

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

from getting laid off in the first place. That is why these talks ought to speed up, so we can get some of these other things in place as well as the unemployment issues that we are talking about.

We extend and significantly expand the employee retention tax credit that was included in the CARES Act so that employers can keep more people on the payroll instead of laying them off. It supports businesses that hire more workers as the economy continues to improve.

We expand the work opportunity tax credit to support employers who are helping those currently receiving unemployment insurance find a new, safe, and steady job. Bringing in new employees and expanding the workforce can be complicated, especially in times of a pandemic. Both employers and employees want to maintain safe working environments. It is important for employers to have the resources to keep their workplaces clean and their employees protected. Republicans then proposed a new tax credit for these expenses, like additional cleaning expenses, personal protective gear, and even office reconfigurations that keep employees and customers safe.

The HEALS Act also provides for another round of economic impact payments. An average family of four would receive \$3,400 to help cover expenses. These payments will help any family or any individual who has had to deal with layoffs and are in addition to any unemployment benefits they may receive.

These tax provisions serve as a complement to the unemployment insurance program that is being negotiated right now, with no evidence of progress. There ought to be progress. These programs do set up an extra layer of protection for workers and those already out of work.

Together, these proposals provide a responsible approach to help employers reopen businesses so that employees can safely and effectively return to work to continue fueling the Nation's economic recovery.

Why can't we get these important issues resolved for the American people, particularly for the American people who are hurting? And they are hurting because we were faced with a virus pandemic. As a result of the virus pandemic, the government, for the first time in 240 years, shut down the economy of the United States, and then immediately, in the middle of March, after that happened, we made a point of passing the CARES Act to open up the economy, to give people confidence that what the government did that was bad for the economy and for people and hurting people, unemployed—that we were going to take a lead in getting them back. And we are still in this situation. We shouldn't be debating as long as we are to get these issues taken care of.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

(The remarks of Ms. SMITH pertaining to the introduction of S. 4466 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Ms. SMITH. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 285

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, if you are a person just watching politics back home, you probably see a common theme: talking. No matter the topic, people in DC like to talk but not much gets done.

There is one topic that is especially guilty of this, and that is immigration. Democrat or Republican, conservative or liberal, we know our immigration system is broken. That is an easy statement to make, but nothing ever changes, and we need to start getting things done.

In Iowa, we learned this in a very tragic way. On January 31, 2016, the same day as her college graduation, Sarah Root was killed by an illegal immigrant named Eswin Mejia. He was drag racing with a blood alcohol level more than three times the legal limit.

Despite repeated requests by local law enforcement, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement failed to detain Mejia because of a nonsensical policy that allows ICE to use discretion when determining whether to detain a criminal alien charged with a violent offense. He posted bond; he was released; and he disappeared. Still, more than 4 years later, he remains a fugitive, denying Sarah's loved ones any sense of justice for closure.

As a mother, I cannot fathom the grief her family and friends continue to feel after such a devastating loss. Sarah had her whole future ahead of her, but her opportunity to make her mark on the world was tragically cut short. Yet even in death, she touched the lives of others, saving six different individuals through organ donation.

Sadly, what happened to Sarah is not an isolated incident. We have seen this story play out time and again in the more than 4 years since Sarah's killing—innocent lives taken by criminals who enter the United States illegally through a porous border, but nothing ever changes.

Although nothing can bring Sarah back to her family, we can ensure that ICE never makes the same mistake again.

Today, I rise to call upon my Senate colleagues to end this senseless madness, to do something and stop another tragedy like this from happening with a simple and clean fix. I am asking the

Senate to join 26 of their colleagues and pass my bill, S. 285, Sarah's Law.

Sarah's Law is simple. It requires that ICE take custody of a person who is in the country illegally if they are charged with a crime that seriously injures another person. It also mandates a better victim notification system that lets victims and their families know what happened to their loved ones.

Sarah's Law is about as common-sense a reform as there is. It recognizes the simple fact that all criminals should be held accountable for their actions and not simply be allowed to slip back into the shadows. If Sarah's Law is passed, people who are in this country illegally who murder another person would be prioritized for deportation if released. Who could be opposed to this?

Here is a bit of good news. President Trump implemented parts of Sarah's Law through an Executive order in 2017, including directing the Secretary of Homeland Security to prioritize the removal of violent criminals. Despite provisions of Sarah's Law being put into place by President Trump's order, it is critical that the Senate codify these enforcement priorities so they cannot be removed by future administrations.

This may seem crazy to those watching at home, but criminal aliens charged with homicide were allowed to escape detention in previous administrations. No family should ever have to endure such a tragedy, especially one that could have been prevented.

I recognize that the immigration debate has become a political football, but justice for victims and their families is not a game. This bill isn't about the southern border or the wall or visa numbers or the larger immigration debate at all. This bill is about changing the system for the better and ensuring that families have the promise of justice. I intend to fulfill that promise to Sarah's loving parents, Michelle Root and Scott Root—the promise that I will do everything I can to ensure that not one more parent has to go through what the Roots have faced—the loss of both their daughter and the promise of justice.

I yield the floor to my colleague from Iowa, Senator GRASSLEY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am here to join my colleague from Iowa, Senator ERNST, in this effort.

We ought to get this unanimous consent request accomplished, and we ought to get this bill passed because it is unjustified that we don't get the cooperation that it takes to keep a person who has committed a felony from the jurisdiction of the courts of the United States.

I joined Senator ERNST in reintroducing Sarah's Law on January 31 of last year, and that was the third anniversary of Sarah Root's death. Sarah was from Council Bluffs, IA, and as my