

going to find that, over the years, we haven't kept up with these maintenance needs so the water systems, the roads, the bridges, the bathrooms, the visitor centers, some of the trails—many of these are now in bad shape. Some are closed, actually.

When you go to a national park, you may find that a facility is closed because of a lack of funding for the deferred maintenance. We just haven't had the funding to do the capital improvements they need so that they can stay functional.

Just the other week, I saw that first-hand at Cuyahoga Valley National Park in Northeast Ohio. It is a great park. It is the 13th most visited national park in America. It kind of runs between Cleveland and Akron, OH.

It suffered from these deferred maintenance problems for years. I saw a crumbling trail. I saw trails that were falling into the Cuyahoga River and couldn't be used. I saw rusting historic train tracks that run through the park. It is a tourist railroad that runs through. Train tracks are an expensive thing to replace. Again, it has to be done. I saw a bridge that was really unsafe to be on and has to be restored. It is a historic bridge. We want to preserve it, but the costs are just too high given the annual budget for that park.

Their maintenance backlog at that park alone is \$50 million, yet their annual budget is about \$11 million, which goes to the rangers and the programs and the maintenance and operations but is not enough money to take care of these big problems.

In a way, by not fixing these problems, we are also increasing the cost. Think about it. These costs compound year after year. In your own house, you might think about what happens if you don't fix the leak in the roof. What happens is the drywall begins to have problems. You might have mold. The floors begin to get wet and wood floors begin to buckle. You have additional costs that, if you had just fixed that roof, you wouldn't have.

Well, that is where we are with the parks. If we take the time and the effort to make the fixes now, we will save money over time for taxpayers because we will not have the compounding costs. Every day, it gets worse and worse.

Now, finally, we have come up with a way to deal with it. Congress has asked our parks, over the last few years, to give us their deferred maintenance projects with specificity: What are your priority projects? What are the top priorities? We have asked them to lay it out in detail.

It has been very helpful because we now know we have over \$12 billion in maintenance needs but about \$6.5 billion of that is high-priority projects—the projects most in need of immediate attention. We know what they are. They are shovel-ready. They have been vetted. We are proposing a source of funding to be able to deal with that because, again, the annual appropriations

process does not come near enough to matching what we need to have done.

The highest priority needs at the parks is about \$6.5 billion. In this legislation—now law of the land—royalty income is taken from onshore and offshore oil and gas, and some of that royalty is directed toward this use.

The next 5 years, enough of that funding will be there to deal with the \$6.5 billion, half of the maintenance backlog. We would like to do better, but, frankly, this is historic. Never have we had so much funding go to the parks, never have we been able to deal with these backlogs that have built up over years.

It is really a debt unpaid. That is how I look at it. It is something we should have been doing all along. We weren't. The costs have now snowballed, and now we need to deal with it. It is not so much a new responsibility as it is stewardship we never did in the first place. It is a debt unpaid.

Second, again, it is going to save us money over time—assuming we want the parks to be working, we want the trails to be open, we want the visitors centers to be welcoming—all of which, of course, we do want and we must have.

The bill is not just important for our parks but also our economy, too, because these projects are infrastructure projects. We have talked a lot about that here on how to get more jobs into our economy right now. With the impact of coronavirus on our economy, we need more opportunities out there. Infrastructure is one. These are infrastructure jobs—over 100,000 new jobs in this legislation alone.

Again, these projects are shovel-ready. They are vetted. They are ones that Congress—thanks to our asking the Park Service for the information—knows what jobs are out there and what projects need to be done.

It is a long-term investment too. As of 2019, visitor spending in communities near our parks resulted in \$41.7 billion of benefit to the Nation's economy and supported 340,000 jobs. It is new jobs in terms of construction, but it is also ensuring the parks continue to be able to be attracting these visitors, which adds such a big economic boost to our economy.

I am proud that Congress has come together as Republicans and Democrats in a nonpartisan way to support this important initiative, and I am thankful for the President and his support. He showed bold leadership by saying: You know what, we are going to do this. Other Presidents have talked about it. In the last three or four administrations, we have talked about it. Again, I have been working on it for a dozen years. Now we have actually been able to do it.

I also want to thank the Director of Office of Management and Budget, Russ Vought, for his help; the Secretary of the Interior, David Bernhardt; and other members of the President's team, including Ivanka Trump, who

has always been strongly supportive of our national parks.

This is about responsible stewardship. These repairs were a debt unpaid. We are finally addressing them before the cost increase. Our parks have stood tall for more than a century now as the embodiment of American history and our shared commitment to preserving some of our most magnificent lands. Thanks to Restore Our Parks Act, we will now ensure that those parks stand tall for centuries to come.

HEROES ACT AND HEALS ACT

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I also want to talk this afternoon a little about the Heroes legislation, the HEALS legislation, and some of the commonalities I see between the two. On the floor of the Senate this week, there has been some discussion about the need for us to come together in a bipartisan way to put together a package to deal with the coronavirus. Some call it the COVID 5.0 package. It is really probably 8.0. We have done a lot of legislation already, but there are things that still need to be done and some urgent matters, including dealing with the expiration of the unemployment insurance.

I am on the floor today to talk about how I see the opportunity for us to move ahead by looking at some of the commonalities between the Democratic support and the Republican support for different legislation. As we all know, the discussions over the past week have not moved forward as quickly as we would like. In fact, it is pretty discouraging. Despite the fact that many people thought the Heroes Act was really a messaging bill—POLITICO wrote a story, one of our news media sources up here—and said: “a messaging bill that has no chance of becoming law.” Others made the same comments. Why? Because it was a \$3.5 trillion pricetag for legislation, which would make it by far the most expensive bill ever passed by either House of Congress. But also, at a time when we had \$1.1 trillion leftover from the CARES package and States have only allocated an average of about 25 percent of their CARES Act funding, it seemed like pushing taxpayers to foot the bill for the costliest legislation in history maybe wasn't the right way to go.

Also, it had virtually no support from Republicans. Also, this legislation included a lot of stuff that had nothing to do with COVID-19. The sense was: Yes, it is an important messaging bill for Democrats—that is out there—but that we needed to figure out a way now to come together as Republicans and Democrats.

Leader MCCONNELL also introduced legislation. That legislation is called the HEALS Act. It is time for us to figure out how to come together and figure out a solution going forward. Particularly with regard to some of these

urgent matters like unemployment insurance, we are already past time. Unemployment insurance already expired last Friday. We have to move forward with that. We should not be playing politics with people's livelihoods and making this a political football.

Last week, and again today, my colleague from Arizona, Senator MCSALLY, introduced what I thought was a great commonsense idea: Let's extend the existing unemployment insurance, \$600 per week Federal supplement, for another week while we continue these negotiations so that people are not going to see their unemployment insurance checks decrease substantially. They would lose all the Federal benefit unless we do that. They would still have the State benefit but lose the \$600 per week.

Unfortunately, Senate Democrats said no, objected to this commonsense idea. I don't quite get that. I think we ought to keep the \$600 in place while we negotiate for the next week, and we ought to be sure and put the interests of the American people first and come to a commonsense solution. Now isn't the time for games. It is the time to get it right.

I also note that with regard to unemployment insurance, there are lots of ideas out there. For the last few months, I have been proposing the idea of a return-to-work bonus. Maybe that is not the best idea. Maybe people have better ideas. The notion there would be the \$600, which is the current Federal benefit, allows people on unemployment insurance, in many cases, to have more income on unemployment than they would working.

According to the studies that have been done, including by the University of Chicago, about 68 percent of the people on unemployment insurance are making more money on unemployment insurance than they were making at work.

Most Americans, including most Members of this Chamber—Republicans and Democrats alike—think that is not right. You shouldn't make more not to work. Unemployment insurance is meant to give you a little help. In Ohio, it is about 50 percent, up to a certain cap, but it is not meant to replace your wages, plus—which is what is happening—on average, 134-percent increase in wages if you are on unemployment insurance.

There must be a way for us to come together and to solve this problem. There are Democrats and Republicans alike who have talked about perhaps lowering that amount from \$600. I heard one of my Democratic colleagues on the floor today—the Senator from Oregon—talk about maybe you can tie it to the unemployment in the State. Others of us, again, and I have talked about the return-to-work bonus. You could take some of that \$600 with you and go back to work, which would deal with, on a voluntary basis, the need for people to go back to work because employers are looking for folks.

Right now in Ohio, we have a lot of jobs open, a lot of manufacturing jobs, as an example. I was at a plant recently—a Ford plant—where they are looking for people. They have a 25-percent absenteeism rate right now. They attribute a lot of that to the fact that people can make more money on unemployment insurance, but they need the workers badly.

There are Honda plants in Ohio—that is another one of our manufacturers—where the white-collar workers are going to work on the assembly lines because they can't get enough workers coming in.

I hear it across the board. I have heard it from those who are involved with developmental disabilities trying to get their workforce back. I have heard it from people who are involved with the treatment for opioids, so the alcohol and drug addiction boards are trying to get their people to come back to work. I have heard it from our small businesses that are trying to figure out how to reopen and reopen safely but have a tough time getting people to come back to work. There is a need for us to figure this out.

For the workers themselves, it is much better for them to be connected with their employer again, isn't it? After all, that is where they are likely to get their healthcare. If they have it, they are likely to get their retirement savings. They are likely to get the training there to be able to keep up with the times.

It is good to have people at work. The dignity and self-respect you get from work is something that is of value. We should all want that. All of us in this Chamber should focus on this issue and say: OK. The \$600 was put in place during a tough summer. Let's be honest. A lot of people had a really tough time, and some people are still having a tough time. There should still be, in my view, a Federal supplement, but it can't be paying people more not to work than to work. That makes no sense, as we are starting to open this economy and open it safely. We have to figure out a way forward here.

There are some Democrats who have worked on this issue. Timothy Geithner is an example of one who was Secretary of Treasury under President Obama, who put forward, along with other Democrats and Republicans, a proposal that said: Let's lower the amount, and let's tie it to the unemployment.

This is something that, in talking to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, including some Democratic colleagues who have talked to me privately, that, you know, they get it; this is not working, and we need to fix it. Let's do that. It seems to me there is a lot of commonality there, and we should be able to figure out a way forward.

Let me mention some of the other places where I see a lot of commonality. First, both Republicans and Democrats agree that it is absolutely

essential that as people return to work they do so safely. In the legislation we talked about earlier, the HEALS package, which Senator MCCONNELL introduced, there is a proposal that is called the Healthy Workplace Tax Credit Act. Basically, what it says is, if a business is willing to put in place safety measures like a Plexiglas shield or do testing or have the PPE—the gloves and the masks and, in some cases, the gowns that are needed to stay safe—they should be able to get a tax credit for that. It not only encourages more employment, but it encourages employers to open in a safe way.

I spoke to a bunch of restaurants yesterday from Ohio. They called in to talk about the legislation. They love this because they have a lot of costs associated with making their places safe during the coronavirus pandemic. But this legislation, again, is stuck because we can't seem to get to a negotiation. That is one where Democrats and Republicans could come together.

There is another one that I think makes a lot of sense. It is called the Work Opportunity Tax Credit Expansion. That also is in the HEALS legislation. This has always been a bipartisan issue—the work opportunity tax credit. We have said simply that just as you can get a tax credit to hire veterans or to hire second-chance individuals who have come out of the prison system, you should be able to hire people from unemployment insurance who have lost their job because of COVID-19 and get a tax credit. This is something that, again, Democrats and Republicans should be able to work on together.

Finally, in the HEALS package, we also have legislation that has a lot of appeal to Republicans and Democrats that is an expansion of the employee retention tax credit from the bipartisan CARES Act. This is legislation that passed 96 to 0 around here. We say, let's make this employee retention tax credit work better. We expand the amount you can get in terms of tax credit, expand the amount of time that has to be covered. It makes it a much better package for small businesses to use to be able to attract employees and to retain the employees they have. Again, this is nonpartisan, I would say, and certainly one that can be bipartisan.

Historically, these tax provisions have had bipartisan support. I worked with my friend BEN CARDIN in designing the employee retention credit in March, expanding the opportunity tax credit, which has always had bipartisan support, and the healthy workplace tax credit. Senator SINEMA actually has a very similar bill.

Second, there is agreement on both sides of the aisle, we have to support our schools and our businesses so our kids can get back into the classroom and our parents can get back to work.

With regard to schools, there is supposedly a big partisan divide over this issue. When I see it, I see schools,

money being practically identical in the HEALS package and the Heroes Act that passed the House of Representatives. In fact, House Democrats provided around \$58 billion for K-12. The HEALS Act actually increases that to \$70 billion. There is actually more money in the HEALS legislation.

On the business front, both Democrats and Republicans have seen value in the Paycheck Protection Program we introduced in the CARES Act, which is why both bills seek to expand it. Albeit in somewhat different ways, but there is greater consensus here than one might think. We just need to sort out the details.

My colleague from Louisiana is here with me tonight in the Chamber. He has talked a lot about the need for us to improve the way we provide funding to local governments, municipalities, and to provide more flexibility. I don't think there is much disagreement about that on either side of the aisle. There may be a disagreement the numbers, the amount of funding, but, again, the HEALS package has funding. The Democrats have more funding. But flexibility—that is one where I think there is a lot of bipartisan consensus.

I know it is a popular right now to say that we are so far apart we can never get together, but as I look at this, when you actually look at the individual pieces of this, I see a lot of commonalities. The final one I want to mention is one where I would think all of us should be together. That is addressing the underlying health crisis we face.

Both the HEALS package and the Heroes Act provide increased funding for research into vaccines and antiviral treatments for this disease. Both acts also recognize the importance of increasing funding for testing, which is critical in making sure we can safely and sustainably reopen.

There are more points of commonality between the Republican and Democratic approaches that I could touch on, like providing another \$1,200 in stimulus checks for all Americans who make less than \$75,000 a year. That, I understand, is something that both Democrats and Republicans support. That would be a huge part of this new package.

The House-passed Heroes Act has, again, a pricetag that is just too high—\$3.5 trillion. I think most people would acknowledge that. I also know there is a big difference between that and the \$1 trillion that was in the proposal from Senator MCCONNELL—\$1 trillion. That used to be a lot of money.

Again, when you look at the actual details of this, when you look at what is actually in these two pieces of legislation, there is so much commonality. I think it is critical that we get this legislation right. We have time to do that. In the meantime, as Senator MCSALLY has proposed, let's continue the \$600 for the next week.

Let's be sure that we can build on these commonalities we see between

these two pieces of legislation. Retreating into partisan corners at this critical time doesn't benefit any of us. It certainly doesn't benefit the United States, and it doesn't benefit us as an institution. It certainly doesn't benefit the people I represent.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BARASSO). The Senator from Louisiana.

AIR AMERICA

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I rise to speak of a largely unknown aspect of the Vietnam war and a too neglected aspect. I rise to highlight Air America and its role in military conflicts from the 1940s through the Cold War.

Air America, which was previously known as the Civil Air Transport, operated under a shroud of mystery, intrigue, and, at times, purposeful deceit to allow the organization to continue covert operations. Its members lived the motto "Anything, Anywhere, Anytime, Professionally."

Now, if you would look at this picture, you would think that this must be an Army helicopter pilot performing a rescue on an active battlefield. No, that pilot was a civilian. He was a contractor of sorts with the U.S. Government and was flying that helicopter to rescue that soldier or that marine, not an enlisted person. Its members, again, lived the motto "Anything, Anywhere, Anytime, Professionally," including rescuing those from battlefields.

They garnered respect as cargo and charter airline pilots during the Secret War in Laos in the 1960s and 1970s. As the war progressed, the U.S. Government increasingly relied on Air America pilots to conduct search-and-rescue missions of downed U.S. military pilots—often in heavy combat areas with no weapons of their own. The daily risks that they took to save others earned them the reputation as being the most shot at airline. I shouldn't laugh, but there is, I am sure, kind of a gallows humor they felt when they said that, "the most shot at airline."

Here is a depiction of a plaque in Richardson, TX, that President Reagan dedicated. On it are the names of those who died as Air America pilots.

At the plaque dedication in Dallas, President Ronald Reagan said: "Although free people everywhere owe you more than we can hope to repay, our greatest debt is to your companions who gave their last full measure of devotion."

While President Reagan recognized the contributions that these pilots made to the United States, Air America has received mixed support throughout its history. The Department of Defense and the CIA, among others, have argued that Air America pilots are not veterans, saying their heroic rescues of American soldiers were not part of their contracts or within the scope of their mission.

These sentiments have kept Air America pilots from receiving veteran

status and the benefits that come with the status. This needs to change. This need to change is based on declassified materials that show these pilots are deserving of such recognition for their exploits.

Who were these dedicated Americans serving in Air America?

Most crews had military training. Many bore the scars of fighting on the ground in Korea and Vietnam. They are former POWs and Special Forces—all tough as nails. They were also crop dusters and water bombers who fought forest fires. They were smoke jumpers and flight mechanics. Thousands of personnel were indigenous people, both male and female. Air America members came from all walks of life to answer the call to serve.

Military aircraft was provided to employees to conduct combat-related activity in areas where the U.S. Armed Forces could not go due to treaties. They served at considerable risk. Numerous employees died or were seriously injured. However, their sacrifices were not given the same recognition as military members.

Lowell Pirkle was killed when an RPG hit his helicopter, and it burned to the ground. Sadly, it took years for his remains to be repatriated and sent to Honolulu. When Deborah, Lowell's wife, insisted that he be buried in Arlington Cemetery, she was informed that Lowell was ineligible because he died not in the military but as part of Air America. He would eventually be buried in Arlington due to his previous military service, though the work in both engagements was essentially the same.

Let me just pause for a second. Let's look at this poster.

From 1962 to 1975, Air America inserted and extracted U.S. military personnel and provided combat support across the entire Vietnam field. Air America rescued hundreds of Americans and stranded Vietnamese, including the last out of Saigon in April 1975. Who can forget these dramatic photographs?

Air America pioneered remote landings during the Vietnam war to resupply U.S. troops and key allies, like the Hmong in Laos, and Air America pilots were the only known civilian employees to operate non-FAA-certified military aircraft in combat zones.

Lastly, as I previously mentioned, here is the memorial plaque in Richardson, TX, that honors the 146 Air America veterans who were killed. These men served "Anything, Anywhere, Anytime, Professionally." Again, it has been denied that they actually performed these military duties, but, once more, declassified documents show that the U.S. Government owes Air America and, therefore, its members status as veterans.

In August 1965, Secretary of State Dean Rusk wrote: "Political factors require that Air America helicopters continue to assume responsibility for all search-and-rescue operations in Laos."