

the food on our dinner tables and make sure our supermarket shelves are stocked.

These producers are facing low prices, regulatory overreach, a challenging trade environment, and drastic and sudden changes in demand for their crops and animals. To top it off, net farm income is estimated to drop by nearly \$20 billion as of this year. Despite all these challenges, they have continued to produce even more with less.

American farmers and ranchers are so efficient at their jobs that we are able to enjoy the most affordable food of any country in the world—and the most safe. We also have the safest and most ample food supply.

That is why I consider—as well as all of my colleagues on the Agriculture Committee and others who are privileged to represent farmers, ranchers, and growers—that they are true heroes.

Producing food for a troubled and hungry world is what farmers do day in and day out, but especially at times like this, it is nothing short of heroic. We have taken steps to address the needs of our Nation's farmers and ranchers, and in recent months—in March—unanimously, we passed the CARES Act.

I would say that would be a goal we might want to achieve with the Heroes Act scaled down to whatever we want to call it—and also the HEALS Act. At any rate, it was unanimous back then, and that funded the Department of Agriculture to address the needs related to the pandemic, among a lot of other things.

We included \$9.5 billion for Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue to deliver emergency support for those in agriculture and the food industry who suffered losses due to the pandemic, and we included \$14 billion partial replenishment for the Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation to provide additional assistance to affected producers. This legislation ensured the continued implementation of our 2018 farm bill programs, which do provide certainty and predictability at a time when both are scarce.

We also provided additional resources for telemedicine, broadband connectivity, as well as business and industry loans. The CARES Act also supplied the Department with the resources to continue mandatory inspection services to ensure our food safety and minimize potential interruption in the food supply chain.

COVID-19 created a ripple effect that has been felt from the farm to the supermarket. The agriculture and food sector, along with the administration, the CDC, and OSHA have all implemented practices and policies that address worker health and safety in our processing plants. Keeping America's meat and poultry processing system functional was imperative—it was difficult, but we are making progress—as was boosting worker safety and protection in these plants.

Now we must take what lessons we have learned in the past few months and build upon this progress.

I am privileged to be the chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. I have worked on the role of addressing rural America's priorities as part of a fourth COVID-19 relief package, as have all members of the committee, both Democrat and Republican.

This week, we are considering legislation with the hopes of a bipartisan solution. We all know and we anticipate this process will go through several twists and turns before a final agreement is reached, but we must provide solutions. The entire country is truly counting on us.

In closing, I want to again thank our farmers, our ranchers, and our growers all across the country who have continued to do their job during these very difficult times, and I want them to know that we are continuing to work to make sure they have the tools needed to continue to feed not only our country but a very troubled and hungry world.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, as we debate the need for additional coronavirus relief funding, I am pleased to join my colleagues in commending the millions of Americans who have gone above and beyond to help others during this pandemic.

Throughout our Nation's history, everyday heroes emerge in times of turmoil to aid their neighbors in so many ways. The COVID-19 pandemic is no exception. In every corner of my State, Mississippi's first responders and healthcare providers are historically stepping into harm's way to provide care to patients affected by the virus.

REMEMBERING WILLIAM DAVID MARTIN

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, let me first honor the life of William David Martin, a paramedic with American Medical Response of Southwest Mississippi, serving on the frontlines of Mississippi's healthcare as COVID-19 began to spread.

Sadly, in April, he passed away from complications due to the virus. Mr. Martin is a true hero and one example of the extent to which first responders and healthcare workers are working to overcome this national emergency.

COVID-19 HEROES

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, rural hospitals like King's Daughters Medical Center in my hometown of Brookhaven have always been the backbone of healthcare in Mississippi. The work of the staff at these rural hospitals during the pandemic has been remarkable.

Dedicated nurses like my friends Larue Lambert, Tammy Livingston, Misty Britt, Christina Miller, and their

coworkers—which are so many—toil every day under heavy stress and heart-wrenching situations to care for patients and their families. They are lifesavers, and they are best friends to total strangers. They take on extra shifts and duties while doing what they can to keep morale up. They are healthcare heroes who are enduring extreme conditions.

Doctors like Dr. Jeff Ross are working through both physical and mental exhaustion. Yet they continue to do their job, selflessly managing the care of their fellow Mississippians.

In the heavily affected Jackson metropolitan area, the University of Mississippi Medical Center has brought its unique capabilities to bear. In the early days of the pandemic, its research labs rushed to create its own in-house COVID test. And the UMC National Telehealth Center of Excellence quickly ramped up technology to triage patients for testing and provide socially distanced care.

I greatly admire UMC's work with the Federal Government on best telehealth practices during a pandemic. As potential treatments have emerged, UMC researchers and healthcare providers have stood up eight cutting-edge COVID clinical trials in their new clinical trials unit.

Our healthcare providers aren't the only ones who have been working to protect the health of Mississippians. Industries across the State have quickly pivoted to provide needed supplies to fight COVID-19. For example, distilleries like Wonderbird Spirits in Taylor, Cathead Distillery in Jackson, and Lazy Magnolia Brewery in Kiln made the quick decision to begin producing hand sanitizer early in the pandemic. Furniture companies, like Confortaire in Tupelo, stepped up to produce needed PPE for the North Mississippi Medical Center and our local schools. And Mississippi Prison Industries, a non-profit that gives incarcerated individuals the opportunity to be employed and gain work experience, is producing up to 15,000 masks and 7,000 isolation gowns per day.

Since the start of this pandemic, I recognized that we are dealing with two emergencies. There is the healthcare emergency and the economic emergency. I am proud of the many ways in which Mississippians are helping each other weather these difficult economic times.

Mississippi bankers worked around the clock, 7 days a week, to help small businesses access the Paycheck Protection Program loans. Our friend Brad Jones at the Bank of Franklin in Meadville, MS, was so helpful in keeping me abreast of the needs of our local business owners. Because of their efforts, Mississippi ranked No. 1 in the entire Nation in PPP loans, with nearly 50,000 loans processed. This tireless work is helping small businesses stay open with their employees at work.

Ensuring Mississippians have access to food has been a challenge. A Mississippian who has been a godsend to

many families is Andy Mercier, who leads Merchants Foodservice in Hattiesburg. In partnership with the Mississippi Food Network, his 800 employees have remained on the payroll and worked to provide more than 100,000 gallons of milk and nearly half a million food produce boxes to those in need.

These USDA Farmers to Families boxes filled with food products from Mississippi farmers and producers have sustained families and helped our hard-hit agricultural industry.

In addition to efforts in the private sector, our churches and nonprofits across our State are also working tirelessly for Mississippians. St. James United Methodist Church in Columbus coordinated with a Delta catfish producer to distribute five tons of Mississippi farm-raised catfish to those in need in the Golden Triangle region.

Finally, I could not stand up here today and fail to mention our Mississippi teachers, especially as so many schools across our State are beginning the new academic year this month.

Last spring, our teachers accepted the challenge and quickly transitioned their classrooms to a new kind of learning through technology and other socially distanced means. While those challenges continue as schools navigate how best to serve students this fall, each and every one of our teachers will be in my prayers over the next few weeks.

In every facet of our society, we have heroes standing up to help their neighbors during unprecedented challenges. To all of the healthcare workers and first responders on the frontlines against this virus, to all the researchers racing to test treatments and develop protocols, to all of the people making hand sanitizers and PPE to help prevent the spread of this virus, to all the bankers and small businesses working to keep people on the payroll, to all of our farmers, ranchers, food distributors, and grocery store workers keeping food on the store shelves and on our tables, to all of our churches and nonprofit organizations serving our communities, and to our teachers who are facing challenges they could have never imagined, from the bottom of my heart, I say thank you. Your heroic labors are noticed, and they are greatly appreciated.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

COVID-19 HEROES

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleagues today—the Senator from Mississippi, the Senator from Kansas, and so forth—for coming down and spending just a little bit of time talking about the wonderful heroes we have in our home States, and we really do have so, so many of them.

While the country is anxiously awaiting Washington to come together and pass an updated COVID relief package,

we are truly blessed to have everyday heroes back in our 50 States who are working around the clock to help out their neighbors.

Essential workers haven't taken a break. They have been keeping our country running—and not just during this global pandemic but every single day. I have heard, time and again, stories of Iowans helping Iowans. Folks are volunteering their time and their talents to serve their communities and ensure no one feels alone during this time of social distancing.

When my friend Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds announced that there was a shortage of face masks to protect frontline workers, Iowans, including my own mother, started sewing.

Deb Siggins of Lisbon, IA, has made more than 400 masks that she has donated to a local hospital, her friends, and coworkers, the local fire department, grocery store employees, and elderly patients. She has even turned a tree near her home into a “giving tree” decorated with her homemade masks for people to take, which she is constantly updating. Deb plans to keep making the masks until they are no longer needed because she believes that sewing is her gift from God, which she can use to help others.

Mary Shotwell of Des Moines wanted to give back to those helping her during this pandemic. In “i-sew-lation,” as she describes it, Mary sewed masks for her entire neighborhood and healthcare workers at Broadlawns Medical Center.

In addition to the demand for masks, there has also been an increased need for food, especially to feed our hungry kiddos. Linn-Mar teacher Carla Ironside, who hasn't seen her students in the classroom since March, now sees some of them when they pick up meals at Feeding Lunches to Youth in Marion and Cedar Rapids, where she volunteers. Carla says the opportunity to serve these meals helps calm her anxious mind, knowing her students are fed. She said: “I get to see their smiles . . . and it helps me, and I think it helps them.”

But it is not just our wonderful teachers; students are doing their part too. Allie Stutting of Princeton, IA, who is a University of Iowa student, launched an effort to mobilize her peers to serve and protect those at heightened risk. Worried about the threat COVID posed to her grandparents and the elderly, Allie set up a network of young people called the Iowa City Errand-ers to get groceries and food, pick up prescriptions, and run other errands for older folks and others in need. Allie's idea has inspired an army of over 400 volunteers—yes, 400 volunteers, folks.

The story of these everyday heroes continues. To keep those who are venturing out safe, ambassadors from Operation Downtown are walking around Des Moines, cleaning and sanitizing handrailings, door handles, parking meters, and other high-touch surfaces.

Julie Skalberg, an Operation Downtown ambassador, explains that it is an

effort to help folks feel secure during what can be a very scary time.

Despite the potential risk, Cynthia Allen—another Operation Downtown ambassador—says she feels that it is an honor to give back to our community.

Folks, the actions of these and many, many others like them who are pitching in and doing their part are examples of what I like to call “Iowa Nice.” For each of them, serving others is not a chore but, rather, a gift greeted with gratitude.

At a time filled with immeasurable uncertainty, these heartland heroes are bringing comfort to their communities, including complete strangers, many who are isolated and alone.

Defeating this virus will require the development of an effective vaccine, and Iowa is helping to lead the way in this effort. Right now, the hard-working folks at the University of Iowa's Medical School are working with Pfizer to develop a COVID-19 vaccine. In the annual Defense bill that recently passed the Senate, I helped increase funding for these types of studies and developments.

The efforts of our bright young Iowa college students, combined with the work of Operation Warp Speed and the administration, provide great hope for the future development of cures, treatments, and vaccines. Now, as we wait for the results, let's not forget the hope that the stories of our everyday COVID heroes bring. It is the Iowa way: stepping up and doing your part—meeting the needs of family, friends, and even strangers.

Folks, I have said it before, and I will say it yet once again here today: We will get through these challenging times, and we will do it together.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Ms. ERNST. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I have come to the floor again today to speak about an obscure section of immigration law that has a direct impact on the lives of literally millions of people living and working in the United States. I am here to speak about the plight of immigrant workers who are suffering because of a serious problem in our immigration system, known as the green card backlog. Many of these immigrants are essential workers helping to lead the fight against COVID-19. We have just heard tributes on the floor to these healthcare heroes from Senators on the other side.