

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.

Chicago Public Schools have done an incredible job providing 18 million meals since March. We need to ensure the U.S. Department of Agriculture provides the range of alternative options needed to make sure that no kid in America goes hungry.

Schools in Chicago and around our State don't need any more tweets or self-congratulatory briefings, Mr. President. They need Federal resources and guidance based on the best science our government has to offer. That is why I am fighting for this relief package to be at a level to meet the challenge we face across America.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, let me close by saying this. The majority leader comes to the floor regularly and talks about special interests. Perhaps he can explain to us why the Republican proposal for relief for the COVID-19 virus includes a \$2 billion allocation for a new FBI building across the street from the Trump hotel. Perhaps he can explain the \$30 billion wish list from the Department of Defense, trying to make up for cuts that were made when the President raided their accounts to build his almighty wall in the southern border. Perhaps the majority leader can explain to us the liability immunity which is being proposed by the Republican side as a "redline, take it or leave it, we will walk away if you don't like it" approach.

It would be one thing if the Republican leader were in the room, actually negotiating, but he just makes a redline and walks away. That redline is a subsidy to the largest corporations in America, giving them liability immunity when it comes to possible court suits.

Wouldn't we want a standard to make sure that all businesses and every individual or group or business is doing its best to keep America safe? When we say, don't worry about any liability in court if you ignore the public health reality, that is no guarantee that it is going to be a safe environment for America when we reopen this economy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, last week Senate Republicans did introduce a new coronavirus relief bill called the Health, Economic Assistance, Liability Protection, and Schools Act. This bill is a \$1 trillion piece of legislation focused on getting Americans back to work, getting kids and college students back to school, and providing healthcare resources to help defeat the virus. As the title says—the Health, Economic Assistance, Liability Protection, and Schools Act—it does have liability protections in there.

I just listened to the Senator from Illinois attack the idea of including

those types of protections in the legislation, but I think it is really important to point out that those type of protections are critical if we are going to get the economy reopened again.

Businesses that are doing all the right things—following the CDC guidelines, adhering to all the laws, all the guidelines and restrictions that are out there—shouldn't have to worry about lawyering up and spending thousands and, in some cases, millions of dollars to try and defend themselves against frivolous lawsuits, which are being filed as we speak by the thousands.

The implication given by the Senator from Illinois that somehow this is all about big corporations or big businesses is just not consistent with the facts on the ground. In fact, I had a conversation 2 days ago with the school administrators in my State of South Dakota, all of whom are very interested in getting their schools opened up and getting kids back in school, which, again, is one of the priorities of our legislation and should be, I think, one of the priorities of the country as we head into the fall.

One of their big issues was ensuring that they had protections against liability—a liability shield, if you will, not against gross negligence, not against intentional misconduct—those types of things would not be covered—but protections if, in fact, they are doing all the right things, consistent with the guidelines, following the rules that have been put in place, that they should have at least some protections.

That is going to be true not just of schools and small businesses, but it is also going to be true of healthcare providers. We have people on the frontlines who are sacrificing every day to try and get people better, to heal those who have contracted the virus, and also protect those who are on the frontlines from getting it. They, too, are going to need those very types of protections that are called for in our legislation.

So this is not something that was put in there on a whim just because we knew that the Democrats wouldn't like it. It was put in there because of feedback we received from States, local governments, school districts, healthcare providers, hospitals, nursing homes, and, yes, some small businesses, all of whom are going to be essential if we are going to get the economy up and going again and get people back to work, kids back to school, and Americans back on their feet.

So it is an essential part of the legislation, one which, so far, the Democrats have demonstrated no interest in including and, frankly, no interest in even having a conversation about, which is unfortunate because it is a critical element, feature, of any bill that we should be working on right now to provide coronavirus relief.

When we introduced this bill, we knew this version wouldn't be the final draft. I think everybody conceded that. We knew we would need to negotiate

with our Democratic colleagues just like we did with the CARES Act, which was our largest coronavirus relief bill, back in March.

Back in March, the model that was used was having committee chairmen and ranking members get together in compromise and work out differences and end up with a strong, bipartisan bill. Was it a perfect bill? Well, no, of course not. No bill is. Did everyone get everything that he or she wanted? No, but it was a strong, bipartisan bill that was praised by Democrats and Republicans alike—in fact, reflected by the unanimous vote.

I would like to say that we are engaging in those same types of negotiations right now, but unfortunately I can't say that. I can't say, in fact, what is happening right now is even negotiations. Negotiations involve both sides being willing to give something up to compromise and to try and move toward a solution. While Republicans are willing to make compromises to ensure that we can deliver another coronavirus relief bill to the American people, Democrats apparently aren't willing to make any.

Back in May, House Democrats proposed and passed a massive \$3.4 trillion piece of legislation that they called a coronavirus relief bill. Subsequently, it has been endorsed by Senate Democrats who have gone so far as to offer up unanimous consent requests here on the Senate floor to adopt the House-passed bill. In reality, that House-passed bill, \$3.4 trillion bill, was a lengthy liberal wish list which even Members of the Democrats' own party dismissed as dead on arrival. In fact, Democrats had some work to do to persuade Members of their own caucus in the House to vote for the bill.

As POLITICO put it at the time: "As of late Thursday evening, the House Democratic leadership was engaged in what a few senior aides and lawmakers described as the most difficult arm-twisting of the entire Congress: convincing their rank and file to vote for a \$3 trillion stimulus bill that will never become law."

That is from POLITICO. The House bill includes various "coronavirus priorities" like funding for diversity and inclusion studies in the marijuana industry, tax cuts for blue-State millionaires, federalizing elections. Those are just a few of the items that were included in the House-passed bill that it is very hard to argue have anything to do with defeating the coronavirus. In fact, the House bill mentions the word "cannabis" more often than it mentions the word "job," which tells you all you need to know about the seriousness of that proposal.

Despite all that, Democratic leaders have taken the House bill as their starting and, yes, their ending point for negotiations. They are insisting that Republicans sign off on pretty much everything in their bill, from the tax cuts for wealthy Americans to major changes in election law. And