging from over 400,000 to 18,000, the COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for all local governments not only within Louisiana, but nationally. The extreme loss of tax revenues, which provide for essential services, coupled with unforeseen costs brought onto us by the response to COVID-19 pandemic, has the potential to have an extremely detrimental effect on our role to provide for the citizens of our parishes.

I received a letter from more than 80 mayors across my State giving "their strong support and thanks" for efforts to pass the SMART Act because they know I am working to deliver the support they need for their communities or mutual constituents. And mayors ranging from cities as large as Shreveport to as small as Glenmora and Athens wrote:

The SMART Act would provide funding for municipal economic recovery that will support the reopening of businesses and allow Louisiana to move forward. We are grateful for Senator CASSIDY's bipartisan efforts and for his longstanding partnership with Louisiana's governments.

The same sentiments have been echoed by Louisiana's Chamber of Commerce.

I understand concerns about spending money on State and local government. Some are worried the money will be used to bail out poor management decisions and overly generous and unfunded pension plans. I share those concerns, which is why the SMART Act includes specific provisions prohibiting spending in those areas. The SMART Act money replaces lost revenue caused by COVID-19 and nothing more. A city or parish or county would have to show their books and show that they have lost revenue relative to a year ago before they would be eligible to receive funding from this.

I understand concerns about spending, but the cost of doing nothing is worse. Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell spoke on the State and local funding needs, saying that while costly, it would be "worth it if it helps avoid long-term damage and leaves us with a stronger economy."

Congress should not allow police officers, firefighters, first responders, teachers, sanitation workers, and others to lose their jobs by the millions at a time when our country needs them most. The United States cannot fully recover economically if local communities cannot provide basic services, allowing commerce to flow.

As I end, I commend my colleagues on the work thus far on the HEALS Act. More work is left to be done, and I look forward to working with others in this Chamber in the coming days to strengthen this bill even further and finding a common path forward with our Democratic colleagues. We cannot let Americans down in this time of tremendous need. By working together, we can deliver the support they need, and we will be stronger as a nation for having done so.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I rise today to join my Republican colleagues from Louisiana and Maine to make a plea for us to break any partisan logjam and support bipartisan, commonsense solutions. I want to especially commend Senator CASSIDY, who from the beginning has joined me in this effort and has been true to his commitment to the issue and to his work. We have engaged in a series of conferences with major national organizations in support of the legislation, and I appreciate his leadership in this regard. I also appreciate Senator COLLINS, who joined us from the very beginning in this effort.

Exactly 76 days ago—yes, 2.5 months ago—Senator CASSIDY and I stood here on the floor of the Senate with our colleagues Senator COLLINS and BOOKER to talk about the challenges facing our State and local governments and the need for Congress to deliver robust, flexible assistance to help them deal with the pandemic and economic fallout.

In 76 days, we have seen COVID-19 sweep across our land. The virus is surging in States coast to coast. From the Deep South to the Upper Midwest, no community has been spared.

America is no stranger to tough times. In just the past 100 years, we have fought two World Wars. We have faced a Great Depression. We have confronted a nuclear-armed Soviet Union. We have faced calamitous disasters, both natural and manmade, from Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy to the terrorist attacks on 9/11. We have lived through many dark days of our history, but no matter how steep the challenge, no matter how hopeless things appeared at the moment, we always came together as a country, and we saw ourselves as Americans above all else.

I am proud to be a New Jerseyan. I am proud to be from a State that invests in its people, has a great educational system, and has an innovative economy. But when my parents fled tyranny in Cuba, their dream wasn't to move to any one State. No, they dreamed of moving to the United States of America to give me and my siblings the opportunity they never had.

We are not a collection of 50 separate States. No, we are one Nation, indivisible. When hurricanes hit the gulf

coast, flooding inundated communities along the Mississippi River, or wildfires raged in the West, I have never hesitated to act and cast my vote to help my fellow Americans. I have never asked how many New Jerseyans were affected or how this would impact my State. But some in this body have chosen to undermine that unity and to, instead, pit Americans in one State versus their fellow citizens in another. They have derided Senator CASSIDY's and my efforts to avoid millions of layoffs of essential workers as a "Blue State Bailout."

For example, the junior Senator from Florida has said he refuses to support assistance because it will go to progressive States like New Jersey, New York, and California. He spreads falsehoods about States carrying over large annual budget deficits, even though he must be well aware that States, unlike the Federal Government, must balance their budgets according to their State Constitution.

He has the gall to chide other States about taking from Florida, even as his own State is the second largest "taker" State in the entire country. Indeed, according to the latest estimates, Florida receives about \$45 billion more from the Federal Government than it pays each and every year. By comparison, New Jersey actually pays about \$21 billion more each year to the Federal Government than it receives. Let me say that again. Florida takes \$45 billion more per year out of the Federal coffers than they put in. New Jersey puts \$21 billion back in.

To my colleague from Florida: You are welcome.

Why is New Jersey a donor or "maker" State while Florida is a "taker" State? Quite simply, it is because we invest in our people and in our communities. New Jersey has the best public schools in the country, ranking No. 1 in Education Week's 2019 report. Florida, well, it ranked in the bottom half of the States.

A better education leads to a better economy with higher paying jobs, so it is no surprise that New Jersey also has the highest per capita income among States at over \$110,000 per year. By comparison, Florida's per capita income is almost \$35,000 less, which puts it, once again, in the bottom half of States.

So if you want your children to have a quality education, if you want to work in a vibrant economy that creates high-paying jobs, you should live in a State like New Jersey. But New Jersey, like all States—and through no fault of our own—is facing a health and fiscal crisis of historic magnitude. And because here in Washington we have failed to implement a national response to a national emergency, our local towns, cities, counties, and States have to deal with this crisis alone rather than united as a nation, and they are running out of money.

They are running out of money to combat this deadly disease. They are

running out of money to maintain the services our residents and businesses depend upon. They are running out of money to pay our first responders: police, firefighters, paramedics, and emergency personnel. They are running out of money to make sure that there are teachers in the classrooms when our kids can safely head back to school and nurses in our hospitals when a sick patient is brought in. They are running out of money to make sure the trash gets picked up, the buses and trains run on time, and the lights stay on at City Hall.

They have been squeezed on both sides of the ledger, spending billions of dollars in unforeseen costs on emergency response while watching revenues dry up due to the slowing economy and necessary orders to contain the virus.

Without help from Washington, our States, counties, and municipalities will have to swallow a toxic cocktail of tax hikes, service cuts, and layoffs that will only poison our economic recovery.

It would be the height of irony—and a horrible one at that—for the men and women we have needed the most to be the ones fired as a result of the economic distress that the virus has created. We need our essential workers on the job dealing with the pandemic, not on the unemployment line.

Already, nearly 1.5 million State and local workers have been furloughed or laid off—and that is only since February—and double the total local public sector jobs we lost during the entire great recession of a decade ago.

If we fail to deliver the robust, flexible funding our States and communities need, we will effectively be sending pink slips to millions of Americans. We will be saying to all of them: You are fired.

That will be millions more who aren't collecting a paycheck, millions who can't afford to shop at our stores, eat at our restaurants, pay their rent, or their mortgage.

Leading economists respected by both parties predict it would decimate our economy and send us on the path to another Great Depression. We can't allow that to happen.

That is why Senator CASSIDY, Senator COLLINS, Senator HYDE-SMITH, and I came together. We saw early on the impact COVID-19 was having on our home States and constituents, so we came up with the State and Municipal Assistance for Recovery and Transition, or the SMART Act.

As Senator CASSIDY says, it delivers \$500 billion in flexible funding to frontline States, counties, and municipalities. It targets areas with the greatest need based on infection rate and lost revenues. Unfortunately, from when we started this, that is a growing reality across the country. Every single town, city, and county, regardless of its size, would qualify for direct funding. No one is left out.

We immediately built a bipartisan coalition with Senators COLLINS, BOOKER, HYDE-SMITH, MANCHIN, and SINEMA—Republicans and Democrats from all walks of life, cutting across the political and geographic spectrum.

We knew the assistance Congress provided our State and local governments in the CARES Act wasn't enough to deal with the growing need, and we warned our colleagues—each and every one—that what was happening in New Jersey, Louisiana, and elsewhere would eventually come to their State if we didn't get this pandemic under control. Well, we haven't, and it is raging. Our fellow Americans are suffering, and too many of them are dying.

We have waited for 76 days. What is now being offered is wholly inadequate to address the needs of the American people. In Colorado, for example, the estimated State and local shortfall due to the pandemic is \$10 billion, and counting, through 2022. In Alaska, it is expected to exceed \$4 billion. In Georgia, it will be \$2.5 billion in 2021 alone. Kentucky could see nearly a 20-percent drop in its revenues in 2021, at a time when the State's fiscal house is already in disorder. But we are being offered not a dime—zero—to help our cities, counties, and States confront this challenge—zero, nothing. That is not something that is acceptable.

That is the problem when we ignore regular order and let leadership hijack the legislative process: We lose our voice, and the needs of our constituents are left out.

I, for one, didn't come to Washington to sit on the sidelines and wait for a handful of people to reach a deal behind closed doors, forced to vote on a 1,000-page bill within an hour of seeing it. But that is exactly what we have been doing here for far too long.

We need to end this high-stakes game of closed-door posturing and restore the Senate back to the foundation as the greatest deliberative body in the world.

It would have been easier for me just to embrace the \$900 billion for fiscal relief in the Heroes Act. It would have been easier for Senators CASSIDY, COLLINS, and HYDE-SMITH to just toe the party line, but we all knew that sticking to our respective corners wasn't going to help a single one of our constituents.

It is not too late for the Senate to get back on track. Let's do our jobs. Let's work together on a bipartisan solution that delivers the Federal support our States, counties, and cities on the frontlines of this pandemic need to defeat COVID-19 and serve the American people.

Let's bring the SMART Act up in committee, allow Members on both sides of the aisle to offer amendments to make the legislation even better. You all know what our State and local governments will get if we leave it up to the present status—absolutely nothing. Good luck explaining that to the people back at home.

I hear some of my colleagues speak from this floor, calling not for unity but for division. They callously ignore the pleas for help from the fellow Americans, comforted by the selfish but mistaken belief their communities are immune to the fiscal Armageddon facing our communities.

Let me be clear. It doesn't really matter how fiscally responsible or conservative your State budget has been when your revenue drops 30 percent overnight. It is not a random blue State issue; it is an American priority.

I believe that history will look kindly upon those who stood up for some unity and compromise over demagoguery and obstinacy, those who put the well-being of the country over scoring partisan points, those who stuck their necks out and took a political risk for no reason other than it was the right thing to do. That is what I believe we are doing on the floor right now—the right thing.

With that, I am happy to turn to my friend Senator COLLINS.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I have listened to the presentations of my two colleagues, Senator CASSIDY and Senator MENENDEZ, and I could not agree with them more. We have an opportunity to solve a problem that is affecting each and every community in our country.

With the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to devastate our public health and our economy, towns and cities across our country are facing increasingly significant new challenges and plummeting revenues at the exact same time. I urge my colleagues to be problem-solvers, to address this crisis as part of the relief package that is now being negotiated. We cannot wait.

I have joined with Senators MENENDEZ and CASSIDY and others in this Chamber in introducing the SMART Act. It would provide much needed financial assistance to State and local governments while providing safeguards to prevent wasteful spending.

It is a lifeline to our communities, just as the Paycheck Protection Program has been a lifeline to our small businesses and their employees.

The consequences of local government shortfalls are dire. Without our providing them relief, communities face having to lay off essential employees and reduced services at the worst possible time for working families.

What is their alternative? They cannot raise taxes. That would be the worst thing for them to do. Municipalities are already scaling back their budgets, furloughing workers, and postponing needed purchases and projects.

These cuts threaten the jobs of our police officers, our firefighters, our EMS personnel, our dispatchers, our sanitation crews, and our public works employees at the time when their serv-

ices are vitally needed. They are the people who make our communities operate, who make them livable. We need them.

We already know about the stresses our schools are undergoing. Do we really want school budgets to be cut and educators laid off at this important time?

The CARES Act did provide \$150 billion to our States and to very large communities, but those funds came with restrictions, and they did not require direct distributions to municipalities with populations under 500,000. There is not a single county in Maine, much less a city or town, that has a population of that level.

The National Governors Association has called for \$500 billion in assistance to aid our Nation's recovery. Organizations supporting our towns and our cities and our counties have all endorsed the SMART Act.

Moody's Analytics warns that failing to act could shave 3 percentage points from real GDP, from our economic growth, and result in the loss of 4 million jobs. That is the worst thing to happen at this time.

This week, the Maine Municipal Association released projections anticipating a combined \$146 million in lost revenue from Maine cities and towns by the end of this year alone. We know that the revenues are going to take a while to recover and are going to affect next year as well.

This builds on Maine's Revenue Forecasting Committee, which expects a \$1.4 billion State budget shortfall from lost sales and income tax revenues over the next 3 years.

As people are driving less, we are also seeing our gas tax revenues plummet.

I have talked with town and city managers, with mayors and members of town councils, selectmen and -women, all across the State of Maine about the difficult decisions they are facing as they attempt to balance their budgets.

These cuts are not theoretical. The harm is not just possible; it is occurring today. Let's look briefly at what some Maine communities are already having to do.

The city of Westbrook has announced a hiring freeze affecting all city departments, including the police department. Well, that police department has five open positions that it needs to fill and cannot do so.

Auburn, a city in Androscoggin County, has had to freeze six vacant positions because of expected revenue losses—again, vital positions: two firefighters, a police officer, and three public works employees. These cuts come as the city of Auburn has spent more than \$200,000 in new expenses to respond to the virus.

The town of Falmouth has eliminated four open positions, including a police officer, and can no longer go ahead with the purchase of a much needed new firetruck.

The town of Windham has kept seven needed positions open. These are not

large communities. This is a large number of positions. Five of these are public works positions, without which, how is the plowing going to be done this winter to keep the roads safe and clear?

The town has also postponed \$1.6 million in capital projects. That has a ripple effect on the local economy. It means the contractor is neither buying supplies nor hiring employees at this time.

In northern Maine, in the northern Maine city of Madawaska, the town manager has shared with my office that the town has had to scrap a \$3 million road-paving project and will have to keep at least three positions vacant.

This is what they are doing already. It is only going to get worse for these towns and cities as revenues continue to plummet.

Senator MENENDEZ made a very important point that I want to reiterate, and that is, the way our bill is structured, every city, every town, regardless of size, will receive direct assistance. Every county will receive direct assistance. They will not be dependent on the largesse of the State. The money will go to them to meet these essential needs.

It is common sense to provide the relief needed to avoid these widespread layoffs and cuts to essential services at the local level, where they often are most often needed. These are the public servants who keep our communities and our citizens safe. They are the public servants who keep our communities and our citizens healthy. They are the public servants who keep our communities and our citizens educated. They are the ones who are plowing our roads and repairing our bridges. They are the ones who make our towns, our cities, our neighborhoods livable.

Congress must act to provide assistance to every community. This is a problem we can solve. Let's enact the SMART Act as part of the next coronavirus package.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASIDY). The Senator from Delaware.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I am going to briefly remove my mask.

We are about 1 week into baseball season. I will lighten this up a little bit. We are 1 week into baseball season. Some of us here are huge baseball fans. This is the home of the Nationals—home of the world championship Washington Nationals. The best two pitchers come from the Detroit Tigers, my favorite team.

For those who might not have been watching baseball over the weekend, there is a young guy who is a relief pitcher for the Tigers. His name is Tyler Alexander. He was brought in in relief in the second or third inning and struck out nine straight bats. He struck out the first nine batters he faced. I think one other person has done that in Major League history.

So, as we gather here today to figure out how to get out of this mess, his job that day was to try to figure out how to get out of another mess, and my hope is that our efforts here in the Senate, the House, and the White House will be as successful as were his.

I am happy to follow today our friend from Maine; our colleague from New Jersey; and you, Mr. President, as the Senator from Louisiana, in actually pointing to something we can agree on. People are always saying to me and, I know, to my colleagues when we go home: Can't you guys and gals ever agree on anything?

Well, as it turns out, a number of us agree that States and local governments could use some help—some additional help beyond that which we have already provided. That is a good thing. We don't have to pit blue States against red States. We can actually work together, and in this case we are.

Very few of us actually come here and start our first elected job being in the U.S. Senate—some, but not a lot. A number of people are former mayors, former Governors, former Representatives. But every now and then, somebody slips through without ever having run for elected office.

I am a former State treasurer. People call me a recovering Governor, but I am really a recovering State treasurer. I was elected State treasurer when I was 29. When I was elected State treasurer and took my oath, our State had the worst credit rating in the country.

I was elected in 1976—the same year that a Republican named Pete du Pont was elected Governor of our State. He turned out to be a terrific Governor at a time when we needed one. He was a good mentor for me and someone I always looked up to, and I hope I was a good partner to him and Democrats and Republicans in the legislature to pull our State out of a real mess.

Not only did we have the worst credit rating in the country that year—1977, actually—we had the worst credit rating, we had no pension fund, we had no rainy day fund, and we had the lowest start rate of new businesses of any State in America.

We couldn't balance our budgets if we had to. In order to actually have money to spend, we issued revenue anticipation notes.

When I got to the State treasurer's office, I said: What is a revenue anticipation note?

They said: That is the way the State borrows money until tax monies come in the following April, so that we can actually pay payroll and pensions and stuff like that.

I said: You are kidding.

They said: No, we are not.

That was then; this is now. When Pete du Pont was our Governor and I was treasurer, we had a bipartisan legislature. The house and senate were split between Democrats and Republicans. But we created a rainy day fund and never invaded it. We created and fully amortized our pension fund. We

had no pension fund. We fully amortized it within about 10 years. We did all kinds of things, all kinds of budget reforms in order to get us on the right track.

Now, I have heard some of my colleagues say the States got themselves in a mess and they are going to have to get out of it. They said they can file for bankruptcy; they are badly managed.

Let me just say, my State is a AAA State. We got a AAA rating when I was Governor, and we never lost it to this day.

Most States are better run fiscally than the Federal Government. You only have to look at the way we spend money around here—not just in the middle of a pandemic. Look at the year before the pandemic, at how much our Nation's deficit and debt increased. But even fiscally responsible, well-managed States like Delaware and some other States that are represented on this floor right here are finding themselves in a situation that one could not have imagined just a few months ago. That is especially true when we have an administration that is simultaneously asking State and local governments to shoulder the burden of responding to the coronavirus.

Leader MCCONNELL and Secretary Mnuchin say that States don't need more money because they haven't used the coronavirus relief funds that Congress provided in the CARES Act. Well, unfortunately, that is just not true. A survey conducted by the National Association of State Budget Officers shows that States have already allocated nearly 75 percent of these funds already to fight the pandemic and help struggling families and small businesses through this crisis.

If States across this country see a resurgence in infection rates, the cost of addressing the health and economic crisis is not going down; it is going up.

At the same time that the cost of addressing this pandemic has skyrocketed, businesses are shuttered, and tourism and commerce have come, in many places, to a standstill. That means that hundreds of billions of dollars in lost revenues for States and local governments have occurred.

Delaware is certainly not alone. So let me be very clear. This is not a red State or a blue State problem; it is a United States problem. It is not a consequence of poor management either.

Over the past couple months, weeks, I have had conversations, as my colleagues know, with dozens of them on both sides of the aisle about what States and local communities across our country are facing as a result of COVID-19. In those conversations with my Democratic and Republican colleagues, time and again I have heard a familiar refrain: The pandemic has caused State and local government revenues to plummet in a way that none of us have ever experienced or would have or could have foreseen.

Income tax revenues have fallen and unemployment numbers have reached