

just Alaska but for the whole country, New York, North Carolina. And I am certainly hopeful that my good friend from New York and North Carolina can work this out.

I will certainly lend my efforts, my staff's efforts, because we shouldn't have a regional fight blocking what will benefit everybody, particularly when fishermen right now are really hurting. They are one of the sectors of the U.S. economy that have been hammered by this pandemic. This kind of legislation, although it is not going to solve all their problems, shows that we are working for them.

We will live to fight another day here soon. I hope that we are able to pass my legislation, commonsense legislation—the American Fisheries Advisory Committee Act—which will help every fisherman in America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

CORONAVIRUS

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the people doing the truly essential work in our country, and it isn't the Fortune 500 CEO, hedge fund manager, or investment banker. It is the home healthcare worker providing essential care to homebound seniors or the disabled. It is the delivery truckdriver working a 12-hour shift, bringing food and medicine and other critical supplies to people who need it. It is a grocery store clerk, working a checkout line or stocking shelves to keep up with the skyrocketing demand. It is the migrant agricultural worker picking berries or standing on an assembly line at a meatpacking plant. It is the housekeeper or custodian working longer hours to clean our hotels, offices, and other public places. It is the childcare worker coming in every day to care for other children, while being unable to afford care for their own. And it is the busdriver who, despite operating on a tightly enclosed space, transports hundreds of people to work every day.

These people, and others like them doing essential work, are literally risking their lives every day for the rest of us, and they are earning much deserved recognition during this pandemic. But let me be clear. These workers have always been essential, even if our economic system has not valued the jobs they do or treated them with the respect they deserve.

Valuing and respecting essential workers is about more than calling them heroes when that is the popular thing to do. It is about recognizing and calling out how these workers have been treated in our economy. And it is about doing something to fix it.

For too long, people doing the work now deemed essential during the pandemic have been forced to work for low wages that are either at or just above minimum wage, have jobs that offer no

paid family or medical leave, have little access to affordable childcare, have jobs that offer no employer-sponsored healthcare coverage, and have been forced to work in dangerous conditions.

Coping with these inequities in normal times was challenging enough for our essential workers, but the pandemic, exacerbated by Donald Trump's failure in leadership, is creating new problems, and it is making existing problems worse. The administration's failure to implement emergency safety standards is creating unsafe workplaces for essential workers.

Meanwhile, it is pushing to provide businesses immunity from coronavirus-related lawsuits. If they are successful, employers would have even less incentive to provide safe workplaces for employees or to protect customers and consumers.

Its failure to fully and effectively use the Defense Production Act means the most vulnerable workers continue to face shortages of personal protective equipment—putting them at greater risk for contacting the coronavirus. And its failure to implement a national testing and contact tracing program means that essential workers face testing delays and may never be notified if a coworker has tested positive for COVID-19.

As Donald Trump refuses to act responsibly to keep our essential workers safe, this has fallen to States, local governments, and the private sector.

In Hawaii, we are fortunate to have responsive State and county governments, strong unions, and one of the lowest uninsured rates in the country, thanks to Hawaii's Prepaid Healthcare Act. These advantages, however, have not shielded Hawaii's essential workers from the dangers of the pandemic.

Let me share a few of their stories. A few weeks ago, I spoke to a group of transit workers who operate The Bus in Honolulu. A simple shower curtain separates the drivers from passengers boarding their buses. Many riders do not wear masks, putting the driver and other passengers at risk for contracting the virus.

Drivers are also facing threats and physical violence when they ask riders to put on a mask. One passenger even spat upon a busdriver who asked the person to observe social distancing.

Many of the busdrivers live in multigenerational families. They spoke about the fear that they will contract the virus on the job and bring it home. Three bus operators have already tested positive, including one just this week.

Transit workers in other industries have also experienced challenges related to coronavirus safety. A group of Hawaii flight attendants I recently spoke with are unable to be tested regularly due to supply shortages, despite showing up to work every day. They also spoke about their daily challenges convincing passengers to wear masks.

Essential workers are also providing childcare during this pandemic so that

other essential workers can continue to do their job. Katie, a nanny on Oahu, whom I heard from recently, has provided childcare for essential workers and military families on Oahu during the pandemic. Katie lives with her mom, who has been battling stage IV cancer for nearly 3 years. She is rightly concerned about the possibility she might bring this virus home with her from work.

In April, Katie received a scare when one of the families she worked with told her they might have been exposed. Katie is like so many essential workers in Hawaii and across the country who live with uncertainty about their jobs and families every day.

More firefighters, grocery store workers, bank tellers, postal workers, community health center employees, and paramedics tested positive for COVID-19 this week. They certainly will not be the last.

Something as simple as showing up to work every day shouldn't be an act of bravery, but that is exactly what we are expecting from our essential workers every day. If they can show up and do their job, Congress can certainly step up and do its job.

It is why Senate Democrats have been fighting so hard to pass the Heroes Act—to bring this to the floor, to debate the Heroes Act. The Heroes Act includes a number of strong provisions that will support essential workers during this pandemic. It establishes a \$200 billion fund to provide up to \$10,000 of hazard pay to each essential worker. It requires the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to issue an emergency temporary standard within 7 days of enactment. It prevents employers from retaliating against workers who report workplace safety issues. It adds another \$75 billion for COVID-19 testing, contact tracing, and isolation measures. It also provides every American access to free treatment for COVID-19. It provides access to free and affordable childcare options for essential workers who are expected to show up to their jobs regardless of whether they have someone to look after their children, and it provides permanent paid sick and family leave so that people don't have to choose between their jobs and the health of their families.

The Heroes Act is a bold, worker- and family-centric bill. We should have passed it months ago. Instead, the bill has been sitting on the majority leader's desk for almost 3 months now. He called it "taking a pause."

The people suffering in our country didn't have the luxury of taking a pause 3 months ago, and they certainly don't have the luxury to take a pause now. As Senators, we are able to telework. We can attend hearings remotely. We can stay socially distant. Maybe this is one reason some Republican Senators don't have sufficient empathy or the sense of urgency to pass the next COVID relief bill that would actually help the busdriver who

can't drive a bus from home, the UPS driver who can't deliver packages from home, the healthcare aide who can't administer medications to seniors from home, the agriculture worker who can't pick coffee beans from home, and the postal worker who can't deliver the mail from home.

Millions of people are suffering in our country today. They should be able to count on the Senate to step up and take action to help them. At this very moment, negotiators are deciding whom we will help and who will be left behind. Democrats are fighting to protect essential workers and help the unemployed.

Republicans are fighting to protect businesses from their own negligence and allow corporate executives—corporate executives—to write off their business lunches. These very different priorities reflect very different values and point out what is at stake in these negotiations. Protecting and assisting essential workers is a value. It isn't enough to simply tell them “thank you very much” and call them heroes. Actions speak louder than words. It is time for us to act. It is long past time for us to act.

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. LANKFORD. 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— S. RES. 458

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, thousands of radical Islamists rallied on Friday in Northwestern Pakistan in support of a man who earlier this week walked into a courtroom in the city of Peshawar and gunned down a U.S. citizen on trial for blasphemy. That is how the New York Times started its article on this issue last week. The American, Tahir Naseem, died of his wounds before he could be taken to the hospital while the gunman was taken into custody.

The U.S. State Department said Naseem was standing trial after being lured to Pakistan from his home in Illinois. He was entrapped by the country's controversial blasphemy law, which international rights groups have sought to have repealed. The blasphemy law calls for the death penalty for anyone found guilty of insulting Islam, but, in Pakistan, the mere allegation of blasphemy can cause mobs to riot and vigilantes to kill those who have been accused. Pakistani officials said Naseem was charged with blasphemy after he declared himself to be Islam's prophet. That was the accusation that was laid against him.

At the rally in Peshawar, which was in support of the person who murdered

the American citizen, the demonstrators carried signs that praised the murderer for the killing and called for his immediate release from jail. They said he killed Naseem because the government was too slow in prosecuting blasphemy cases.

Last December—8 months ago—I filed a resolution to speak with a unified voice on what I considered to be a nonpartisan issue—a simple statement from this Congress condemning blasphemy laws across the world wherever they exist. We are a nation that stands for the ability of every individual to choose any faith, to change one's faith, or for one to have no faith at all. That is a basic human right. Yet, according to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, 84 countries—more than one-third of the world's countries—have a blasphemy law on the books, including in Pakistan, where an American citizen was murdered last week under an accusation of blasphemy.

This resolution that I filed 8 months ago with the Foreign Affairs Committee has already moved in the House. The House Foreign Affairs Committee worked through the process of this resolution in March of this year and passed it unanimously. It was sponsored by Democrat JAMIE RASKIN and had the support of multiple Democrats on the Foreign Affairs Committee. It was overwhelmingly moved while this resolution—a mere eight pages—has sat, unmoved, for 8 months.

The Vice Chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, who was appointed by Speaker PELOSI, has said that USCIRF—that is this organization—has noted countless times that Pakistan's blasphemy law inflames interreligious tensions and too often leads to violence. He urges the State Department to enter into a binding agreement with the Pakistani Government that includes the repeal of blasphemy provisions in the Pakistan Penal Code. I could not agree more.

The Trump administration has spoken out on this, and the House of Representatives has spoken out on this. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, a nonpartisan group, has spoken out on this. We in the Senate should also speak out on it, and the time to speak out on it is when we have just had an American citizen murdered overseas because of these laws. It is prime time to move this. This is something that, I believe, should be passed by unanimous consent. How could we oppose the movement of something like this?

Now, I have heard that, possibly, we should slow this whole thing down because resolutions like this should have a fulsome committee process. They should be heard and marked up and read and reread, and 8 months is not enough time to review them. The problem with that is that, last week, a Democratic resolution on elections in Belarus was filed. It was never heard by the Committee on Foreign Rela-

tions here in the Senate. Yet it was discharged, placed on the hotline yesterday morning, and cleared last night.

So, for Democratic bills, they don't have to go through the committee process, apparently. They can just move through on their own because the Republicans have not opposed those. The Republicans take the time to read these on their own—to go through the resolutions and make decisions on them. That resolution had a majority of Democratic sponsors, but it also had Republican sponsors.

This resolution is sponsored by CHRIS COONS and me. We also consider it to be a nonpartisan issue. Something that has sat in the committee for 8 months, waiting, surely can move when something that was filed last week and never heard by the Committee on Foreign Relations could move on the hotline in a single day.

So I bring this resolution because I think we should speak out on this as the House has already spoken out on it, as the State Department has already spoken out on it, as the Trump administration has already spoken out on it, and as USCIRF has already spoken out on it. Why wouldn't 100 Senators speak out on this blasphemy resolution today?

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be discharged from further consideration and that the Senate now proceed to S. Res. 458. I further ask the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, in reserving the right to object, first of all, I note that the customary path for bills and resolutions is for them to be considered by their committees of jurisdiction, marked up through regular process, and reported out to the Senate floor.

I understand that many Members of this body have noble causes and good ideas that fall under the jurisdiction of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Unfortunately, the chairman has only held one real legislative markup this entire year—in May. That one meeting, which included multiple pieces of substantive, bipartisan efforts, was ended prematurely before many pieces of vital legislation could be acted upon and without having a vote on even a single amendment. While the minority was strongly supportive of more legislative activity, the chairman pulled down another legislative markup, without any explanation, in the first week of July and yet another one, just this week, without any explanation.

Regardless of those facts, I can tell you that I don't believe the majority, which has the convening power—and, lately, when it does list a committee