

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, negotiations on the next round of COVID relief continued yesterday and will continue again today. Speaker PELOSI and I are making progress with the White House, but we remain far apart on a large number of issues.

As I mentioned yesterday, the fundamental disagreement between our two parties is the scope and severity of the problem. This is the greatest economic crisis America has faced in 75 years and the greatest health crisis in 100. There must be a relief package commensurate with the size of this historic challenge. A skinny package—a package that doesn't solve so many of the problems that America faces—would hurt the American people, and we cannot have it.

But our Republican friends are wedded ideologically to the idea that government shouldn't take forceful action; that we should leave the welfare of the American people to the whims of the private sector. It just doesn't work like that, especially in a time of national emergency. The private sector cannot do it.

While we have started to generate some forward momentum, we need our partners in the White House to go much further on a number of issues, let alone the Republican Senate, where 20 or so Republicans, by the majority leader's admission, don't want to do anything.

For example, the administration has finally come around to the view that we should extend the moratorium on evictions, but they continue to refuse to provide actual assistance to the renters themselves. What good does that do? We can prevent Americans from being kicked out of their apartments for another few months, but if they can't pay the rent, they will be right back at square one when the moratorium expires, with even more unpaid bills piled up. Extending the moratorium on evictions solves only one-half of the problem.

Republicans continue to stonewall support for State, local, and Tribal governments, which have already shed more than a million public service jobs this year and will continue to lay off teachers, firefighters, and more if Congress does nothing.

In the early days of the crisis, State and local governments fought this disease basically on their own. The Trump administration couldn't be bothered to coordinate a national response or supply them with the necessary resources. Now Leader MCCONNELL and others on the Republican side say our States

should just go bankrupt. They put zero into their proposal for State and local and would like Republican Senators to go home and tell their Governors, tell their mayors, and tell their county executives: We want zero for you. That is what our leader is for. Well, it is not acceptable.

On unemployment insurance, a few Senate Republicans have belatedly accepted the view we should extend the enhanced benefit of \$600 for an extended period of time, as Democrats have proposed and voted for in the House. Of course, many Senate Republicans—most Senate Republicans—still object to that, but at least a few have come around. At the moment, however, the White House is not there, and we are not going to strike a deal unless we extend the unemployment benefits, which have kept nearly 12 million Americans out of poverty.

The same goes for healthcare, testing, and tracing. How is it that everyone in the White House can get tested, everyone in the NFL can get tested, but average Americans still cannot access tests easily or get results back fast enough? More than 7 months into the crisis, this administration does not have a plan or adequate capacity for testing and contact tracing. It is a shocking failure on the part of the Trump administration and the Republican Senators.

So Democrats are insisting that we provide enough resources to finally slow the spread and defeat this disease—the single most important thing to our recovery. The American people know that the Trump administration and their Republican adherents in the Senate are to blame for this huge failure in testing and tracing. They demand we act and act fully now, not with some half-baked, poorly funded plan that won't do the job, which is where the administration seems to be at right now.

Democrats are insisting that every American should be able to vote this November safely and confidently in person or by mail. COVID has affected how we will vote. Many more will vote by mail. There will be a need for polling places—maybe more of them—and a need to space people out as they vote. We are not going to stop fighting until State election systems and the post office, which is part of getting the mail there on time, get the resources they need.

Elections are a wellspring of our democracy, and the only answer as to why neither the Republicans in the Senate nor the White House wants to do anything about it is they fear a free and fair election. That is inimicable to the core of this Republic.

We are going to keep fighting. There have been alarming reports about recent failures at the post office, about residents in Michigan and Pennsylvania not getting their medicines or their paychecks for 3 weeks or more. The Postal Service is vital—and not just for elections but every single day.

The new Postmaster, Mr. DeJoy, a big donor to President Trump—which many believe is his main qualification for being chosen—has enacted new guidelines in the post office that experts say will cause severe delays in mail delivery. Then he refused for weeks to even hold a phone call with Democrats, including myself, about this issue. I called three times. Mr. DeJoy evidently didn't have the time to call back when I was so concerned about mail delivery in New York and the rest of the country. So we have insisted to Mr. Mnuchin and Mr. Meadows on meeting with Mr. DeJoy, which will take place later today.

We need to resolve the problems at the post office—this lack of funding and the new regulations that get in the way of the timely delivery of the mail. We must resolve those issues in a way that allows mail to be delivered on time for the election and for the necessities that people need.

Each and every one of these issues is critical, and there are many more. We need answers and movement on all of them, not just on one or two, but some of our Republican friends seem content to pass a bill—any bill—so they can check the box and go home. We cannot do that. We cannot agree to an inadequate bill and then go home while the virus continues to spread, the economy continues to deteriorate, and the country gets worse. So we are going to keep slogging through, step by step, inch by inch, until we achieve the caliber, the extent, the depth and breadth of the legislation that the American people need, deserve, and want.

In stark contrast, the Republican leader has decided that he would rather lob partisan pot shots from the Senate floor each morning rather than join in productive negotiations. It is difficult to listen to the Republican leader spin such a malicious fiction about why Congress has yet to pass another round of relief when he can't even sit in the room with us and negotiate, when he can't even create a modicum of unity in his disturbingly divided caucus.

For 3 months, Leader MCCONNELL and Senate Republicans put the Senate on pause when it came to the coronavirus. As COVID threats spread throughout the South and West, as States hit daily records for new cases and hospitalizations, as 50 million Americans filed for unemployment, the Senate Republican majority merely hummed along as if it were living in a different universe.

Leader MCCONNELL scheduled confirmation votes on rightwing judges. The chairman of Judiciary and Homeland Security held hearings on the President's wild conspiracy theories about the 2016 election and conducted desperate fishing expeditions, hoping to dig up dirt on the family of the President's political rivals. When the Republican majority did put legislation on the floor, it wasn't even remotely related to COVID.

All through that time, Democrats came to the floor to practically beg our

colleagues to consider COVID relief legislation. We asked consent to pass urgent relief no fewer than 15 times, and every single time, Republicans blocked our requests.

Once Senate Republicans finally decided to write a bill, it was the legislative equivalent of a dumpster fire. Republicans bickered among themselves for over a week and a half before finally giving up. They didn't even release a coherent bill; just a series of nibbling proposals, rife with corporate giveaways and K Street carve-outs. Republicans proposed a tax break for three-martini lunches but no food assistance for hungry kids; \$2 billion to build an FBI building to boost the value of the Trump hotel but not a dime to help Americans afford their rent.

Then, to top it all off, almost as soon as the Republican plan on COVID was released, it became clear that even Senate Republicans didn't support it. President Trump called it "semi-irrelevant." "Semi-irrelevant" is what President Trump called the Republican proposals.

Leader MCCONNELL basically gave up and left Democrats and the White House to negotiate the next bill. So it strains reason for Leader MCCONNELL to criticize those of us who are actually engaged in negotiations while he is intentionally staying out of it. His "Alice in Wonderland" rhetoric—flipping everything on its head and accusing the other side of the sins that Leader MCCONNELL, in fact, is committing—is extremely counterproductive.

Since Senate Republicans clearly cannot reach a consensus, any agreement is going to require a lot of Democratic votes. Suffice it to say, the Republican leader's rhetoric and positions are not helpful in that regard.

While Republican leadership continues to sit on the sidelines, Democrats are in the room working hard. That is what the American people expect of us. They want to see us working to get something done in this time of extraordinary challenge.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I want to thank the Senator from New York and thank him for the negotiations he has engaged in.

It is nothing short of amazing that the Republican leader of the U.S. Senate comes to the floor of the Senate every morning and criticizes Senator SCHUMER and Speaker PELOSI, who are sitting in a room day after day after day, trying to hammer out an agreement to help America in this time of need, while there are two empty chairs at that table. KEVIN MCCARTHY, the House Republican leader, does not attend the meetings, and sadly, the Republican leader of the Senate is also boycotting these meetings. I can't remember a time when this has occurred, ever—no time in history when there was a critical national decision to be

hammered out between the parties and the leaders of the Republican Party in Congress refused to attend the meetings.

Senator MCCONNELL gives polished speeches on the floor criticizing Senator SCHUMER and Speaker PELOSI. They should be polished—he has time to practice them all day instead of going into the negotiations that can actually make a difference in the future of America.

Americans are genuinely concerned, and they should be. We face a national health emergency with this pandemic, sadly, where the infections are spiking across America. It is still amazing to consider two numbers: the number 5—the United States has about 5 percent of the world's population; and the number 25—the United States has generated 25 percent of the COVID-19 infections in the world. Five percent of the population and 25 percent of the reported COVID infections in the world.

How did we reach this point where this great developed, civilized, and strong Nation has been brought to its knees by this pandemic? We have reached this point by lack of leadership. The American people know that there have been leadership failures at the top. They know this President refuses to listen to experts. If the experts say something he doesn't like to hear, he banishes them, as Dr. Fauci has found.

We also know that this President is downplaying the threat that sadly is taking American lives in the thousands by the day. Just yesterday or the day before, he branded this pandemic as all but over. Really? There is hardly anyone in America who would agree with that statement—certainly no one who is paying any attention to the sad realities facing families.

This President has failed to tell the truth. He has been engaged in medical quackery. This hydroxychloroquine that he clings to has been discredited by the sources that test it. It just isn't an answer. The President should know better. For goodness' sake, he doesn't have the competence to make a medical judgment along those lines, but that won't stop him.

But many people across America are just fed up with it, whether it is Lysol cocktails or ultraviolet insertions. Lord only knows what he will come up with next. At a time when people are literally sick and dying, when our healthcare heroes are risking their lives every day, this President goes off on these flights of medical fantasy, and the American people are fed up with it.

This President has failed to take the action that America desperately needs. We cannot reopen this economy, we cannot consider reopening schools until we dramatically invest in better, quicker testing. That is a reality.

As Senator SCHUMER said earlier, Americans wonder how the President manages to test everyone who crosses the threshold of the White House over and over, every single day, and how

Major League Baseball and the National Football League can get test results in a matter of hours while Americans are standing in line and waiting for results that are largely irrelevant when they are delivered 5 or 6 days after the test. What good is a test if it tells you that you are safe 6 days ago, when you want to see your grandchildren today? That is the reality of testing in America.

And what has this President done about it? He has made statement after statement that there are all the tests we could possibly want available to every American. We know better. All across America, we know better. Testing has improved and increased, but it is not where we need it. That should be the highest priority of this administration, but they failed when it came to providing personal protective equipment, and they failed when it comes to providing testing.

The biggest failure is the attitude of the Senate Republican leader and the President when it comes to the crises America faces—first, the coronavirus crisis and, second, the economic crisis. The biggest tragedy is the fact that they believe we should do little or nothing—little or nothing when we are facing some of the greatest challenges of our time, some of the greatest challenges in American history. The American people expects us to take it seriously and to aggressively go after this coronavirus and its spread and aggressively help this economy back to its feet.

We have come up with a plan, which Senator MCCONNELL has come to the floor and mocked every single day. It passed the House of Representatives 11 weeks ago. Eleven weeks ago, Speaker PELOSI passed it and sent it to the Senate. What has happened in that 11-week period? Speech after speech after speech, deriding the efforts of the House of Representatives and, literally, nothing on the other side to show for it.

Finally, last week, they started trickling out a few ideas here and there, and they weren't very good. They refused to participate, will not even attend the negotiation sessions with the White House, and come to the floor each day and mock and criticize Democratic efforts to deal with the issues before us.

As far as a recovery is concerned, it is essential that we dedicate ourselves to it, but, first, coronavirus—first, get the infections under control and save the lives of those who have already been infected. That is the first thing that needs to be done.

The Republican approach is too little and too late. We have come up with a \$3 trillion plan. They have come up with a \$1 trillion plan and said: We may not even spend that much.

Particularly troublesome for me is this attitude toward the unemployment compensation being paid to Americans. I couldn't believe the Senator from Kentucky when he came to

the floor today and tried to pit our healthcare heroes against the unemployed, saying: They are going to work every day. Why should we give any money to those who don't go to work every day?

Really? We have four unemployed Americans—four unemployed Americans—for every single job opening. I don't believe the doctors, nurses, and medical professionals who are fighting COVID every single day resent those who are unemployed. I think they understand full well the devastation of this pandemic, not only on the individuals they treat but on the economy at large.

When it comes to these healthcare heroes, the Democrats have stepped up and called for hazard pay. Will the Republicans join us? We think these healthcare heroes deserve it—that and more, our gratitude and more, for all they have given to the United States.

Let me say a word about those who are receiving unemployment benefits. I met with five of them in Chicago last week, heard their stories, asked them a few questions, and learned a little bit about their lives. I wasn't surprised at the hardship they face. Many of them have been out of work for 4 or 5 months already. It is no surprise that almost half of the people out of work have exhausted all of their savings at this point, even with unemployment benefits.

You ask those who are unemployed: Well, what do you do with these checks that are sent to you each week?

It is pretty obvious to them what you do with it. You pay the mortgage, if you have one. You pay the rent, the car payment, so it is not repossessed and taken away from you. You try to keep food on the table. You try to keep the people issuing the credit cards at bay. These are the basics that people face every single day. But the Republicans don't seem to get that. They don't understand it because they don't get to know these people or even ask them what life is like. They are not on any bed of roses with \$600 a week when you consider the debts they face, when you consider the expenses they face, and you consider the fact that many of them are struggling to pay for their own health insurance at this point. A family trying to pick up the cost of their health insurance, that their employer once provided half of, finds themselves spending \$1,400 to \$1,700 a month on that alone. That is the reality.

For the record, of those who have returned to work in America, we are grateful that they are back to work. We are happy that they are back to work. Seventy percent of them were making more money on unemployment than they made returning to work. Well, why would they do that? Because they are not lazy people. They are people who take pride in work, believe there is dignity with work, and are prepared to return even if they made more on unemployment. They know that un-

employment is a temporary help. They want to get back to work, a place where they can prove their worth as individuals and feel some satisfaction that they are going to work and doing their best. That is part of the reality.

REOPENING SCHOOLS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, let me also address for a moment this issue of reopening of schools. There is a debate raging across the country right now about what this autumn will look like for our Nation's schools, the schoolchildren, teachers, and school staff. You have heard the President, who has literally threatened those who don't reopen their schools that they may lose Federal funding if they don't reopen schools. What is that funding spent for? Special education, school lunches, help for kids in poor schools.

The message has been reiterated by the loyal Education Secretary, Betsy DeVos. She, too, has joined in the threats of schools that don't reopen. Now the Republicans in the Senate have taken that threat and turned it into legislation with their proposal in the next relief package.

Let me be really clear. There is a concern about empty classrooms. Those who study childhood behavior worry that lack of socialization takes its toll on childhood development. Teachers are often sentinels for evidence of child abuse, which now may be going unreported. Remote learning works well for some but not for others. But that is not the concern of this President. He wants schools back so he that can claim some kind of false victory over the coronavirus.

Last week, I led 24 of my colleagues in writing to the majority leader and the Democratic leader opposing putting children and teachers in any danger by conditioning funding of schools reopening in person.

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit the Little Village Academy in Chicago with the Chicago Public Schools chief, Janice Jackson. Some wonderful people are there each day passing out lunches to the kids in the neighborhood who come around the school. They haven't reopened for classes. They hope they will, but that decision is still to be made.

I can tell you that in Chicago and around my home State of Illinois, school boards, administrators, teachers, parents, and others are facing these decisions honestly. They have to provide a safe and effective learning environment for students and for teachers, whether that be in person, in school, or at home.

Unlike President Trump, who is nicely insulated in the bubble of the White House with the multiple daily COVID-19 tests for everyone who just might come in contact with him, these education professionals in my home State of Illinois have to answer directly to the families in their communities. It is a decision that local officials are best

sued to make without intimidation or threats from Washington, DC.

But Washington does have a role to play. The best thing we can do to help local school districts through this difficult fall and beyond is to provide the Federal assistance and support they need to ensure the path they choose is one that keeps students and staff safe while allowing the learning and development to continue effectively.

It is why, as we negotiate a fourth coronavirus response package, I will be pushing for the inclusion of the Coronavirus Childcare and Education Relief Act, being led in the Senate by Senator PATTY MURRAY of Washington.

In addition to supporting childcare, early education, and higher education, the bill provides \$175 billion to elementary and secondary schools to help meet technology, cleaning, staffing, and other needs of schools. It provides funds to school districts based on their share of low-income children. In that way, it is similar to the CARES Act, which brought more than \$200 million to the Chicago Public Schools and a total of \$512 million across our State of Illinois. Compare that \$175 billion to the \$70 billion being offered on the Republican side—another classic example.

We believe this is a serious national issue, when it comes to education. The Republicans do not. The amount of money that they are proposing is a fraction of what we offer, and much of it is conditioned on the schools actually reopening in person, regardless of what is the safest thing for the schools, the teachers, and the students in any given area.

Congress shouldn't put State and local officials in the position of choosing between desperately needed Federal assistance and the safety of students and the school personnel. Congress should not incentivize schools to reopen in person prematurely or penalize those where the public health situation makes it dangerous.

The argument from the administration seems to go: "Well, if schools don't reopen, they either don't deserve or don't need any help." That is just not the case. Even schools that are not able to reopen in person need assistance ensuring their students, especially those from low-income families, have the ability to participate in remote learning. They need help keeping staff on payroll, preparing the buildings so they can return in person in the future, and addressing any number of difficulties this pandemic has created. For school buses, if there is going to be social distancing of the kids on the buses, will there be a need for additional buses and busdrivers?

In addition to funding, the Federal Government should also ensure that schools have science-based guidance to support safely opening, free from political influence and Presidential quackery.

They also need the flexibility to continue serving critical meals to our students, regardless of what the school year looks like this fall.