

PELOSI and I have been engaged in serious discussions and negotiations with the White House over another round of emergency relief for the American people. Our motivation is simple: Americans are crying out for relief.

Cases, hospitalizations, and deaths continue to climb. The snowball of economic impacts continue to roll downhill. This morning, we learned that another 1.2 million Americans filed for unemployment—far more than at any time during the great recession that began in 2008.

Our two parties don't agree on many things. That is no secret. The Trump administration has bungled this crisis from the very beginning and even now is careening from one self-inflicted crisis to the next. Democrats believe that Congress has a moral obligation to step into the breach to help Americans put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads, to save our economy from a deeper recession and longer recovery, and to fight this disease with all the resources and wherewithal a great nation can bring to bear.

After the Senate Republican majority failed in spectacular fashion to put together a bill even its own Members could support, Democrats have engaged in arduous negotiations with the White House trying to impress upon them the gravity of the situation. We have made some progress this week but not enough. The biggest reason is that Trump and his aides and his party in Congress are not truly awake to what is happening in this country.

The Trump administration and Senate Republicans have badly mauled the body politic, the American economy, and American healthcare. We Democrats believe the patient needs a major operation, while Republicans want to apply a bandaid. And we will not let them just pass the bandaid, go home, and still leave America bleeding. That is the difference right now on so many issues.

Our Republican counterparts refuse to acknowledge that Americans who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own might need some assistance with rent. The Republican leader warns of an epidemic of lawsuits that hasn't materialized. What will materialize soon is an epidemic of evictions unless we extend the moratorium and pass rental assistance. Between 19 and 23 million households—one in five rental households—will be at risk of eviction by the end of September unless we do something, unless our Republican colleagues wake up.

Our Republican counterparts refuse to acknowledge that State, local, and Tribal governments, which the Trump administration abandoned in the early days of this crisis, might need Federal support to prevent teachers, firefighters, busdrivers from being laid off and public services from being slashed at the worst possible time. Leader MCCONNELL just states that States should go bankrupt. That is not acceptable.

Our Republican counterparts refuse to acknowledge that running an election in the middle of a pandemic is going to be difficult; that State election systems are going to need more resources; and our post office must be well-staffed and prepared to manage an election that will see more voting by mail than any before.

Yesterday, the Republican leader scoffed at the idea of extended enhanced unemployment benefits because it would mean that some Americans without work would be paid more than our essential workers. Conveniently, the Republican leader did not mention that Democrats have proposed for months that we give our essential workers additional hazard pay and that he and his party continue to block it.

If our friends on the other side are finally worried about how little many of our essential workers are making as we are, I would hope they will put their money where their mouth is and support our proposal to give them hazard pay.

When it comes to elections and education, food assistance for hungry children, and, mind-bogglingly, when it comes to healthcare, testing, tracing, and Medicaid, our Republican friends continue to pinch pennies during a national emergency.

Again, this is the reason our negotiations with the White House have been so difficult. The President and his aides and his party in Congress are not even awake to the crisis in our country. President Trump doesn't have a plan, doesn't engage in negotiations, and still manages to undercut the negotiations at every turn.

There is no leadership from the White House at a time of great crisis. Historians will look back and say this is one of the greatest crises America has felt, and the White House is nowhere to be found. It has never happened before.

Way back in March, after we passed the CARES Act, the Senate Republican majority made a dangerous gamble. Leader MCCONNELL said he was putting the Senate on "pause" to see what would happen. Senate Republicans swallowed the President's ridiculous fantasy that the disease would just disappear. Hoping they wouldn't have to do anything, the Republican majority put the Senate on ice for 4 long months—4 months. Only yesterday, Leader MCCONNELL admitted that his delay "allowed us to learn the coronavirus didn't mysteriously disappear."

Look, at this late stage, after months of Republican delay, as the country got worse and worse, after Republicans in the Senate failed to generate a proposal that even their own caucus or President could support, Democrats are now in the room—we are the ones in the room trying to negotiate a bill that will meet the country's needs.

While some of my friends on the other side of the aisle are just looking for an outcome, any outcome, so they

can vote on something and go home, we are not going to agree to an inadequate bill that doesn't address the challenges in our country.

We are not going to give up. We are going to keep fighting until we achieve the caliber of legislation the American people, during this time of great crisis, need and deserve. We are going to keep working until we get it done.

I yield the floor.

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. Madam 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. DURBIN. Madam President, the news this morning about the actions taken by Facebook and Twitter in relation to statements made by President Trump is incredible. We now have a decision by these two major sources of social media to draw down and to remove statements made by the President of the United States on the issue of the national health emergency which we currently face.

They believe—and certainly, on its face, it is clear—that these statements by President Trump misrepresented medical fact in terms of the immunity of children to COVID-19 and the state of play in America when it comes to this pandemic.

The numbers 5 and 25 tell a real story. America has roughly 5 percent of the world's population and, sadly, 25 percent of the COVID infections in the world. How could a great and strong nation like ours have reached this point where this medical crisis has reached a point where many parts of America are facing recordbreaking infection levels?

Part of it has to do with the lack of leadership: a President who has refused to acknowledge experts like Dr. Fauci and others, who, when they say things that disappoint him, are banished from appearing on television with him or making public statements in contradiction of his bizarre point of view. We also know, as well, that the President has downplayed, from the start, the threat of this COVID-19. One of the reasons Facebook and Twitter removed his statements is that the President continues to diminish the severity of this crisis.

We know, as well, that he has failed to tell us the truth and has speculated on medical theories that are just pure quackery. Who can forget the President's famous press conference talking about ingesting disinfectants, his theories about ultraviolet lights, and this hydroxychloroquine fantasy that he continues to enjoy telling the American people? We know, as well, that he has failed to take action when it was needed.

Initially, Governors, including my own in the State of Illinois, were desperate for the equipment that they

needed to protect healthcare workers and to save the lives of those who were infected with the coronavirus. At this moment in time, many people are asking me basic questions on my website. One of the questions from a lady this morning said: Why is it that the United Kingdom has a rapid test and we don't in the United States? I wish I could answer that, but I can't.

The fact is, if you are taking a test to see if you are positive for the coronavirus and the results aren't available for 5 days or even 12 days, they are almost pointless. At that point in time, it is just a data point in history, not something that you could rely on in terms of your own conduct.

How do the Republicans in the Senate explain the nonchalance many of them have displayed when it comes to the challenges we face? This is the worst national health crisis we have faced in 100 years. We know that people are dying. Over 150,000 have died already in this country, and we know that number is likely to grow.

Despite that, when it comes to putting money into testing, Democrats have called for a dramatic investment to make that happen, and the Republicans—just \$16 billion for a nation that needs so much more.

When it comes to the economy, I can't understand the position of the Republicans. They refuse to come forward with their own plan to rescue our economy, to help unemployed families, and to put businesses back in business, and they seem to lack a sense of urgency as to the situation we currently face.

The American people take this situation very, very seriously. We have recently done surveys and found that they overwhelmingly believe we still have major challenges ahead, and they start with the coronavirus. Why hasn't this President used the resources of this government to come up with a quick, rapid-results test so that people can learn whether they are positive for coronavirus in a quick fashion? We can't realistically expect to open the economy or open our schools until we have that available across the United States of America. Yet the President doesn't seem to want to take on that responsibility.

For those who believe that we can say to the unemployed "If you would just work a little harder, you would find a job," they ought to face the reality. The reality is we have four unemployed workers in America for every job opening. The reality, as well, is that employers who wish to fill their positions are doing it at a faster pace than at any time. And this notion that if you are receiving an unemployment check you are going to stay home and not go back to work—in the last few months, of the people who have returned to work in America, 70 percent of them were being paid more on unemployment than they were on the jobs that they returned to, but they wanted to get back to work. They believe in

work. They know that unemployment is a temporary help and that they have to get back on their own feet as quickly as possible. Plus, there are benefits to working. One of them is health insurance, and many people returned to work to get back to the health insurance that they particularly think is right for their family.

So why would the Republicans be suggesting a reduction in the weekly benefit by some \$400? They ought to sit down and talk to the people who are receiving these unemployment checks, as I did last Friday in Chicago. Let them tell their stories. What are they spending these unemployment checks for? Overwhelmingly, the basics of life: food, paying utility bills, rent and mortgage payments.

People aren't salting this money away. Almost half of the unemployed in America have exhausted all of their savings. Some of them have resorted to selling some piece of property they own, some goods or articles that might raise enough money to help them pay their bills. It is a desperate situation for the 30 million Americans who are unemployed. I don't understand why the Republicans don't engage with us in addressing this problem directly.

How can we possibly explain that, in the negotiation over the next rescue package for America, we have the President's Chief of Staff; the Secretary of the Treasury; the Speaker of the House, Democrat NANCY PELOSI; CHUCK SCHUMER, the Democratic leader in the Senate; and two empty chairs? Senator MCCONNELL does not participate in this negotiation, nor does Leader MCCARTHY from the Republicans in the House.

They should be there. That is their job. This notion that they can stand off on the sidelines and just criticize things that are being discussed is not productive. America needs more. America needs a better approach when it comes to this.

Another issue that comes up every time I open any conference call to questioning from an audience is our Postal Service. In July, Postmaster General DeJoy eliminated overtime for postal employees even though parcel volumes were up almost 60 percent in June compared to last year. Usually, about 20 percent of all the work by mail handlers, city carriers, and postal drivers is done in overtime.

In the July memo announcing these operational changes, the new Postmaster acknowledged that employees—listen to this quote—"may see mail left behind or mail on the workroom floor or docks . . . which is not typical." Postmaster General DeJoy routinely compares the Postal Service, a 245-year-old government agency that performs a service, to U.S. Steel as an example of the need to adapt to the new market realities. Postmaster DeJoy does not seem to understand that the Postal Service is an essential service provided by the government, not a luxury and certainly not a routine business.

Americans rely on the U.S. Postal Service to deliver needed packages, medications, Social Security checks, and other benefits. Many small businesses would absolutely fold if they couldn't use the U.S. Postal Service and its daily operations, and rural Americans especially know that many for-profit delivery services will not come to their addresses in smalltown America. The Postal Service will be there.

We are less than 100 days from an election where mail-in ballots delivered by the Postal Service will be vital to ensuring people of all political persuasions that they can safely exercise their right to vote while following public health experts' recommendations to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

When contacted to schedule a call with the Postmaster General, his office's response was this: "Currently, he is not taking calls or meetings as he is focusing on understanding the organization." Understanding the organization?

The Heroes Act that passed the House of Representatives 11 weeks ago included \$25 billion in emergency funding to cover revenue losses over the next 2 years. I believe in the Postal Service, and I thank the employees. My own mail carrier in my neighborhood back in Springfield, Greg, works late hours, usually delivers our mail at 7 p.m. He tells me he is delivering a lot of packages now. He said: Senator, I just delivered a package of duct tape to one of your neighbors. I want to make sure I deliver your mail every single day, as promised.

He is a dedicated public servant. You can tell it in his manner and his gait and his attitude. He takes his job very, very seriously, and he does it well, as so many do.

We need to support our Postal Service. This is not something we can afford to skimp on at this moment in American history. I hope the Republicans will join us in believing that the Postal Service is worth an investment today, and I hope that we can include that in anything that we move forward.

There is another provision I would hope to include in any rescue package, and it addresses an issue that we all feel intensely. Across America, many communities routinely face the harsh reality of too few doctors or nurses, dentists, or behavioral health providers. It means delayed healthcare in many communities, gaps in accessing lifesaving services, and, ultimately, worse health outcomes, especially in low-income rural and urban areas.

Our Nation is projected to face a shortage of up to 120,000 doctors within the next 10 years and a shortfall of hundreds of thousands of nurses for each of the next several years. If you ask the question, you will find that many hospitals and clinics in smalltown America resort to contract nurses. These are nurses who are available in an emergency, but they are expensive, sometimes charging two or

three times what a nurse is usually paid at the same place—and that was before the coronavirus rampage across our Nation.

This pandemic has magnified these shortages in our system. In my State of Illinois, Governor Pritzker had to call providers out of retirement from other States to deliver surge care while fourth-year medical students at the University of Illinois at Chicago were graduated early so that they could go to work.

Over the past 6 months, America's healthcare workers have faced incredible strains on the frontlines in our fight against the coronavirus. Hundreds of healthcare workers have, tragically, died from COVID-19, tens of thousands have been infected, and countless more endured trauma and burnout from intense patient care.

The crisis has also compounded alarming health disparities for Black and Latinx Americans, who are three times more likely to get sick and die from COVID-19 than White patients. A lack of minority physicians and health professionals of color contributes to this unconscionable inequity. In 2018, only 4 percent of incoming medical students in Illinois were Black men. A recent study found that there are fewer Black male medical students today than there were in 1978. That is 42 years ago.

The simple economics of American medical education pose a barrier to our health workforce needs. We take our most promising students, put them through years of rigorous education and training, license them after a backbreaking residency on one condition: They have to be prepared to assume a student debt of, on average, more than \$200,000 to be a doctor in America.

The burden of paying off these loans steers some of our best and brightest minds into higher paying specialties and communities, leaving many areas with gaps and vulnerable to the challenges we are facing today.

To address these health workforce challenges and medical disparities and to bolster surge capacity for future emergencies, I have partnered with Senator MARCO RUBIO of Florida. Together, we have introduced Strengthening America's Health Care Readiness Act, immediately restoring our pipeline of doctors, nurses, and other providers. How do we do it? We provide scholarships and loan repayment funding through the National Health Service Corps and Nurse Corps to those who commit to serve in needy areas.

In 27 States, more than 70 percent of inpatient hospital beds are full. One of the major issues with this capacity strain is the lack of providers to actually staff these health units. Our bill would help to surge tens of thousands of clinicians into these communities. To narrow disparities that I mentioned earlier, our legislation would emphasize recruitment from populations historically underrepresented in

healthcare, and our bill would enhance our emergency preparedness by providing loan repayment for clinicians who serve in a reserve capacity—similar to our National Guard—who could be deployed from the private practice to serve in disaster locations.

Representative SCHAKOWSKY—JAN SCHAKOWSKY of Chicago—is our partner in the House. We are pleased to have the support of the American Medical Association, the Association of American Medical Colleges, the National Association of Community Health Centers, and many more.

Senator RUBIO and I are working to include this policy in the next coronavirus relief package. We urge our colleagues to support it.

BELARUS

Madam President, the other day, the Chicago Tribune ran a story with this moving headline:

Her husband jailed, her kids sent away, a 37-year-old ex-teacher is running for president. She's trying to beat "Europe's last dictator."

The story went on to explain the courageous effort of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya to run for the election on August 9 in Belarus for President, where the country's strongman, Alexander Lukashenko, regularly runs sham elections and usually caps them off by jailing anyone who has the temerity, or nerve, to run against him. In fact, he jailed Sviatlana's husband—a popular online commentator—a few months ago. He disqualified or jailed other candidates and harassed and detained protesters and journalists, including those from Radio Free Europe.

I am not surprised by what I read in the Tribune. You see, 10 years ago, I went to Belarus, just after the equally appalling December 2010 Presidential election in which the same dictator, Lukashenko, jailed the opposition candidates. When I arrived there just after the election, I had a meeting I will never forget. It was with the family members of many of these jailed candidates. They were deeply concerned for the safety of their loved ones who had been rounded up by Lukashenko's KGB—and, yes, he still calls his secret police the KGB.

They spoke movingly—these members of the family—about their admiration for their loved ones who had risked so much just to run in an election and lose against Lukashenko. They spoke of the fear of what would happen at the hands of Lukashenko's henchmen.

I later told their stories on the floor of the Senate. Shortly thereafter, the Senate passed a resolution that I introduced with Senators McCain, Lieberman, and others that said that the announced result of this election in Belarus was neither credible nor sustainable since they jailed the political candidates who opposed Lukashenko. Eventually, all of them were released, but it took time.

Here we go again—witnessing the same brutality and deprivation for the

most basic demographic freedoms on the European continent. Clearly, Lukashenko knows he cannot win a fair election, so he turns to the usual autocrats' playbook—harassing and jailing opposition, rigging and discrediting the electoral process, and unleashing brutality on anyone who resisted.

I am here to say to Mr. Lukashenko, no one in the West is fooled. That is why I am pleased to have introduced a resolution with Senators Rubio, Cardin, and others that calls for the release of those disgracefully jailed during the Belarus election period. It calls for basic international election norms to be adhered to, including the allowing of international and local election observers and for the peaceful exercise of basic democratic rights.

I want to thank my colleagues who joined me on this measure. I believe this matter has been passed by live consent. I thank my colleagues for giving me the opportunity to let them know about this violation of democratic values in Belarus.

I yield the floor.

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. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

HEALS ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, every day we can see that this public health crisis is also an economic crisis. During the shutdowns, some employers shuttered completely, and others were forced to lay off workers. Tens of millions of jobs were saved thanks to the Paycheck Protection Program and other CARES Act provisions, but millions of other Americans lost their jobs and remain unemployed.

While job numbers have improved since the more dire days of March and April, there are still many Americans facing unemployment. Talks are continuing to determine how best to modify and extend a Federal supplement to State unemployment insurance programs, but those talks are going miserably slowly.

These State programs and the extra Federal aid have been important safety nets for folks who have lost their income, but they are only a piece of what we can and should do and what a bill before the U.S. Senate lays out. It is called the HEALS Act, put forth by our leader.

As the leader said yesterday, we know that these programs shouldn't pay someone more to stay home than essential workers are making by working hard. We also know that most people would prefer to have a reliable job and avoid layoff entirely. That is why Republicans, as part of the HEALS Act, have put forward several additional proposals to help already unemployed Americans and prevent others