

\$10-billion SBA program to provide Federal grants to live-venue operators so that when, God willing, these live stages can reopen safely, these venues can come back bigger and better than ever. Those grants would go for 6 months, giving the venues enough time and breathing room to recuperate, and, God willing, if there is a vaccine in 6 months, they will be able, God willing, to open again.

One of the most difficult parts of this pandemic has been the effect on American society, arts, and culture. These are the things we live for: sports, comedy, theater, and music. When the day finally comes that the pandemic is behind us, we will want to celebrate once again with friends and family at these venues now in danger of closing.

I hope we can come together in the future to pass the Save Our Stages Act and save this essential part of American culture.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

#### CORONAVIRUS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I want to thank my colleague from New York. Many of the things he has said on the floor this morning reflect what I have seen back in Illinois in the last 5 or 6 weeks that we have been home, people I have spoken to who are genuinely suffering because of the coronavirus pandemic and the state of the American economy.

There was a moment here on the floor of the Senate earlier this year when the gravity of the situation brought us together. It was March 26—almost 6 months ago—when we voted 96 to 0 to pass the CARES Act, the \$3 trillion effort to try to keep America's economy alive and breathing during this pandemic and the impact it has had on all of our lives. That is \$3 trillion—money for the unemployed, substantial sums for those who are about to see their lives transformed overnight. Laid off and fired from jobs that may never return, they tried to keep their families together with mortgage payments, rent payments, automobile loans, the credit responsibilities they faced, and just putting food on the table.

It was a wrenching, disquieting situation for so many of those families, and we said that we should give them \$600 a week—\$600 a week—in Federal assistance to get through this period. What we did not only helped those families, but it helped the economy. The money those families received was spent almost instantaneously. That is understandable. They are struggling to survive.

But we knew that the program we enacted on March 26 had a termination date of July 31. We hoped that by then the pandemic would be behind us, our economy would be recovering, and we wouldn't need any further relief. We were wrong—terribly wrong. We still face this coronavirus in a way that we never expected 6 months ago. It is still

a challenge—a terrible challenge that has claimed over 180,000 American lives to date.

I could speak for a few minutes here about our response as a nation to this pandemic and talk about the lack of leadership from the very top in Washington when it came to dealing with this public health crisis, but suffice it to say for the moment that two numbers tell the story. The United States has 4 percent of the world's population. Sadly, we have 20 percent of the COVID-19 deaths in the world.

The United States has not responded as expected. Innocent people have died. The situation was chaotic in the White House. The leadership we needed wasn't there.

Where are we today? Here we are in the second week of September. Where are we now as we reflect on the situation? Many of us believe we still face a grievous, serious challenge and need to respond accordingly, but others see it differently.

Senator MCCONNELL, the leader on the Republican side, is going to offer a proposal tomorrow that is a fraction—a fraction—of what was offered on March 26 to deal with this crisis. Many people, obviously on the Republican side, feel that America is headed in the right direction and therefore we don't need to make a substantial investment in people, in businesses, and in the health and resources of this country.

For those who come to the floor and argue that America is headed in the right direction, three-fourths of the American people disagree with them. You see, in a survey taken just 2 weeks ago, 75 percent of the American people said America is headed in the wrong direction. So when the Republicans come up with a modest—almost immodest—proposal that they are going to bring to the floor tomorrow, they disagree with three-fourths of the American people.

Many of them obviously believe that we don't have to make a massive investment in helping families who are fighting unemployment, helping businesses to survive. They must believe that the worst is behind us. Well, it turns out that two out of three of the American people disagree with them. That is right—two out of three in a recent survey in America said the worst is still ahead. Wrong direction, 75 percent; the worst is still ahead, two-thirds.

What is the response on the Republican side? First, it was silence. You see, it has been almost 4 months now since the House of Representatives, under the Democratic leadership of Speaker PELOSI, passed the Heroes Act—a \$3 trillion investment to make sure that we stood by the families who were unemployed, to make sure that we put money into the hands of businesses that needed to survive, to make certain that we had adequate testing across the United States, to give money to schools so that they could weather this crisis as they readjust to

the challenges they face, and to put money in the hands of hospitals and providers that in some cases are just hanging by a thread because of the state of the economy and this medical challenge. That is what Speaker PELOSI did almost 4 months ago.

In the meantime, in that 4-month period, the Republican leader of the Senate has done nothing—nothing. He didn't bring a bill to the floor. He didn't pass a bill and call for a conference committee. In fact, during this entire period of time, the Republican leader in the Senate has refused to personally attend the negotiations between the White House and congressional leaders. Both he and House Republican Leader MCCARTHY have boycotted any negotiation sessions. Any persuasion they want to bring to the issue, they bring to the floor of the Senate in speeches, not behind closed doors, where compromise is reached and where, in fact, we were successful last March, passing the CARES Act.

So now we face a challenge as a nation. Which party will stand up for America to weather this crisis and come out strong? The Democrats have a proposal. We have had it for 4 months.

The Republicans, tomorrow, will offer a skinny—some say emaciated—version of that proposal. They want to take the assistance to unemployed Americans—800,000 of them in my home State, millions across the Nation—and cut it in half. Did Senator MCCONNELL get a news flash that I missed that mortgage payments will be cut in half as of tomorrow, that rental payments will be cut in half as of tomorrow, that car payments will be cut in half, that the cost of food will be cut in half? Not at all.

We know these families will face the same obligations and, under the Republican proposal, receive a fraction of what they were given and have received between March and the end of July. That is unfair to these families.

I know what is happening in food banks across Illinois, and I am sure it is the same case in Kentucky, perhaps in Georgia, perhaps in New York. People are flooding these food banks asking for help. Some of them are embarrassed by their situation. They shouldn't be, but they are. Many people who used to volunteer at these same food banks are now standing in line, looking at their shoes, hoping to take enough food home to make it through a week.

That is the reality, but it is not the reality that is reflected in the Senate action this week. What we have from Senator MCCONNELL is a small effort at a time when America needs a substantial effort to deal with not only the situation facing our economy but also the coronavirus.

I am troubled, too, because I represent a State that is so diverse, with the great city of Chicago but all the way downstate—my roots—smalltown America, rural America. Many of the

hospitals and healthcare providers in those areas are literally struggling to survive. They are looking to Washington for a helping hand. Do you know what it means to smalltown America to lose a hospital? It is devastating, not only from the viewpoint of healthcare and emergency care, which is unavailable on a timely basis in many places, but also because it is hard to keep a business or attract a business if you don't have quality healthcare nearby. Many of those hospitals are struggling to keep the lights on and survive, and they will not make it unless we step up.

So what is included in the Republican proposal when it comes to these healthcare providers, to increasing Medicaid assistance to them, for example? Virtually nothing. I can't understand this. I have to believe that the Republican leadership representing States with small towns and rural populations are hearing exactly what I am hearing in downstate Illinois. Yet, when it comes to a proposal on the floor, they are doing nothing—nothing.

Let me just add, in closing here, if we don't take testing seriously in America, we cannot be serious about reopening the economy, reopening schools, from colleges to kindergartens. That is the reality, to be able to test in an effective, cost-effective way people who are positive for this virus so that they are notified and stop from circulating among those who are, at that point, healthy.

The testing investment by this bill on the Republican side doesn't meet the challenge at all. They can't call for opening the economy on one hand and ignore the responsibility for testing on another.

So where do we go from here? Well, tomorrow is a symbolic, partisan vote on the Republican side when it should be much more. After it is finished and we know the outcome, perhaps then the Republican leader in the Senate will be willing to sit down and negotiate. Will he be willing to occupy that empty chair in that negotiating room with the White House and Democratic congressional leaders? Will he be willing to sit down and actually work on a compromise comparable to the CARES Act that passed here in March, earlier this year?

That is what it takes—not a speech on the floor, not a press release, not a symbolic vote but something much more significant: the willingness to sit down and acknowledge the obvious; that America is heading in the wrong direction, and we should be heading in the right direction.

Many people worry that the worst is yet to come. We want them to be more hopeful and optimistic because we care, and if both parties do care to help the unemployed, to help businesses, to make sure that our healthcare providers have the resources that they need, then we can start to address this coronavirus, this pandemic, with the leadership that has been so lacking in

the months that we have faced it this year.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip is recognized.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, starting this week and tomorrow, there will be a vote on a coronavirus relief bill, and it is a bill that is targeted to the areas that really need it, it is fiscally responsible, and it is rooted in reality. In other words, it is a realistic approach to dealing with the coronavirus challenges that we, as a nation, are facing.

The Democratic leader and the Democratic assistant leader have been down here just now talking about the Democratic bill, a bill which passed the House of Representatives and a bill that was \$3½ trillion in terms of its pricetag and a bill that was filled with goodies for special-interest groups and lots of leftwing priorities, many of which have nothing to do at all with the coronavirus.

In fact, \$3½ trillion is a number that I think was pulled out of thin air. I have no idea how they came up with it. I don't think it was based on any feedback or input that they got from States or businesses around the country. I think it was let's just make up as many things as we can and let's just throw a lot of money out there and see what it does.

Well, unfortunately, I think people have come to the realization—people around the country, at least—that every dollar that we spend now is a borrowed dollar. So the \$3½ trillion that was allocated by the House Democrats and which has been supported just in the last few minutes here by the Democratic leader and the Democratic whip is borrowed money. It should come as no surprise to anybody in this country that our country already is deeply in debt. We added about \$3 trillion earlier this year when we passed the CARES package—at the time, something that was needed. We needed to be big and bold and move quickly, which we did.

We have a much better sense now, I think, about this disease, what the needs are, and we ought to be targeting our assistance to those areas of greatest need, whether it is small businesses that need assistance, that haven't been able to reopen; whether it is in the area of healthcare, our hospitals and nursing homes, the provider community; or whether it is supporting the efforts that are being made to come up with vaccines and therapeutics, the money that is going into testing. Those are all things I think that there was pretty broad agreement on at the time. We still believe those are things that are essential, in addition to supporting our schools as they try to safely reopen.

There are a number of priorities out there that I do think we have learned, gotten more information about, and determined where the dollars made the most difference, what could be changed and modified in these programs to

make them more workable, and that is what has led to the discussion we are having now and the bill that we will vote on tomorrow.

What the Democrats, in their bill—the \$3½ trillion bill—did was they just decided that money is no object and evidently without, again, much consideration about how those dollars are spent or in any way making sure that they are targeted to the right area, to those areas of greatest need, just basically decided to kind of throw caution to the wind and throw \$3½ trillion out there at the economy.

The ironic thing about it, in many respects, is that, without having feedback or input, for example, from State and local governments about how much they needed, they put another \$1 trillion into that bill—\$1 trillion for State and local governments—at a time when very little of the \$150 billion that we had already done in direct assistance, not to mention the additional assistance to States, to education, to colleges and universities, elementary and secondary education, healthcare providers—a lot of additional dollars have gone through the States, to the tune of about a half a trillion dollars already, much of which hasn't been spent. In fact, of the \$150 billion in direct assistance that went out to State and local governments—the latest numbers I had as recently as about a week ago—only about a quarter of that, about 25 percent of that money had been spent. Yet they were asking for another trillion dollars, every single dollar of which is borrowed.

It was just reported recently that, in 2021, the United States will exceed 100 percent debt to GDP. That puts us in the elite and rare company of Italy, Greece, Japan, countries around the world that have gotten dramatically overextended when it comes to their sovereign debt. When you get to the debt to GDP which is in excess of 100 percent, that is pretty dangerous territory.

Everybody says we are the best economy in the world, we are the world's reserve currency, and people are going to continue to want to invest here in the United States. Well, at some point there are consequences. The chickens do come home to roost. You cannot continue to borrow without eventual consequence. At some point, interest rates will start to normalize, at which time these countries that invest in the United States are going to demand a higher return. Interest rates—when they go up, it means the amount we have to pay to borrow money goes up, and when our interest gets north of \$1 trillion, it will exceed every other item in our budget, including the amount that we spend for national security.

So that is the other part of the debate which the other side never references; that is, what are we doing to the long-term future of this country, to our children and grandchildren, all of whom are going to be responsible for this debt? We are essentially doing everything we do right now—putting it

on the credit card and handing the bill to our children and grandchildren—which is to say that the Republicans believe that we ought to do coronavirus relief and help those who need it. I am going to talk in just a moment about all the things that this bill does to help those who really need the help, but it ought to be targeted. It ought to be with some thought toward what is the greatest need? where can we make the biggest difference? where can we help the people who are really struggling and really hurting as a result of the virus, the pandemic? And we ought to do it in a fiscally responsible way. We ought to do it in a realistic way. We ought to have a bill that is, frankly, rooted in reality.

The reason I say that the Democratic bill isn't rooted in reality is because of many of the things that it contained. In fact, there were more mentions of the word “cannabis” in the Democratic bill than there were mentions of the word “jobs”—more mentions of the word “cannabis,” a synonym for marijuana, than mentions of the word “jobs.”

So if you think about that, the 58 mentions in the Democratic \$3½ trillion bill had to do, for example, with diversity training. This was a study that was requested—I shouldn't say “diversity training” but a diversity study in the access to financing for people who are in the marijuana business. That was something that was determined a priority and funded in the Democratic-passed bill.

Now, that is just one of many examples of why that bill wasn't taken seriously by anyone. When I say “anyone,” I am talking about the New York Times. The New York Times called it a messaging document and not a viable piece of legislation. The New York Times called it a messaging document and not a viable piece of legislation. National Public Radio said that it was a wish list—a Democratic wish list—of favored policies. POLITICO called it a long wish list of Democratic policies. Nobody—nobody took the Democratic bill seriously. When you can't get the New York Times to speak favorably about a Democratic coronavirus relief bill, it tells me that it was completely out of step and out of touch with what is really needed in this country and, certainly, by the people in this country who do want to see us respond but respond in a way—again, as I said—that is targeted and is fiscally responsible and doesn't throw any kind of fiscal caution to the wind, that just throws money out there at a lot of favored pet causes and ideological agenda items on the Democratic wish list. That is essentially what that bill did.

So as we decided to put together a bill, we listened carefully. We listened to small businesses. We listened to healthcare providers. We listened to schools, to school administrators. We listened to those folks who are impacted on a daily basis by the effects of this pandemic and what is really need-

ed, where are those greatest needs, where can we make the biggest difference.

This is, again, the focus of the Republican bill that we will be voting on tomorrow, which, contrary to the assertions that were made by the Democratic leader, does include a lot of bipartisan policy and bipartisan cooperation. Many of the provisions in the bill are provisions that share Democratic cosponsorship. In fact, I would point out that the changes we made to the PPP program—the PPP program, which is an acronym for the Paycheck Protection Program, is one of the most successful of all the programs in the CARES Act that passed earlier this year. It was a very bipartisan effort shared with people like MARCO RUBIO and SUSAN COLLINS on our side and BEN CARDIN and JEANNE SHAHEEN on the Democratic side and others involved in shaping that program, making it effective. Subsequent to that, changes made it work even better, and this will include some changes that we think will make it work even better.

There are some in here that I, frankly, was very supportive of because they will help people who, under the last Paycheck Protection Program, didn't receive help because, for one reason or another, they were excluded from the qualifications to make them eligible for it.

It makes changes in the Paycheck Protection Program, many of which—again, this is a bipartisan program—will be bipartisan in nature. There were a number of things that the leader mentioned over here this morning earlier when he was on the floor in which he talked about some of the provisions that Senator ALEXANDER had added. There are things in that space that, again, share bipartisan support. So if you look at this bill, in many respects the Democrats are also saying that we need to do more to help our schools open safely, and this legislation does that. There is significant funding in here that actually helps out—makes sure that our schools, our administrators, our school boards, our students, our parents are assisted in a way that would see that our schools open safely and get our children back to where they can be learning again at the fastest rate possible.

Those are, again, some of the priorities that were in this legislation. I would add, because I think it is really worthwhile noting, that one of the provisions in this bill does take dollars from the CARES Act that have not been spent and, frankly, may not be spent and repurposes them so that the cost of this particular piece of legislation is reduced—something, again, that I think is important. I think it is important to the American people and it is important to our kids and grandkids as we look at the pricetags we have been talking about—the \$3 trillion that was done earlier this year, and what we might do here—that we do it in a way that is fiscally responsible, with con-

sideration and an eye toward ensuring that the taxpayers are getting the best return on their dollars and that we are being good stewards of the American tax dollars and spending in a way that makes sense and doesn't just throw money out there, which, again, is what I would argue the \$3.5 trillion bill proposed by the House Democrats did—a bill which, again, was roundly denounced not just by Republicans or conservatives but by entities like the New York Times.

I want to speak very briefly about what is happening out there—why I think this bill and this vote is important and why I believe it addresses the real needs, based on the input that we have received from the people out there who have been adversely impacted by this.

The good news is we are hearing continually improving numbers on the economy—as recently as last Friday. The economy added 1.4 million jobs in August, and the unemployment rate fell again to 8.4 percent.

Let me just be clear: 8.4 percent is not where we want to be. But it is a tremendous improvement from where we were just 4 months ago, near the beginning of the pandemic when the unemployment rate was at 14.7 percent. It is very encouraging to see the economy rebounding so quickly.

The last time America went through a really tough time economically—during the first few years of the Obama-Biden administration—unemployment stayed high for years. In fact, during the Obama-Biden administration, America went through 2 solid years of unemployment that was above 9 percent.

It has been great to see the economy rebounding at a rapid pace. Again, we are still a long way from where we need to be and where we want to be; 8.4 percent is not an acceptable unemployment rate. But we are definitely on the right track.

One of the reasons our economy is rebounding quickly is that the economy was thriving before COVID came along. Republican tax reform and pro-growth policies had driven unemployment below 4 percent and created jobs and opportunities for millions of Americans. Having the economy in a healthy position pre-COVID laid the groundwork for a strong recovery. The policies we put in place during the early years in the pandemic to help businesses—particularly small businesses—survive the pandemic and keep workers on the payroll have gone a long way toward helping our economy rebound.

Republicans are committed to building on those policies, but as everyone knows, Democrats have so far blocked our efforts. Despite weeks of negotiating efforts from Republicans, Democrats refused to budge from their demands for a giant bill that would spend an irresponsible amount of taxpayer money and include a bunch of measures with no relation to the coronavirus crisis.

This week, Republicans are trying again. We have introduced a targeted bill focused on a few key coronavirus priorities—like helping the hardest hit small businesses, getting kids and college students back to school, and providing additional healthcare resources to fight the virus.

As I mentioned earlier, the Paycheck Protection Program, a program Congress passed as part of the CARES Act back in March, has played a key role in helping small businesses survive the pandemic.

The legislation we have introduced would authorize a second round of forgivable Paycheck Protection Program loans for the hardest hit small businesses but would also simplify the loan forgiveness process for small businesses with Paycheck Protection Program loans of \$150,000 or less. Again, I would point out that this program, these changes, share bipartisan support.

The virus has highlighted how much we rely on our Nation's farmers and ranchers, and I am pleased our legislation includes an additional \$20 billion in funding to allow the Department of Agriculture to continue to assist ag producers—again, a bipartisan priority.

Our legislation would also provide for an additional \$300 per week—over and above unemployment benefits—for those who have lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic.

Our bill contains another important measure to help keep our recovery going and to protect jobs, and that is liability protection.

No matter how many precautions schools, hospitals, and businesses take, there is no way—no way—for them to completely eliminate all risk of employees, students, or customers contracting the virus. But that doesn't matter to the army of trial lawyers itching to levy lawsuits against even the most careful schools and businesses. I don't need to tell anybody that saddling businesses large and small with a bunch of frivolous lawsuits could seriously hamstring our economic recovery.

There is no question that schools and businesses should be liable for gross negligence or for intentional misconduct. But businesses and schools that are taking every reasonable precaution to protect employees and students should not have to worry about facing lawsuits for virus transmission that they could not have prevented.

In addition to providing schools with liability protections, our bill focuses on providing schools with the resources they need to get kids and teachers back in classrooms safely. Our bill would help expand the educational options that parents have for their children. And it would provide increased funding for childcare during this crisis so that parents who are trying to get back to work have a safe place to send their kids.

Finally, our bill would provide more money for coronavirus testing and tracing and for the development of the

therapies and vaccines we need to defeat this virus. And it would focus on building up State and national stockpiles of the medical resources needed for public health emergencies like the coronavirus.

I would like to think that Democrats would work with us to get a version of our legislation passed this week. While this bill may not address every current or future coronavirus need, it would go a long way toward helping with our most pressing needs—supporting jobs, getting kids and teachers back to school, and ensuring that we have the medical resources necessary to fight the virus.

Unfortunately, it has become very clear that Democrats are more interested in keeping the coronavirus as a political issue than in actually fighting the virus. If Democrats were serious about coronavirus relief, they would be willing to negotiate with Republicans to arrive at a bill that both sides could agree to and that could actually pass Congress. But they have made it very clear that reasonable negotiations are off the table. Instead, they are content to see Americans suffer or our economic recovery slow in the hopes that they will be able to use the coronavirus as a political issue in the November elections.

It is disappointing, but it is not going to stop Republicans from continuing to try to pass coronavirus relief legislation. The American people are depending on us, and we are going to do everything we can not to let them down.

I hope that at least some Democrats will decide that they should join us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, over the last several months, Texans have found new and creative ways to connect with one another while following the necessary COVID-19 precautions—things like drive-through birthday parties, live-streamed weddings, virtual family reunions, and socially distanced barbecues. Life looks a lot different today than it did at the start of the year, but despite the challenges we face, we know it is unrealistic to hit the pause button until the pandemic subsides.

While COVID-19 continues to be ever present in our daily lives, folks across my State are safely adapting their routines, and that certainly has been my objective in the Senate. Over the past few months, I, like many of my colleagues—maybe all of my colleagues—have largely replaced in-person conversations with virtual ones, through more than 150 separate calls with groups across the State of Texas. These virtual conversations continued over the month of August, along with a number of socially distanced events complete with all of the CDC precautions. Close communication with my constituents has always been important, and the COVID pandemic has made these conversations even more critical.

During August, I spent time hearing from my constituents, learning about their challenges and what they need in the way of additional help. I donned my mask—like we all have—to safely meet with city leaders, teachers, healthcare heroes, food bank workers, and others across the State. I continued to join telephone and video calls with Texans whose routines and livelihoods have been disrupted by the pandemic.

It actually was an exhilarating opportunity to get out from behind my computer screen and to share information about the coronavirus relief bills that we have passed thus far but to learn also, just as significantly, where those bills were working and where more needed to be done. As the Senate prepares to vote on a targeted relief bill tomorrow, these discussions could not have been more timely.

I also hosted recently four telephone townhalls with constituents across Texas. This is amazing technology, as the Presiding Officer knows, where you can reach out to a quarter of a million people just in an hour-long phone call and give them a chance to express their views or ask questions.

I heard from parents who are concerned about the start of the school year; small business owners who are trying to stay afloat, not knowing when all of this will end; and a woman in rural Texas who is worried that if the U.S. Postal Service goes under, she will not be able to receive her medication in the mail.

This is a difficult time for many of our neighbors, and I was glad to share the information about the resources we provided and to answer questions about what Texans might be able to expect in the next relief bill.

One of the most commonly asked questions was about unemployment insurance. Since March, more than 3.4 million Texans have filed for unemployment compensation, and many were able to take advantage of the extra \$600 a week in Federal benefits provided by the CARES Act. But that extra funding expired at the end of July, leaving many Texans who were still unable to return to work without the income they need to support their families.

Despite our repeated efforts, Congress has been unable and unwilling to come up with an agreement on unemployment benefits before the month of August. As a gap-filler, the President issued an Executive order to provide an extra \$300 a week in benefits, which Texans have received. This is good news for those who came to rely on these bolstered benefits, but, unfortunately, it doesn't help them with the same level of certainty that congressional legislation would provide. The next relief bill must provide those who are still without a way to earn a paycheck the additional benefits they need to replace their income.

It is important that we agree to an amount or a formula that doesn't

hinder our economic recovery or perversely incentivize people not to go back to work safely. Over the last month, I have heard from a number of employers who had trouble rehiring workers because in some cases their workers were earning more with the additional \$600 benefit than they would from working. Well, it just doesn't make any sense to incentivize people not to go back to work when they can safely do so. We need to strike a delicate balance that gives them the resources they need to support their family without incentivizing them to stay home.

As businesses have reopened and employees returned to work, Texas has made serious progress in getting more folks back on the payroll. The State unemployment rate has steadily declined from a peak of 13.5 percent to 8 percent in July. Obviously, that is still way too high and a far cry from the 3.5 percent we saw pre-COVID. If we are going to keep working and moving in the right direction, we need to have our workers return to work when that becomes an option. Obviously it goes without saying that they would be able to safely return.

Of course, it is not enough to just give people the resources they need to support their families; we also need to ensure they have jobs to return to. That is why the Paycheck Protection Program has been so vital and has saved countless jobs since it was established in March through the CARES Act. So far, Congress has invested \$670 billion in this job-saving program, and I am glad to say that Texas has received more than \$41 billion across more than 417,000 individual loans. It has literally been a lifesaver for many of these small businesses. I hope the next relief bill will provide an opportunity for the hardest hit businesses to receive a second PPP loan and save even more jobs and small businesses in communities not just across my State but across the United States.

Our State also has a vibrant arts and culture scene, and some of the hardest hit businesses are live-event venues. These were actually some of the first to close when the pandemic hit, and they will be the last to reopen. Unlike restaurants or retailers, which were able to switch to curbside or pickup delivery, event venues don't offer a service that can be tailored to meet the CDC guidelines.

The experience of a concert at the Lowbrow Palace in El Paso or a trip to hear the symphony at the Meyerson in Dallas isn't the same through a computer screen. That leaves no opportunity for live venue operators, promoters, producers, and talent representatives to organize events and no chance for security guards, ticket takers, bartenders, or cleanup crews to earn a paycheck.

These venues are not only a special part of our culture and our communities, they are also major employers and fuel our economic engine. Pro-

viding relief for these venues is an important way to protect our local economies, jobs, and beloved cultural institutions. That is why I introduced the Save our Stages Act with Senator KLOBUCHAR, our colleague from Minnesota. It would establish a \$10 billion grant program to give independent venues and their employees the funding they need to survive this pandemic. We are not talking about huge, publicly traded, multinational corporations here. In order to be eligible, recipients must have fewer than 500 employees and can't be publicly traded. They can use the money to cover payroll and benefits, as well as rent, utilities, and other expenses to stay afloat. As the Senate continues to work on our next coronavirus relief bill, I hope the Save Our Stages provision will be included.

Our economy in Texas, like the rest of the country, is moving in a more positive direction. We want to keep it this way. We need to do everything we can to ensure that once the pandemic is contained, our cultural institutions, our businesses, and our jobs that we rely on will be ready to bounce back. I appreciate the countless Texans who shared with me their feedback and ideas on how Congress can do more to support our State and our country through this crisis. I am going to do my part to keep fighting to enact these ideas into law and give Texans the support they deserve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Ludwig nomination?

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 91, nays 5, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 159 Ex.]

YEAS—91

Alexander	Casey	Fischer
Baldwin	Cassidy	Gardner
Barrasso	Collins	Gillibrand
Bennet	Coons	Graham
Blackburn	Cornyn	Grassley
Blumenthal	Cortez Masto	Hassan
Blunt	Cotton	Hawley
Booker	Cramer	Heinrich
Boozman	Crapo	Hoeven
Braun	Cruz	Hyde-Smith
Brown	Daines	Inhofe
Burr	Duckworth	Johnson
Cantwell	Durbin	Jones
Capito	Enzi	Kaine
Cardin	Ernst	Kennedy
Carper	Feinstein	King

Lankford	Peters	Sinema
Leahy	Portman	Smith
Lee	Reed	Sullivan
Loeffler	Risch	Tester
Manchin	Roberts	Thune
McConnell	Romney	Tillis
McSally	Rosen	Toomey
Menendez	Rounds	Udall
Merkley	Rubio	Van Hollen
Moran	Sasse	Warner
Murkowski	Schumer	Whitehouse
Murphy	Scott (FL)	Wicker
Murray	Scott (SC)	Young
Paul	Shaheen	
Perdue	Shelby	

NAYS—5

Hirono	Schatz	Wyden
Markey	Warren	

NOT VOTING—4

Harris	Sanders
Klobuchar	Stabenow

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

### CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Christy Criswell Wiegand, of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Pennsylvania.

Mitch McConnell, Joni Ernst, John Boozman, James E. Risch, Mike Rounds, Roger F. Wicker, Mike Crapo, Mitt Romney, John Barrasso, Shelley Moore Capito, Pat Roberts, Thom Tillis, Cindy Hyde-Smith, David Perdue, Lindsey Graham, Kevin Cramer, Tim Scott.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Christy Criswell Wiegand, of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Pennsylvania, shall be brought to a close.

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 80, nays 16, as follows: