

greater way to celebrate a centennial than for one of our colleagues who is a woman to have a chance to break a glass ceiling that still has existed, whereby no woman in this country has ever been a Vice President or President.

We are so good at so much in this country. In fact, we are so good at many things with regard to women in this country, but we are sort of uniquely bad in electing women to higher office. In Congress right now, 24 percent of Congress is women, and that ranks us 76th in the world in terms of our percentage of women in a national legislative body. We are tied with Afghanistan, but we trail Iraq and Mexico and many other nations.

So regardless of how it all works out between now and November, and regardless of our own political affiliations, this is a good day, I believe, for the country and a good day for the Senate when 1 of the 100 is recognized in such a way and introduced to the American public with an opportunity to serve at a significant level.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, returning to the latest coronavirus emergency aid package—currently, the package doesn't exist. There have been no bipartisan negotiations on it since last Friday. That is disappointing to all of us who are here, ready and willing to negotiate and vote for a strong bipartisan relief package.

The House of Representatives passed its strong package back on May 15, now nearly 3 months ago. Today is August 12. There was some hope that maybe COVID-19 cases were ticking downward. At the end of May, there was some hope that maybe the economic devastation was reducing, but COVID cases did not tick down over the summer as some had hoped. In fact, they have ticked up in many parts of the country, and the Senate has not taken any votes on the House bill or indeed on any bill. That is disappointing.

More than that, it is disappointing for millions of Americans who are in the midst of hard times right now. They are worried about their own health or the health of their loved ones. They are worried about whether they will receive unemployment benefits or how they will make rent or mortgage or how their children will get an education. We know in this body we can transcend politics as usual to address the coronavirus because we did so in March by passing the CARES Act, even as Members of the body, including me, were getting coronavirus as we were having those negotiations. Even as staffers were getting it, even as Senate spouses were getting it, we stayed at the table and found a bipartisan bill that helped us deal with the challenge for a few critical months.

But we are here debating this again because the magnitude of the crisis is not a crisis of a few months. No, it is

such that the aid provided thus far is running out while Americans' hardships continue. That is why it is essential that we not give up and that we stay here as long as it takes to come through for the American people.

I have heard some in Congress and, indeed, some in this body say about more Federal aid for the coronavirus response say: I just don't see the need for it. Indeed, the majority leader has candidly acknowledged that approximately 20 Members of the Republican caucus will not vote for more aid. Well, I want to make the case first that there is need for it, and the need is undeniable because the circumstances that people are living in are dire.

Last Friday, we found out that the unemployment rate in July was 10.2 percent, which is a number that is higher than at any point during the 2008, 2009 recession. The President called these "Great Jobs Numbers!" But I don't see anything great about 1 in 10 Americans who are in the workforce not being able to find work.

More than 30 million Americans are collecting unemployment benefits, and last week their benefit checks were cut by more than 50 percent. In Virginia, just as an example, unemployed workers are now receiving a maximum—a maximum—of \$378 a week. That is not enough to pay rent, let alone rent, groceries, childcare, electric bills, and many other costs that families face every day.

Because they lost their jobs and other income, millions of Americans are now at risk of eviction or foreclosure. The \$600 Federal unemployment benefit and Federal eviction moratorium were holding this off for many, but with those relief measures expiring, families are unable to continue paying their August or September bills.

One estimate is that 12 million evictions will be filed by October, and 12 million is essentially the combined population of about 6 or 7 States. There could be that many evictions filed by October. Just in Virginia there was a State-imposed eviction moratorium that lapsed for 5 weeks, and just in those 5 weeks, nearly 10,000 evictions were filed, potentially forcing people out of their homes.

Three in ten Virginia renters surveyed a couple weeks ago said that they were uncertain how they could pay August rent, and it was more than half of all African-American renters surveyed who said that was the case. Housing instability is difficult at any point in time, but imagine losing your housing during a pandemic. What are people supposed to do during a pandemic? The advice is, if you can stay home and don't go out and don't be with others, that will help keep your family safe. But how can you quarantine at home if you are in danger of losing your home?

Like the majority leader, who quoted from constituents in Kentucky, I am hearing from Virginia constituents every day.

From Allison in Henrico:

I have now exhausted my savings account and have rent due, groceries to buy and bills to pay. I am now desperate for immediate help.

From Rhys in Mechanicsville:

I have three children, one with significant special needs. My wife cannot work now due to covid-19 and the school closures. I am behind on numerous bills, including mortgage, utility, and other bills.

From Dominique in Fairfax:

My rent is now 3 months behind as well as my other bills and I am receiving letters [threatening] evictions and services being turned off.

Unfortunately, these examples are now not aberrations, but they are common. We all know people—we all know people—who are at risk of losing their home or being hungry or losing healthcare or their savings being depleted because of the absence of work.

So we have to make sure that people are not removed from their homes in the middle of a health crisis. We need to make sure they can continue to pay bills until the health crisis is sufficiently addressed and the economy gets back to where it was.

Schools and colleges across the country are trying to reopen right now. It doesn't matter if it is in person, online, or a hybrid model, we want them to reopen safely right now, and this is the time to provide schools with the resources they need to deliver quality instruction, not punish them for following public health guidance and data.

Working families are struggling to find childcare options. This is critical to reopening the economy. Childcare providers themselves are struggling. Virginia, according to national surveys, is at risk of losing 45 percent of its licensed childcare capacity; that is, 130,000 childcare slots in Virginia without the additional support they would need to help them stay viable. If we lose childcare capacity, that will have a significant consequence in terms of the ability of people to go back to work so that the economy can start to grow again.

On the nutrition front, we are facing an unprecedented rise in food insecurity as thousands of Virginians and millions of Americans have newly enrolled in the SNAP program. The Brookings Institute estimates that nearly 14 million children are living in food-insecure households—14 million children. That is nearly six times the number of children who were food insecure just as recently as 2018, and nearly three times as many who were food insecure at the peak of the great recession in 2008 and 2009.

I bet all of my colleagues have experienced this because we are all out in our States talking to folks. Food banks have been slammed with demand they have never witnessed before, and it has been harder for food banks to get grocery access because grocery store shelves have also been ravaged because people are going to grocery stores while restaurants are closed.

What do food banks do with increasing demand and fewer donations from grocery stores? The Capital Area Food Bank purchased 100 semitruck loads of food in April, which is triple what the food bank purchased in all of 2019. Just in 1 month, they tripled their purchases compared to 2019. The Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, which serves the western part of Virginia, saw the number of new families seeking food assistance quadruple from last year, just as of May.

Americans are in a dire state. Their basic needs are at stake. We Democrats want to address that hardship. We did address that hardship in the Heroes Act, which we passed in mid-May. We want to keep people from losing their jobs, being evicted, and going hungry.

I know there are many Republicans who share these same goals, but the proposals that have been on the table in this body are simply inadequate. There are areas that we agree on. Aid to small business is important. Broadband is important because as people telecommute or get telehealth or get educational content online, they have to have access to broadband. Testing is important. Childcare is important to open the economy. These are important priorities I believe we can come together on, but the Republican plan that the Senate GOP introduced in this body, which the majority leader again acknowledges that at least 20 Members of the caucus will not support, has large cuts to unemployment aid, no State and local government aid to prevent layoffs of first responders and vital programs and services.

The majority leader characterized State and local government agencies as a “slush fund.” I was a mayor. I was a Governor. I know what is happening to State and local budgets, and when the revenues to State and local governments decline, there is about one place they can go, and the one place they can go is furloughs, waivers, salary cuts, and cutting personnel.

The overwhelming majority of first responders in this country work for State and local governments. It is never a good time to cut police, fire, EMT, ambulance, healthcare workers—never a good time—but the worst time to do it is in the midst of a global health pandemic. It is not a slush fund; it is a necessity that the communities where people live and work have basic services to get through this challenge.

The Republican proposal has inadequate education aid, no aid for the eviction tsunami that is facing us to provide rent or mortgage assistance, no nutrition aid in the SNAP program or otherwise to help the 14 million kids who, today, are living in food-insecure households.

The Republican proposal did include a comprehensive liability shield to prevent anyone from suing if their employer’s negligence causes a virus outbreak. I thought it was interesting that so often on the other side of the aisle in this body, when this prospective bill

has been talked about, that has been in the front of the line as if the worry about lawsuits is the biggest concern that the American people have right now. No one in Virginia, when they tell me about their concerns, is putting worries about lawsuits up at the top of the list. We are talking about food, hunger, healthcare, and housing.

The liability shield proposal in the GOP goes even further than protecting against liability; it wipes out States’ abilities to pass safety regulations. Virginia became the first State in the country to do an emergency temporary standard to provide guidance to public places and employers about safety standards that they could use on the job. It is good to get advice about safety standards because most businesses don’t have an NIH or CDC or a health department, so advice about standards that should be followed in workplaces is a great idea. Virginia became the first State in the country to do that. The Republican liability shield would not only give people liability protections, but it would take away the ability of the States to do what Virginia did to try to create lifesaving protections for workers and customers. That is unacceptable—unacceptable.

Democrats offered to meet halfway. We knew when the Heroes Act passed—I mean, we have been around the block a few times. It wasn’t as if Senate Republicans were just going to say: That is a good idea. We will just vote for it.

That is not the way things work. The Senate Republicans would have their proposal just as the House Democrats have their proposal. The two proposals have dramatically different pricetags. The Senate proposal, together with the White House, came in the neighborhood of \$1 trillion and the House proposal came in the neighborhood of \$3 trillion.

There is nothing magic about these numbers, but it is important to understand that willingness to compromise is something Americans expect of us right now. Democrats said: OK, you have a package that is worth \$1 trillion, and we have a package that is worth \$3 trillion. Let’s split the difference. We will have to decide how to compose the \$2 trillion package, but let’s split the difference. The White House refused. The White House got an offer to meet halfway and said: That is not what we are going to do. We insist on the skinny version.

The skinny version is inadequate to meet the challenge of the moment. This is the worst economic contraction in the 145 years that we have had measured quarterly economic growth in this country. This is the worst pandemic that the United States has dealt with since the Spanish flu of 1917 and 1918. A narrow bill isn’t enough.

If you don’t like the Democratic bill because you think the pricetag is too big, how about meeting us halfway? That is the way negotiations so often happen. After the White House rejected the notion of meeting halfway, the President issued Executive orders that he claims break through the logjam.

Like many things the President does, though, an analysis of the Executive orders demonstrates there is little substance there. The President proposed a deferred payroll tax collection. That doesn’t actually give Americans more money; it just gives them a larger tax bill next year. Because it is a deferral, the President cannot lift the obligation off either the employers or the employees. It is also very confusing to employers to suggest: OK, you should defer, but it is likely to start back up again. That is very, very hard for employers, especially small employers, to figure out.

We all know that the payroll tax is the main pillar of Social Security, as every generation pays into the system while they are working so they can enjoy retirement with dignity in their senior years. President Trump has said that this isn’t just a deferral, but if he has his way and is reelected, he is going to permanently cancel the tax. That would undermine retirement security for all future generations.

The Executive order with respect to housing did actually nothing. It just ordered agencies to look into delaying evictions and foreclosures, but no assistance and no dollars for those facing eviction or for those facing foreclosures. Look into “can you delay them.”

Governors are already saying that the Executive order dealing with unemployment aid is unworkable. It would be very difficult for them to reconfigure their UI systems to do what the President has asked them to do and asked them to help pay for in the Executive order. Even if States could figure out how to launch a completely new system, the benefits would run out in 5 weeks.

On the surface, the Executive order with respect to student loan relief looks like an extension, but if you dig into it, that is not what it is. The order still leaves out 8 million Federal student loan borrowers, and it doesn’t even mention whether borrowers’ credit ratings and credit scores will be protected if they take advantage of what is offered to them under the EO.

What about the millions of students who are struggling to financially find a way to go back to college, or the schools that are trying to find a way to still make sure students get an education when they reopen, or the working families that are struggling to find childcare? School boards and superintendents around the country have come with a proposal saying that to open schools safely would cost about \$175 billion, and that is what Democrats have put on the table. That is not addressed at all in the Executive orders, even as we stand at the threshold of schools reopening.

In sum, the President’s Executive orders address virtually none of the hardships, solve virtually none of the hardships, and lift virtually none of the burdens that Americans are suffering through right now. We are having hard

times. We are having hard times, and it is our duty to try to address that hardship.

Democrats are willing to compromise. When we say, “Hey, we have a plan but we will meet you halfway in your plan,” and the White House says, “No,” you know, what are we supposed to do? What are we supposed to do? A skinny version isn’t sufficient for the magnitude of the crisis.

The Senate Republican proposal has some elements that we support, but it leaves so many others unaddressed that it is not adequate. The Republican White House has rejected compromise. President Trump’s Executive orders are partly illegal, partly unworkable, and completely insufficient. It doesn’t have to be this way because there are many areas on which we can find agreement.

I know many in this body are hearing from their home States’ Governors, mayors, local governments, colleges and universities, school boards and housing authorities, food banks, hospitals, and the chambers of commerce. You are hearing the same thing that I am hearing from Virginians.

So, as I conclude, it doesn’t have to be this way. We can put together a good bipartisan deal, but it can’t be a “White House my way or the highway.” It has to be a willingness to meet and find compromise between a Democratic proposal and a proposal that is acceptable to at least some on the GOP side and the White House.

Any large compromise in a divided government is bound to be imperfect. I am reminded of a quote from FDR during the Depression years. You never really had to use quotes from the Depression because the magnitude of the Depression was different than what I have experienced during most of my life, but now quotes from the Depression, I think, bear some revisiting. Here is what FDR said as the administration and Congress, at the time, were doing everything they could to figure out a way to help out needy Americans: “Better the occasional faults of a government that lives in a spirit of charity than the consistent omissions of a government frozen in the ice of its own indifference.”

By now, everybody knows somebody who has gotten COVID-19 or somebody who has gotten sick or even died or somebody who has lost a job or somebody who is worried about rent or food. We all know those people, and many of us have experienced this in our own families. Are we going to help or are we going to be frozen in the ice of our own indifference? Let’s surprise the Senate. Let’s work together and get this done.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). The Senator from Nevada.

CORONAVIRUS

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, you know, as I sit and listen to my colleague from Virginia, I can’t agree

more. Now is the time, really, for us to come together to do what the Senate traditionally does best, and that is working on the best interests of the people across this country who are struggling right now.

Compromise is not a bad word. It is time for us to get in a room and really do the job that the American public expects us to do, and that is looking out for their best interests at a time when we have a healthcare pandemic. Now, keep in mind that this is a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic—once in a lifetime. So that requires us to come together and really focus on how we help Americans across this country who are struggling right now. They shouldn’t be penalized.

We have asked them to stay home and shelter in place because we are trying to address how we do the research that is necessary for a vaccine. Hopefully, one day, we will have that vaccine. We need to ramp up the testing that is needed so everybody can feel safe and comfortable knowing whether they have this virus or not or the antibody, but we are not there yet because more work needs to be done, particularly by this Congress.

The American public has heard us, and they are sheltering in place, they are staying home, and they have shuttered their businesses. Now, more than ever, this country needs the Senate to act.

The House has done its job 2 months ago. They worked a comprehensive package, and I say “comprehensive” because we can’t just pick and choose winners and losers here. This isn’t what this is about. This is about making sure we are bringing relief and helping those across this country. Everybody is impacted. We have promised them: If you do what we say and we help stem the spread of this virus, we are going to have your backs, and we are going to take care of you.

I will say that we have failed at that. This administration has failed. We have failed at that promise. I know when we all go to our offices or we go home to our States, we are hearing from our constituents. We get emails, we get calls, and we get letters. I know you all feel the same as I do, and we read them and we listen to them. I don’t know of one State in this country right now where somebody is not suffering from this pandemic who needs our help.

I know that is why I am here, because we all took the oath. We said we are going to be here to work in the best interests of our States and this country and to make sure that those individuals across this country who pay our salaries—those taxpayers—expect us to do our jobs and work. And that is what I am asking for right now.

You know, I have been to the floor of the Senate this week to talk about the struggles that I see in my State. We all get letters, and I do want to focus today on one. There are so many, and that is why a comprehensive package is

necessary. Right now, I would love to talk to you about what I am seeing in my home State when it comes to our seniors and those who are in need right now with funding to help nursing homes.

Let me just start with letters because I think this is how it starts with all of us—calls into our offices and letters coming from our constituents. There are two calls that I received. One of them was from a daughter who called in for her father, who is in a VA nursing home in Boulder City, NV, and because he isn’t showing symptoms, he isn’t getting tested. With so many cases there, how is this possible? Where are the tests? This is a daughter who is concerned for her father, knowing that if we just get people tested, there is that comfort in knowing whether or not you have this virus and whether you should be quarantined or how we protect you, particularly those in nursing homes.

Then, another call I received was from a mother. She is also a certified nursing assistant at a nursing home, and she is telling me that many there quit because they don’t have the proper PPE. They want to work, but they don’t want to expose themselves. So what are we doing right now to address all of these needs?

And, listen, there is so much. It is overwhelming. I know it. That is why we were sent here for the hard decisions, not the easy ones, to make sure we are all working in the best interests of the people in our States. I know you all feel the same way.

I have to tell you this. There are thousands of Nevadans that know the anxiety that comes because there is a spouse, a parent, or a grandparent in a nursing home, and they are unable to visit with them or hug their loved ones for fear of giving COVID-19. You have seen it. You have heard it, and I have heard it. Too many loved ones have lost their loved ones because of this virus, and they were not able to be there.

Do you know who was there with them in the nursing home? Those incredible heroes on the frontlines, who are sacrificing their own health to be with them, for those who passed away because of COVID-19. There are so many factors that raise a coronavirus risk for nursing home residents. The majority of the residents, as we all know, are seniors. Many have underlying conditions. They live in closed quarters, and they share common spaces. And we also know this: Residents and staff of these facilities shouldn’t be an afterthought. They are a core part of our communities and our healthcare system. They are the elders, and they are the keepers of our stories. We have to do more to protect them.

We need to protect the workers in these homes, too, many of whom belong to communities of color and who are struggling to provide care to a population with unique needs.

The reason why I bring this up is because there is legislation out there to