

package, but to truly address these injustices, we must reform our immigration laws once and for all.

We have to come together as we did before here in the Senate—I was part of that Gang of 8—to restart these long overdue discussions and find a path forward to achieving real immigration reform.

I have always believed and still believe that reforming our immigration laws is the civil rights issue of this community and of this time.

It is time to treat immigrants fairly and to recognize their hard work and contributions to this Nation—immigrants like my mother, Evangelina, who came here with nothing but the conviction that everything in America was possible. She refused to let not speaking English or her modest wages as a seamstress stop her from giving us the best life she could.

And here I am, one of 100 U.S. Senators, in a country of over 320 million people. I am the embodiment of that American dream, and my story is no less meaningful than that of any other immigrant coming to this country or in this country to build a better future for their family and this Nation.

That is our past; that is our history; that is our present; and it will be our future. It is past time that due acknowledgement and respect be given. It is now time for action.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, as everybody knows, this country faces at this moment an extraordinary set of crises—in fact, crises that are unprecedented in the history of our country. We are in the midst of the worst public health crisis since the Spanish flu of 100 years ago, and, sad to say, this Senate has done nothing to address that crisis over the last 2½ months.

Over the past 4 months, the coronavirus has infected nearly 5 million Americans and caused 160,000 deaths, and the Senate is doing nothing.

Incredibly—and this is incredible—more Americans have been killed by the coronavirus than by the Korean war, the Vietnam war, the Persian Gulf war, 9/11, the Afghanistan war, and the Iraq war combined, and the Senate is still not acting.

We are in the midst of the worst economic meltdown since the Great Depression of the 1930s, and the Senate is doing nothing.

Since March, more than 30 million Americans have lost their jobs. Last

week, the Senate allowed a \$600-a-week increase in their unemployment benefits to expire. Over half of the American people have seen a loss in their income. Yet the Senate continues to do nothing.

Forty million Americans—an unbelievable number—40 million Americans are in danger of being evicted from their homes while the Senate has allowed a moratorium on evictions to expire.

This is no great shock. Everybody knew this would happen. Yet the Republican leadership here has allowed that moratorium to expire.

Twenty-six million Americans cannot afford food to feed their families, and those Americans are lining up at emergency food banks in record numbers, the vast majority of whom have never been to an emergency food bank in their lives, and the Senate is doing nothing.

A recordbreaking 5.4 million Americans recently lost their health insurance. Under our dysfunctional healthcare system, when you lose your job, you often lose your health insurance, and that now leaves us with over 90 million Americans who are uninsured or underinsured; that is, 90 million Americans who today worry about whether they can afford to go to a doctor when they or their kids are sick. The Senate is doing nothing.

In total, American households have lost a staggering \$6.5 trillion in wealth since this pandemic began. It is an unimaginable number. What does that mean? That \$6.5 trillion is a number much too large for many of us to fathom, and the Senate does nothing.

Although I know there is some obfuscation about this, what everybody in America should understand is that over 2.5 months ago, the House did its job. Over 2.5 months ago, the U.S. House of Representatives did its job, and they passed legislation responding to the enormous pain and suffering that the American people are now experiencing. They did their job, but the Senate has not.

The Heroes Act passed by the House in May would extend the \$600-a-week increase in unemployment benefits until January. I want everybody to understand that. I think sometimes there is confusion. The House did its job. Under the House bill, if that bill were passed here today here in the Senate, people would continue to get that \$600 supplement in their unemployment benefits.

The House bill would provide over \$900 billion to State and local governments to prevent the massive layoff of teachers, firefighters, nurses, construction workers, and millions of other workers who are serving the public during this horrific pandemic. Over 1 million workers who work for State and local governments have already lost their jobs, and if we do not provide substantial aid to State and local governments, there will be a mass epidemic of job loss there.

The House bill would provide hazard pay to essential workers, which is something that is long, long overdue. People are putting their lives on the line and sometimes dying in order to provide us with groceries or to get us to work on a bus or on a train. Those workers need hazard pay, and that is what the House did.

The House also passed a provision in their legislation to require businesses to adopt strong health and safety standards to protect their employees and their customers.

The House bill would provide \$175 billion in rental and foreclosure assistance to make sure that millions of Americans do not lose their homes or get evicted from their apartments and end up out on the streets.

The House bill also provides vital funding for nutritional assistance, for election security—an enormous issue here, whether or not we are going to have free and fair elections—and also substantial funding for the U.S. Postal Service, which is now being sabotaged by the Trump administration. That is what the House passed 2.5 months ago.

Do I agree with everything that was in the House bill? No, I don't. I think much of it, however, is excellent. But we can and should make improvements in that bill here in the Senate. That is what we should be doing—accepting the bill and improving it.

Two and a half months after the House passed its bill, Senate Republicans finally woke up, and they said: We have to do something. We have to respond. The public wants us to respond. We have to do something. And they finally released their bill to respond to the coronavirus crisis. Unfortunately, although not surprisingly, the Republican plan is woefully inadequate for the working families of our country, for the elderly, for their children, and for the poor, while at the same time it provides even more corporate welfare to the rich and the powerful. One might think that in the midst of this terrible pandemic, my Republican colleagues could control themselves just a bit and not pile on more benefits to the people who don't need them and maybe—just maybe—pay attention to the people who do need help.

The Senate Republican bill provides nothing for hazard pay. If you are a grocery store worker, if you are a truckdriver, if you are a busdriver, if you are working in mass transit, nothing in that bill is provided for hazard pay. There is nothing for nutrition assistance and nothing for the 92 million Americans who are uninsured or underinsured. Ninety-two million people are uninsured or underinsured in the midst of a terrible public health crisis, and the Republican legislation ignores that reality completely. There is nothing for the U.S. Postal Service and nothing for State and local governments, many of which are on the verge of bankruptcy.

Here is what that Republican bill does contain. It does include another

\$29 billion for the Pentagon. Last week, this body passed a \$740 billion bill for the Pentagon, which is more money than the next 11 nations combined, most of which are our allies—a huge military budget, but clearly, in the midst of the pandemic, the Pentagon needs even more.

The Republican bill does include another tax break for the meals and entertainment of wealthy CEOs. The Republican bill does include another \$1.75 billion for an FBI building, \$1 billion for new surveillance planes, \$636 million more for F-35s, \$360 million more for a new missile defense system, and \$283 million more for Apache helicopters. I am not quite sure what Apache helicopters have to do with a pandemic, but be that as it may, they did put money in for the helicopters and for the Pentagon.

Under the Republican bill, if you are a wealthy business executive, you will get a 100-percent tax deduction for a three-martini lunch—a 100-percent tax deduction for having lunch at some fancy restaurant and spending another couple hundred dollars on your meal. But if you are one of the 26 low-income Americans who do not have enough food to eat, you get nothing in the Republican bill. In other words, when Republicans, in their bill, refer to nutrition, they are talking about tax breaks for the rich who eat at expensive restaurants but not one nickel for the children in this country who are facing hunger.

Under the Republican bill, if you are a profitable defense contractor, you will receive an additional \$11 billion in corporate welfare, but if you are one of the 92 million Americans who are uninsured or underinsured, you get nothing.

Under the Republican bill, if you are a business owner who forces employees to work in an unsafe and unhealthy environment, you are rewarded. The Republican bill will provide you with the immunity you need from lawsuits if your workers get sick or die from the coronavirus. In other words, you have employers who are saying: You have to come back to work, or else you are going to get fired and not be able to feed your family. But the working conditions that we are providing for you are not protective of your health, and if you get sick, if you die, you are on your own. Don't hold us responsible for that.

The Republican bill does not provide a nickel for essential workers during this pandemic, but it does make sure that you do not receive the hazard pay or the personal protective equipment that you need and deserve.

Unbelievably—unbelievably—in the richest country in the history of the world, we have tens of thousands of workers—not only doctors and nurses but workers from all kinds of professions—who are interacting with the public who need high-quality personal protective equipment, and they don't have it.

While the Republican bill slashes unemployment benefits by 43 percent for

30 million Americans who lost their jobs, it continues a \$135 billion tax break to 43,000 millionaires, primarily in the real estate and hedge fund industry. In other words, we stop the \$600 benefit for unemployment, but we maintain a \$135 billion tax break for the wealthy.

It goes without saying that I am strongly opposed to the Senate Republican proposal. Instead of listening to the needs of the military-industrial complex, we should be listening to the needs of working families and the poor. Instead of providing more tax breaks to the very wealthy, we need to provide more economic relief to the tens of millions of Americans who are hurting economically.

Just last month, I asked my constituents in Vermont and, in fact, all over this country to write to me, email me, and tell me how the economic crisis we are in has impacted their lives. We received thousands and thousands of responses.

I would like to take a moment to read just a few of the many stories that came into my office because I think sometimes it is very easy for us to live in a bubble and not really appreciate what is going on. It is especially more difficult when, because of the pandemic, many of us can't get out the way we would like to get out. So I used our email approach to reach out to people in Vermont and around the country and asked them to tell me what is going on, what is going on in your lives. Let me just repeat and read to you some of the responses—a few of the responses that I received.

A gentleman named Dominic from Williston, VT, wrote:

Without the additional \$600/week benefit, my benefit will automatically revert to the minimum \$191/week.

So he is now getting \$791. If he didn't have that \$600, it would be \$191.

At that rate, my wife and I will be in serious crisis within a month.

Like millions of other people, Dominic does not have a lot of money in the bank. If he did not get that \$600 on top of his unemployment benefit, which in Vermont, for him, would be \$191 a week, he would be in a serious financial crisis.

Denise from Waitsfield, VT, wrote:

I lost my job due to COVID-19 on March 16, 2020. The PUA program and the additional \$600 per week is keeping our family out of debt and allowing us to afford our mortgage. Without PUA and the additional federal stimulus, our family would not be able to survive financially.

In other words, without the unemployment and that \$600 supplement, her family would not be able to survive financially.

Casey from Burlington, VT, wrote:

I have been unemployed since March 20th and have no job to return to and limited options for finding a new job in a timely fashion; losing the extra \$600/weekly unemployment benefit would be devastating for me. I know it would be the same for so many others, including many friends and family.

Amanda from Isle La Motte, a beautiful town in Northern Vermont,

works, as it happens, while living in Vermont, for an unemployment office in the State of Massachusetts. She wrote—and this speaks to the job that she now has:

I have heard heart wrenching stories. I've had moms crying that they can't feed their kids, families telling me they've been evicted and are homeless. A single dad who was a self-employed musician, he cried with me saying his savings had run out, he had no money for food. This man's story will stick with me the rest of my life. I've cried so many days for all these people I can't help. I suggest the government officials work in an unemployment call center for a day. The heart-wrenching stories they will hear.

I thank Amanda for that. I thank Amanda for the work she is doing and what she is trying to do but for reminding us that, in too many instances, Members of Congress are isolated from the reality that is taking place out there.

The stories go on and on and on. Now that the \$600 a week in unemployment benefits has expired, now that the moratorium on evictions has also expired, this crisis is only going to get worse and worse and worse. In my view, we need to extend the extra \$600 a week in unemployment benefits for the 30 million Americans who have lost their jobs. I think that is a no-brainer.

People are hurting. People are desperate. People cannot feed their kids. People are going to be evicted from their homes and their apartments. We have to respond to that pain and extend that \$600 supplement to normal unemployment.

I would go further. I believe that we need to make sure that every working-class person in this country receives \$2,000 a month until this crisis is over so they can have the security they need that they and their family are going to survive this crisis with dignity.

And we cannot continue to ignore the reality that 92 million Americans today are uninsured or underinsured. While I, of course, believe in Medicare for All and will continue that fight, at least during this crisis, we should make sure that all of the 92 million who are uninsured or underinsured get covered by Medicare for their out-of-pocket expenses. It is not asking too much that, during this crisis, people who have private insurance or Medicare or Medicaid not have to pay out-of-pocket expenses.

We need a coronavirus relief bill that benefits the working class of this country and low-income people, not the wealthy and the well connected.

Now, what I think many people do not fully understand—it doesn't get a whole lot of attention—is that, during this pandemic, not everybody is hurting. Not everybody out there needs the Senate to act. While over 30 million Americans have seen their \$600 a week in unemployment benefits expire, thanks to the emergency actions taken by the Federal Reserve to prop up the stock market, 467 billionaires in this country have seen their wealth go up

by over \$730 billion since the pandemic has begun. Let me repeat that: 467 billionaires have seen their wealth go up by over \$730 billion in the last several months of this pandemic.

Millions of people are unemployed, struggling to put food on the table, but 467 billionaires have seen their wealth go up by over \$700 billion. Meanwhile, during the last 4 months, while the very, very wealthy have become much richer, American households have seen their wealth go down by \$6.5 trillion.

In all likelihood, in the midst of everything else we are experiencing, we are currently looking at what is likely the greatest transfer of wealth from the middle class and the poor to the very rich in the modern history of this country. A massive transfer of wealth: the working-class and middle-class poor getting poorer; the people at the very, very top becoming phenomenally richer.

In other words, in the midst of a pandemic, in the midst of an economic meltdown for working families, in the midst of a great struggle regarding systemic racism and police brutality, in the midst of the existential threat to our planet of climate change, in the midst of a President undermining democracy and moving this country in an authoritarian direction—in the midst of all of that, we are also seeing a massive increase in income and wealth inequality and the movement in this country toward oligarchy.

Let me just give you a few examples of the incredible growth in inequality that is taking place right now as we speak. While Amazon is denying paid sick leave to its employees, while they are denying hazard pay and personal protective equipment to 450,000 of their workers, Jeff Bezos, the owner of Amazon, has increased his wealth by over \$70 billion. Yes, one person, during the pandemic, has seen his wealth increase by \$70—7—0—billion.

While U.S. taxpayers are subsidizing the starvation wages at Walmart by providing food stamps and affordable housing and Medicaid to the workers who are employed by the Walton family of Walmart, the Walton family—the owner of Walmart—has made over \$20 billion during the pandemic and now has a net worth of over \$200 billion. While 40 million Americans face eviction, Elon Musk has nearly tripled his wealth over the past 4 months and now has a net worth of more than \$70 billion.

While millions of Americans are lining up at emergency food banks because they don't have enough money to put food on the table, Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, has increased his wealth by more than \$37 billion during the pandemic and is now worth over \$70 billion.

In a time of massive wealth and income inequality, when so many people in our country are hurting, it is morally obscene for billionaires to use a global pandemic as an opportunity to make outrageous profits and to very

substantially increase their wealth, and that is why I will be introducing legislation tomorrow to tax the obscene wealth gains billionaires have made during this public health crisis.

According to Americans for Tax Fairness, if we tax 60 percent of the wind-gains these billionaires made from March 18 until August 3, we could raise over \$420 billion. That is enough revenue to allow Medicare to pay all of the out-of-pocket healthcare expenses for every man, woman, and child in this country over the next 12 months.

So that is the choice we have to make. Do we have a tax on the obscene increase in wealth that has taken place for a few hundred billionaires during this pandemic or do we have a fair tax on their wealth and say to every man, woman, and child: During this crisis, you will no longer have to pay anything out of pocket for the healthcare you and your family need?

By taxing 60 percent of the wealth gains made by just 467 billionaires—so, in a nation of 330 million people, we are talking about a tax on 467 of them—a tiny, tiny, tiny fraction of 1 percent. Just by doing that, we could guarantee healthcare as a right for all people in this country for an entire year.

By the way, if anybody out there is very worried about the impact of this tax on the billionaires, on the people who are being taxed—how will they survive a 60-percent tax? That is a high tax. Do you think they are going to make it? Well, we have left them more than \$310 billion to survive with. That is a \$310 billion increase in their wealth. That is what we have left them.

In my view, above and beyond this circumstance, above and beyond the pandemic, this Nation must address the obscene level of income and wealth inequality which exists. It existed before the pandemic, and it is even worse now. In my view, we can no longer tolerate three people in this country owning more wealth than the bottom half of our Nation at a time when 30 million Americans have lost their jobs and 93 million people are either uninsured or underinsured. We need to reconsider our value system and make it clear that so few cannot have so very much, such obscene wealth—which is exploding during the pandemic—while so many of our people are living in economic desperation.

Now is the time to develop a new set of priorities and a new set of moral values for this country. Now is the time to tax the winnings of a handful of billionaires to improve the health and well-being of tens of millions of Americans. The time is long overdue for the Senate to act on behalf of the working class of this country, the people who are hurting like they have never hurt before—not in our lifetime—and have the courage to tell the billionaire class, who are doing phenomenally well, that they cannot have it all.

With that, I yield the floor.
I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise tonight to talk about a couple of issues I know that will be considered—at least I hope will be considered—in the negotiations that are under way.

Later in this hour, we will be joined by three of my colleagues: Senator WHITEHOUSE, Senator BLUMENTHAL, and Senator DUCKWORTH. Each of us will be talking about these issues from different perspectives, but all focused on those in our society who are most at risk in the midst of this worldwide pandemic and in the midst of this economic and jobs crisis that we are confronting right now. We know that this is the most difficult public health crisis in a century, and one of largest, if not in the top two, job crises we have ever faced.

When we talk about Americans who are most at risk, among them are, of course, older Americans. Tonight, I will spend some time talking about older Americans in nursing homes who are at risk if we don't take action, and people with disabilities who need the benefit of—as do many older Americans need the benefit of—home and community-based services; and, third, Americans who are in communities of color who need the benefit of Medicaid, among other programs that we should be focused on.

Let me start with nursing homes. We know that in the context of nursing homes, the skilled care that is provided there is the highest level of care for an older American or sometimes a person with a disability. We also know that is care that is provided to men and women who have done so much for the country—Americans who have fought our wars, worked in our factories, built the middle class, built America in so many ways and gave us life and love. All that they ask and all their families ask is when they are in a long-term care facility, especially a nursing home, that they are receiving skilled care that is quality care, and in the midst of this crisis, that we are taking every step possible to protect them from the virus and to keep them safe.

Unfortunately, that hasn't happened in America today.

As we speak tonight, more than just a couple of days ago, the number was lower than this, but now it is more than 62,000 Americans who have died in long-term care settings. Most of those are in nursing homes. When you add up the number of residents who contracted the virus and died with the workers who have died, the number is more than 62,000 Americans. That is