



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 166

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2020

No. 154

Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, our hope for years to come, empower our lawmakers to live with integrity. Lord, inspire them to permit their words to be matched by their deeds. As they strive for this ethical congruence, strengthen them to examine their hearts with the goal of seeking to glorify You. Living by Your precepts, may they aspire to be faithful to the noble calling of serving You and country.

We pray in Your majestic Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN).

The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 1 minute in morning business.

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

IOWA 99 COUNTY MEETINGS

Mr. GRASSLEY. In August, I held 49 county meetings as part of my annual 99-county set of meetings in Iowa. At every meeting, the format is the same: Iowans set the agenda.

Challenges from the pandemic and storm recovery were among their top concerns. To explain the storm recovery—about once every 10 years there is a big wind storm called a derecho going

across someplace in the country. That path was about 150 miles long in Iowa and 34 miles wide, and it destroyed the crops for this year in that area. Other issues came up as well. Biofuels, unemployment insurance, the farm economy, access to childcare and school reopenings were frequent points of discussion. I had the chance of visiting in 15 different locations with about that many school superintendents, and they were very optimistic about the coming school year.

This is my 40th year holding my 99 county meetings. I started this tradition when I first was elected to the Senate, so Iowans in every corner of the State would know I care about their opinions.

It is an honor to serve Iowans in the U.S. Senate and uphold my end of representative government. I look forward to more Q&As across the State this year and starting my 41st year of 99 county meetings in 2021.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Our Nation has spent the last 6 months fighting the medical, economic, and social effects of this pandemic. The Senate's historic rescue package from back in March, the CARES Act, has gone a long way to help American workers and families endure these incredible challenges.

It delivered the extra Federal unemployment benefits that helped laid-off workers make ends meet. It created the Paycheck Protection Program, which has helped millions of small businesses keep their lights on and keep employees on the payroll; it sent resources to the frontlines of the healthcare fight; and it invested bil-

lions in the race for treatments and for vaccines.

But this relief was never going to last forever. Today, enhanced Federal unemployment benefits are only still available because of action by President Trump. The Paycheck Protection Program has closed to new applications, and the funds it has delivered are being exhausted. This last month has brought a whole new challenge: how to get teachers and students safely into a new school year. These are the challenges that people I represent are facing every single day. Kentuckians and all Americans know this unprecedented crisis is not through with us yet, and so they expect that Congress isn't through helping yet either.

Senate Republicans have been fighting for months to deliver another round of COVID-19 relief. In July, we proposed the HEALS Act, a sweeping package totaling more than \$1 trillion that would have led right to bipartisan talks, but Speaker PELOSI and the Democratic leader said no.

They said they would block our trillion dollars for kids, jobs, and healthcare unless we doubled the cost to accommodate an endless wish list of non-COVID-related liberal priorities such as tax cuts for blue-State millionaires.

So Republicans tried another way to break the logjam. In August, we proposed narrowing discussions to some of the most urgent, most bipartisan subjects that seemed especially ripe for agreement, but Speaker PELOSI and the Democratic leader blocked that as well. Now they claimed it was too "piecemeal"—too piecemeal, they said—to get any help out the door until Democrats and Republicans had settled every disagreement on every front.

The Democratic leaders have spent months playing these "Goldilocks" games. They have complained about every single thing we put forward but produced nothing of their own with any chance whatsoever of becoming law.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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Meanwhile, after all their blustering that Congress should never do anything “piecemeal,” Speaker PELOSI came rushing back to Washington to pass the most piecemeal bill you could possibly imagine—legislation that solely helped out the U.S. Postal Service and did nothing at all for American families. When Republicans tried to help American workers keep their jobs, Speaker PELOSI and Leader SCHUMER said it was “piecemeal,” but when House Democrats’ fears about mail-in voting made them think maybe their own jobs would be in jeopardy, that argument suddenly disappeared.

That is the score. Democrats are all for piecemeal bills when they concern their own reelections, but when it comes to bipartisan aid for kids, jobs, and schools, Democrats say it is either their entire wish list—all of it—or nobody gets a dime.

Well, Republicans see this quite differently. We don’t think this crisis cares about partisan politics. We think people are hurting and Congress should do its job. We want to agree where a bipartisan agreement is possible, get more help out the door, and then keep arguing over the rest later.

That is how you legislate. That is how you make law. You find agreement where agreement is possible and keep arguing over the rest later.

So Republicans are making yet another overture. Today, we are releasing a targeted proposal that focuses on several of the most urgent aspects of this crisis—issues where bipartisanship should be especially possible. I am talking about policies such as extending the additional Federal unemployment benefit for jobless workers; providing a second round of the job-saving Paycheck Protection Program for the hardest hit small businesses to prevent layoffs; sending more than \$100 billion to help K-12 schools and universities open safely and educate our kids; dedicating billions more for testing, contact tracing, treatments, and vaccines; on-shoring manufacturing capacity for critical medical supplies and rebuilding our national stockpile; giving all kinds of families more choice and flexibility to navigate education and childcare during the crisis; providing legal protections for schools, churches, charities, nonprofits, and employers so they can reopen; providing more help for the Postal Service. Our proposal would do all this and more.

Now, here is what our bill is not. It is not a sweeping, multitrillion-dollar plan to rebuild the entire country in Republicans’ image. It does not even contain every single relief policy that Republicans themselves think would help in the short term. I am confident the Democrats would feel the same way.

But the American people don’t need us to keep arguing over what might be perfect. They need us to actually make law.

So Democratic leaders are perfectly free to come out here and keep up their playbook from these past months. Just

blast away—blast away—in bad faith, call names, and complain about the infinite number of things this proposal does not do. Maybe they will bring back their “Goldilocks” act and say our multihundred-billion-dollar proposal is too small or too skinny, even though Democrats just passed a piecemeal bill for the Postal Service that ignored everything else—a piecemeal bill for the Postal Service that ignored everything else.

Democrats can do all that if they want to. I understand they have already been criticizing this bill today before they even read it, before it had even been put out. More of this would just reinforce that only one side of the aisle seems to want any bipartisan outcome at all.

It is easy to tell in Washington whether somebody’s end goal is political posturing or getting an outcome. One way or another, what Democrats do will be revealing.

The Senate is going to vote on this targeted proposal. We are going to get the stonewalling of Democratic leaders out from behind closed doors and put this to a vote out here on the floor. It is going to happen this week. Senators will not be voting on whether this targeted package satisfies every one of their legislative hopes and dreams. That is not what we will do in this Chamber. We vote on whether to make laws, whether to forge a compromise, whether to do a lot of good for the country and keep arguing over the remaining differences later.

A few weeks ago, more than 100 House Democrats spoke out publicly. They asked Speaker PELOSI to stop stonewalling and let the House vote on targeted COVID relief short of—short of—her entire wish list. The Speaker ignored them—ignored her rank and file, just like her piecemeal postal bill ignored American families.

Over here I will make sure our Democratic colleagues get a chance to walk the walk. Every Senator who has said they want a bipartisan outcome for the country will have a chance to vote for everyone to see. Senators will vote this week, and the American people will be watching.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I understand there are three bills at the desk due for a second reading en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bills by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3) to establish a fair price negotiation program, protect the Medicare program from excessive price increases, and establish an out-of-pocket maximum for Medicare part D enrollees, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 51) to provide for the admission of the State of Washington, D.C. into the Union.

A bill (H.R. 1425) to amend the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to pro-

vide for a Improve Health Insurance Affordability Fund to provide for certain reinsurance payments to lower premiums in the individual health insurance market.

Mr. McCONNELL. In order to place the bills on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar on the next legislative day en bloc.

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

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read nomination of Brett H. Ludwig, of Wisconsin, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Wisconsin.

The Senator from Vermont.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, as we all know, we are in the middle of a public health crisis. The American people are hurting, from every State in our country. Nearly 190,000 people—our fellow citizens—have died. Millions have lost their jobs, and they are struggling to make ends meet. People are being evicted from their homes, and they are struggling to feed their families.

The virus is still not under control. We know there is a need for another emergency funding bill. The need to address the COVID crisis is clear. This is something, actually, we could have done in July if we had been willing to actually do our job and vote on the appropriations bills after the House of Representatives had already shown the way, but 4 weeks ago, the Trump administration and the Senate Republican leadership walked away from the negotiating table. Democrats had offered a compromise. Republicans said “My way or the highway” and left town. They just walked away from the Capitol when we had all these things that needed to be done.