

that bill. And I am glad we do, but that is it. End of story. The rest of the time, what do we spend our days doing? Watching the clock go by for 30 hours so we can have a vote on the next nomination. Is that the Senate you ran for? Is that why you went through the sacrifice and asked your family to join you in that sacrifice to be in public life? No. Not for me, it isn't. I am here to do something. I think we can do something. We have proven it in the past.

The Affordable Care Act. Books will be written—they have already been written about what it took to finally pass it, but eventually it was enacted into law and signed by the President and changed the lives of millions of Americans. I am glad I voted for it. It was not a bipartisan effort at any stage. I wish it were.

The point I am getting to is this: I don't know what the answer is in terms of changing the rules, but I am not going to stand in defense of the status quo. I do not believe the notion that we cannot touch the Senate and its traditions really is defensible in light of what we have seen on the Senate floor for the last several years—years.

I just have to tell you, I am surprised now that the Republican position articulated by your leader and by the whip is status quo: Leave it as is. It is fine. It is just great. Don't you change the Senate.

Well, I think the Senate needs to change.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I have one last question for the Senator from Illinois.

I don't disagree that, again, we can do a better job—both sides—of making the Senate a more open place where we have an opportunity to debate, which I think is the history and tradition of the Senate, but I don't think blowing up the Senate rules accomplishes that.

I just want to read for you from this morning—I was on the floor here, but in an interview on NPR, the junior Senator from Massachusetts was asked if there are parts of the Green New Deal that might attract bipartisan support. How did he reply? He replied that we need to enact the whole thing, and if Republicans disagree, Democrats should eliminate the filibuster.

Now, wanting to preserve the filibuster doesn't mean we can't reform the Senate, but it does mean that we shouldn't allow a majority to steamroll a minority. That is what the filibuster and the rules of the Senate were designed to protect.

What your Members are talking openly about doing—including your leader—is nuking the filibuster, blowing up the Senate, and changing and transforming it in a way that will transform not only the Senate and the way the government, I think, was designed to work by our Founders but also transform the country.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I would love the junior Senator from Massachusetts to address that question him-

self when he gets his chance on the floor.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for one last question?

Mr. DURBIN. Happy to yield.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, to follow the Senator from South Dakota's comments about using the tool that would effectively blow up the Senate, if you will—these are not words that we use freely, but I think it is fair to suggest that utilizing this tool that would eliminate the filibuster, that would eliminate, really, the strongest tool for a minority party, is akin to the nuclear option. We use that term around here in legislative prose.

I would agree with much of what you have said. You and I have served on the Appropriations Committee now for years. We have had an opportunity to be engaged in good, substantive debates that have yielded good, substantive, enduring laws.

As I think about our role around here, it is not just to engage in the partisan message of the day; it is actually to enact laws. But when we enact laws that are good for just one party, that are wholly partisan, you can kind of predict the direction that will be taken when that minority party that voted against that particular policy then regains power and takes the majority and then attempts to overturn whatever that policy may be.

When we think about ways that we can help an economy that is struggling right now, one of the things that I am hearing from businesses is this: The one thing we would really like out of Washington, DC, the one thing we would really like is some level of certainty with policies, that it is not kind of this whiplash, back and forth from one administration to the next.

Well, the way you do that is through a level of consensus. As we know, on this floor right now, where it is still pretty quiet, consensus has been harder and harder to achieve on a bipartisan basis. Maybe this is a place in time where we are, and it is just dark. As our friend John McCain would say: It is always darkest before it goes pitch-black. Well, maybe we are getting close to the pitch-black. One can only hope.

But I do hear your words that the status quo is not acceptable. I agree with you, my friend. It is not acceptable. It is not acceptable that we are in that place where we can't get votes on amendments that are legitimate and pertinent to the legislation that we have.

I am trying to advance an energy bill right now, to get to final passage, and we are going through the procedural hurdles. I will work through those. But we are at a point where, as an institution, I believe we are failing. We are failing the American public. We are failing our constituents. We are failing in our role in governing.

I do think that when people look to the anxiety that is at play right now with our national elections, with a

Presidential election that is as volatile as we have seen, if there is some level of comfort and security that they might have, they might think that just maybe the Congress, maybe the Senate, can get its act together and be working together.

So I hear you. The status quo is not acceptable. I am not one who is going to say we can't change any of the rules, but we have to do better. Whether it is behavioral attitudes that need to change or whether we need to work together to change the rules, that is where we should be, not unilaterally bomb-throwing, not unilaterally making the decision that is going to benefit our party today, and then when we lose the majority, we will deal with it later. We owe it to the Senate and we owe it to the country to do better.

I appreciate this back-and-forth today. I would welcome other colleagues to join us. I would hope that we look very, very closely at where we are right now because we are using our own rules to do damage to the institution of the Senate.

So let's not take the last tool that holds us in check—this filibuster—and throw it away as well because we will regret it. In the meantime, let's figure out what we can be doing as Democrats and Republicans to do better for the institution of the Senate and do better for the American people.

I apologize. That wasn't by way of a question; it was occupying the time of the Senator from Illinois. But I think we have a lot of work to do here, and I hope we are able to do it together.

I yield the floor.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, with her permission, I will add a question mark to the end of that statement to the Senator from Alaska, to thank her and warn her that we are coming dangerously close to debating on the floor of the Senate. It almost never happens, and we are coming close to it.

We are actually asking one another: Do we have to change the rules to finally make the Senate work, or is there another way? I am open to other ways. I am open to demonstrations of that. But I will tell you, it is a frustration. It is the determination to make certain that, for the people of Illinois who returned me to the Senate, we actually do something, achieve something; that we go home, win or lose, with the feeling that we have been engaged in a process that respected our rights as individual Senators and ended in a vote up or down and a measure passed or failed. That, to me, is why I ran for this job, and I think probably for yourself as well. We are not there, and we are not close to being there.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. President, to date, we have lost nearly 200,000 Americans to the coronavirus, and we are quickly approaching 7 million cases in the United States.

This virus has changed life as we know it, and Americans are in need of help from Congress. However, despite

the urgent needs of families, businesses, workers, and unemployed Americans across the country, Senate Republicans have dragged their feet and offered up only a few weak measures that barely address the needs of the Nation.

The majority leader knows what needs to be done. The playbook is right in front of us. We did it back in March with the CARES Act, which passed 96-0.

To negotiate a real package with real solutions for the American people, he needs to show up at the negotiating table and give up these rogue attempts to pass empty, half-hearted measures.

In the meantime, more data is coming in every day, giving us a clearer picture of just how devastating this pandemic has been to so many Americans. A new report from the Robert Wood Wood Foundation found some troubling outcomes that COVID has had on Chicago residents. Half of Chicago households reported facing serious financial problems during the pandemic and troubles caring for children, with 35 percent reporting that they used up all or most of their savings.

As we know, the pandemic has disproportionately affected our minority communities, with nearly 70 percent of Black and 63 percent of Latinx households in Chicago reported having serious financial problems. And I am sad to say that this study found half of Chicago households report having lost their jobs, been furloughed, or seen reductions in wages or work hours since the start of the pandemic.

We all know how important an internet connection is during this pandemic. According to the report, 40 percent of Chicago households are either struggling with their internet connection or lack access to high-speed internet in their home needed to complete school work or their jobs.

While these statistics reflect the reality of many in Chicago, there is little doubt that this is also the story in so many cities and States across the Nation. This is why we need a substantial federal response. We need to do what is necessary to help struggling families, businesses, cities, and States get back on their feet.

Last week, Senate Republicans proposed another inadequate, partisan coronavirus response bill that failed to prioritize the needs of struggling Americans. The bill failed to provide another round of economic impact payments for families or hazard pay for essential workers.

It failed to provide relief to States and local governments so they can continue to pay teachers, EMTs, and firefighters. And it failed to provide any housing assistance or nutrition assistance so struggling families can keep a roof over their heads and food on the table.

It has been 4 months since the House passed the HEROES Act, and week after week Senate Republicans refuse to make a good faith, bipartisan effort

to pass a relief measure that meets the severity of this crisis. History will judge us on how we responded to the worst pandemic in a century and the deepest recession in 75 years. In response to this crisis, did we help prevent millions from slipping into poverty through another round of economic impact payments and extending enhanced unemployment benefits? Did we give schools and teachers the appropriate resources so they can help our children learn in a safe environment?

What steps did we take to preserve one of our country's greatest assets: the health and safety of our workforce? Did we throw caution to the wind by prematurely reopening simply because it's an election year?

Our country needs help, and the proposal that we voted on last week offered little help to struggling Americans.

Our Nation is suffering right now, and there is a long road to recovery ahead of us. Unfortunately, Leader MCCONNELL wasted precious time by pitching a half-baked proposal that prioritized the needs of corporations over the needs of American families. Let's pass a bill that matches the gravity of this crisis, and let's pass it now.

I will close with a brief comment on substance. On March 26 we shocked America in the Senate. I know it. I went home, and they told me so. Do you know how we shocked them? By a vote of 96 to 0, we passed the CARES Act—96 to 0—with not a single dissenting vote in the Senate—\$3 trillion to address our economic problems and the coronavirus epidemic we were facing. We did it on March 26—yes, in this calendar year—and we did it knowing that the measures we were taking had a life expectancy of just a few months because we thought that would be the end of our challenge. It is not.

The challenges that we faced in passing the CARES Act in March still are challenges America faces. When it comes to COVID-19, the numbers are sobering. The infection rate of COVID-19 in the United States is double the infection rate of the same virus in Canada—Canada. How can the United States be in a position where twice as many Americans are getting sick as those living just on the other side of the border?

When you look at the overall numbers, you have to shake your head. We have 4½ percent of the world's population living in the United States—4½ percent—and over 20 percent of the COVID-19 deaths in the world—4½ percent and 20 percent. What is going on here?

In this Nation, this great Nation, with all of its wealth and all of its resources and all of its talent and all of its great hospitals and doctors and pharmaceutical companies, we have a rate of COVID-19 deaths that is just indefensible.

So I would say to my colleagues: When Senator MCCONNELL came to the

floor and said “Here is our package; take it or leave it,” that is not how this can possibly end. That is not the way the debate ended on March 26. It ended when Senator MCCONNELL and his House Republican counterpart, Congressman MCCARTHY, met with Speaker PELOSI, Leader SCHUMER, and Treasury Secretary Mnuchin in a room and worked it out. That is what it takes.

We need to return to that now and get it done before we leave for any reason—election or whatever it may be. There is no excuse. There are too many unemployed people desperate to get by. There are too many businesses desperate to survive. There are too many tests that we cannot take in America because we haven't invested in the resources. There are too many school districts telling me: Senator, reopening safely for these kids and teachers is going to take some money. Can you help?

There is an election coming up November 3, where election authorities—because people want to vote in the safety of their homes—will receive a dramatic increase in paper ballots cast, and they need a helping hand in processing them in an orderly, honest way.

The demands are out there. State and local governments are in trouble. Small towns in Southern Illinois—I speak to their mayors, and I hear the same things that I hear from the mayor of Chicago: We have had a downturn in revenues; we are going to have to lay off policemen and firefighters and healthcare workers if you don't give us a helping hand.

We cannot walk away from this. Senator MCCONNELL can't take the position of “my way or the highway.” We have to work on a bipartisan basis to negotiate an answer to this, and I hope we do soon.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be able to address the Senate for 10 minutes.

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

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, we are fast approaching nearly 200,000 deaths from the coronavirus. But the moral and physical injury done to our country during the pandemic will never be contained in just one number. As that number continues to climb, so too do the frustration and the pain and the outrage of the American people.

We know that Donald Trump recognized the threat of the coronavirus and deliberately downplayed it for his own political gain. He is in large part responsible for these deaths.

We now have 31 million workers who have either received or applied for unemployment benefits. Since March 15, Massachusetts alone has seen more than 2 million claims to our unemployment programs. In Massachusetts, we have the highest unemployment rate in the United States.

Families across the country are facing devastating choices. Cities and towns are struggling to keep programs running and employees at work. We know the Republicans recognize these threats, and they are choosing to ignore them. They are, in part, responsible for the suffering.

After 4 months of callous calculations, when they chose to respond, the Republicans put out on the floor a coronavirus package that was insulting to Americans who have been awaiting relief. The extent of the misery facing our families is unimaginable. Yet Republicans and Leader MCCONNELL responded by designing a bill so intentionally weak and insufficient that it was destined to fail.

It is all just a game to the Republican Party, but for Americans, this economic and public health crisis is a matter of life and death. We need a robust, comprehensive response right now that matches the scale of this crisis, and we have an opportunity to deliver some real justice to working Americans and their families.

First, we need to give Americans a monthly cash payment of \$2,000 so that they have the funding to be able to pay their bills. A single check is not sufficient for households. Families need more than just one payment.

Providing recurring monthly payments is the most direct and efficient mechanism for delivering economic relief to those most vulnerable, for lower income families, immigrant families, and our gig and service workers.

I see these families suffering today. They are the same kinds of working families I grew up with in Malden. I know that \$2,000 each month would mean the world to them—so that they can sleep at night; they can pay the rent; they can pay the electricity bill; they can buy the medications they need.

A monthly payment is the kind of big policy that provides relief on the scale that is needed. Our government needs to tell our families: We are here for you. We will not let you down during this crisis.

Second, we need at least \$4 billion for my E-rate Program to connect every student to the internet at home. The pandemic has shown a bright light on the homework gap being experienced by the 16 million students in this country who do not have internet access at home and are unable to complete their homework. This is unconscionable and a threat to our country's future.

We cannot allow this homework gap to become a larger learning gap, which ultimately is going to become an opportunity gap for these young people. Research shows that the homework gap affects students in both rural and urban areas and disproportionately affects lower income students and students of color. Trump and the Republicans are blocking this investment in education, but we can't let them. We will not leave these students behind.

Third, we need to extend unemployment insurance, the weekly \$600 ben-

efit, through January of 2021. This is not just a line in the budget; it is a lifeline for workers who cannot go to work through no fault of their own. This crisis will be solved only by investing in workers. We cannot simply cut them off when we know harder days lie ahead for those workers in our country.

Fourth, we must continue a national evictions moratorium and provide \$100 billion in emergency rental assistance. No one should have to suffer the indignity of being escorted out of their home by the police. A country that allows evictions during a pandemic—because of a pandemic—has failed its people.

The same goes for electricity and energy shutoffs. We need a national moratorium that keeps the lights on, ensures drinking water, ensures that wastewater services aren't disconnected or interrupted during the emergency period due to nonpayment. We cannot cast families into the dark as they are struggling to stay afloat.

It is wrong to allow a pandemic that has not been created by these families to result in catastrophic conditions that will look like the Great Depression in terms of their impact on families in the same way that it impacted my family during the Great Depression. We owe these people more. They have worked hard. They have worked constantly throughout their lives. Now, through no fault of their own, the pandemic has hit them, and they are unemployed.

Finally, we need \$1 trillion in funding for State and local governments so that our teachers, nurses, postal workers, and other dedicated public servants are not laid off—the essential workers who drive the buses, pick up the garbage, fight the deadliest of fires, educate our young people. Despite providing the services we rely upon every day—including every single one of us in this Chamber—our municipalities are aren't getting any money because Republicans refuse to provide it. State and local governments have been pushed to the brink to support their residents and are in desperate need of relief.

To my Republican colleagues I say that this funding isn't blue or red; it is green. And all of our mayors and Governors and city councilors—whether Republican or Democrat—need that money right now.

I have been traveling around my home State of Massachusetts talking to families. They tell me the same thing: They want a livable future for their children. That means they need the government to do its job effectively in managing this COVID-19 pandemic. Instead of making excuses, they need a government that works on solutions, even if the problems are unprecedented, and they want that government to recognize the rights and dignity of everyone.

Our families want something so basic and so simple, they almost shouldn't

have to say it: They want their children to dream about the future instead of fearing about the future.

They need political leadership from us right now—not political games, not the political calculation of just 20 Members of the Senate Republican caucus.

To my colleagues I say that the gravity of this crisis requires us to respond right now. We know we have a President in the White House who is irresponsible. The President knew. It turns out he knew the virus was deadly. He knew it as well as we knew it, but he lied to us. He told us it would magically disappear. He said it was no worse than the flu while on tape we hear him say that it is lethal. On February 10, he said: You know, a lot of people think it goes away in April with the heat, when the heat comes in. That is what the President said in February about the coronavirus.

He also tells us that climate change is a myth. He tells us that our planet is not in grave danger. He makes fun of the science of climate change the way he makes fun of wearing a mask.

Now the "Denier in Chief" says when it gets cooler it will go away, that the fires in the west coast will just go away. His answer to coronavirus is that when it gets warmer, it will go away. When he deals with the science of climate change, he says: When it gets cooler, the fires will go away.

The west coast of the United States is on fire, and 10 percent of Oregon is under evacuation order. A warning—that is half a million people. We have dozens of wildfires burning right now in California, including the largest in the history of that State. It has blotted out the sun for hundreds and hundreds of miles. The Southwest is shrouded in a horrifying, constant twilight.

We can keep looking at these things in isolation, as if somehow or other they are not connected. Each fiery conflagration, each hurricane, each devastating flood, each ungodly windstorm that wipes out a whole year of crops—we can say they have nothing to do with each other or we can look at the truth and listen to the science and say enough is enough.

We can lie to ourselves and say, as Trump does, that one day these things will just "magically disappear," depending upon whether the heat or cooling will solve the problem. But we all know better. We know that unless we act now, the fires will happen annually and burn hotter and larger each summer, each fall in our country. We know that the hurricanes will get worse and more frequent. Two made landfall at once this year. We know that they will disrupt and destroy the economies of the gulf and the eastern seaboard.

How many times can we ask our people to rebuild? We know that midwestern floods will grow each year, drowning out a whole way of life and making refugees of our farmers. We know that the windstorms like those this year will continue to destroy

crops. Iowa lost 43 percent of its corn and soybeans this year.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has used his 10 minutes.

Mr. MARKEY. No, it will not magically disappear. We need a Green New Deal. We need a solution that matches the magnitude of the problem.

I yield back to the Presiding Officer. I appreciate his indulgence.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to complete my remarks before the lunch recess.

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

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, let me say that I join my friend from Massachusetts in a desire to see us take up and pass another COVID-19 relief bill. I would say that so far, the House of Representatives has taken a completely unrealistic approach, including many non-COVID-19 relief provisions in the bill, including tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires. They literally include, in the COVID-19 bill they call the Heroes Act, a tax cut by removing the cap on deductibility on State and local taxes on your Federal income tax.

When we did that in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, we felt it was improper to force States like the Presiding Officer's and mine to subsidize the irresponsible spending practices in major cities like New York and San Francisco.

If our Democratic friends are indeed serious about wanting to get a deal, we are open, certainly, to negotiating a deal, just as we did the first four bills that we passed, especially by unanimous vote.

It seems the closer we get to the election, which is now 49 days out, that the old partisan dysfunction begins to creep back in and you hear speeches like the Senator from Massachusetts just gave, advocating things like the Green New Deal as a solution to all the world's problems. It is just completely pie in the sky and a pipedream that is obviously not going anywhere.

That doesn't stop our friends across the aisle blaming this side of the aisle or the President for everything that happens in the world, including hurricanes and forest fires, which are largely as a result of failing to undertake proper forest management that we know can prevent fires. They blame it on climate change. It is an easy argument claiming science is on their side.

We need to be good stewards about our environment, no doubt about it. I have no doubt the climate is changing and humans contribute to that, but there are smarter and better ways for us to approach it other than eliminating jobs and burdening people on fixed incomes with higher electricity and energy costs and just embracing an ideological solution, which is no solution at all and will create more problems than it solves.

I would just say, finally, on this point, that we know that the guidance

from the Centers for Disease Control has evolved over time. I went back and checked. My friend in Massachusetts says the President did this; he did that; he said this; he didn't do this. I remember going back and looking at the Centers for Disease Control guidance before April. They said masks were ineffective; they didn't do anything. They came back after some additional investigation and research and said: Well, they can help. That is why we are all wearing masks, especially when we can't socially distance.

Looking at this pandemic now in September as opposed to the way it looked in March, we have learned a lot, thank goodness. Our medical professionals have saved a lot of lives. We learned how to mitigate the risks. We learned how to live with the virus at the same time we are investing heavily in therapies and a vaccine, which can't come soon enough.

Senate Republicans have made attempt after attempt to deliver another round of coronavirus relief to the American people. In July, we proposed the HEALS Act, which was a starting point for negotiations. We realized this wasn't the end-all and be-all any more than the Democrats' Heroes Act, this \$3 trillion hodgepodge of an ideological wish list that we knew wasn't going to pass, but we knew we needed to start somewhere.

Speaker PELOSI didn't help when she quickly disparaged our starting proposal as "pathetic." And, of course, Senator SCHUMER, the minority leader in the Senate, called it "unworkable." I guess they thought they finished their job, and they dismissed it outright and did nothing to negotiate in good faith toward a resolution. They simply have no interest in amending the bill or trying to find a common ground. They just stiff-armed it.

This August, when we attempted to narrow the scope of the negotiation to the most urgent matters—things like continuing Federal unemployment benefits, which expired at the end of July—this time our Democratic colleagues rejected what they called a "piecemeal" approach. Never mind the fact that the House returned to Washington to pass a bill only to help the Postal Service, which was actually bipartisan. Apparently, that kind of piecemeal is acceptable as long as it is a Democratic-sponsored and authored bill.

That brings us to September. Last week, we gave it another shot. The majority leader brought the bill to the floor to address some of the most pressing challenges facing the American people: funding schools, vaccine research, more testing, unemployment benefits, helping small businesses, again, through the extension of the Paycheck Protection Program—all of which should be and I believe, in truth, are bipartisan goals.

Unfortunately, our Democratic colleagues couldn't resist that old temptation of partisan dysfunction this close

to the election. They pulled out the same playbook they used all summer. Once again, they refused to engage in any meaningful negotiations. They resorted to name-calling and blocked the bill from even being debated. You can't pass a bill unless you are willing to start considering it, but they weren't willing to even do that.

Here we are battling a pandemic, which has claimed more than 190,000 Americans, and Democrats blocked every attempt to pass a piece of legislation since March. Rather than trying to negotiate or amend these bills or reach a bipartisan compromise, they seem to be content with airing their grievances at press conferences.

I agree with one thing the Senator from Massachusetts said: There are people who are hurting and need help. We should not take some perverse delight in exacerbating that pain or noting that pain and being unwilling to do anything to relieve it.

This may be a political game for some of our colleagues. It may be a way to try to score points against the President or try to gain advantage in the runup to the election on November 3, but I assure you, it is not an honest attempt to try to solve a problem; it is not a genuine attempt to try to provide relief to the American people who are hurting; and it is not moving us any closer to defeating this virus once and for all.

In the bills we passed so far—again, on a bipartisan basis, largely unanimously—we provided unprecedented support for American families, including direct payments, bolstered unemployment benefits, and provided the ability to defer student loan payments. We sent help to farmers, ranchers, and producers. We helped our schools prepare for the new school year and gave small businesses and their employees the resources to stay afloat. We have provided stability for families and communities across Texas and across the Nation.

More help is needed, especially to bolster our response to the virus itself. We know we are in a global race to develop a vaccine and treatment. Our brightest scientific minds are working 24/7 to deliver those lifesaving drugs to the world as quickly as we can, safely and effectively, but they need more money to succeed.

At the same time, our communities are trying to test as many people as they can, whether it is people attending college football games or surveillance testing in communities or at colleges or grade schools. Our constituents don't care about our partisan disagreements. They just want us to do everything we can to help them and to help us defeat this virus.

During the month of August, I was able to travel around the State and to listen to feedback from my constituents on how the funding we provided so far has aided in the fight against COVID-19. Congress has provided more than \$234 billion to support our

healthcare response. That includes \$10 billion for research and development of a vaccine through Operation Warp Speed, \$16 billion for personal protective equipment, \$26 billion for testing, and, of course, the \$173 billion Provider Relief Fund to help our hospitals.

More than 23,000 hospitals and healthcare providers in my State alone have received more than \$5.1 billion in Federal funding, allowing them to procure critical resources like masks and gloves and to cover mounting costs due to the deferral of elective procedures.

In August, I had a chance to personally thank some of the healthcare workers in Abilene, Waco, Wichita Falls, Amarillo, Lubbock, and Corpus Christi. I also had lunch and visited with the children of healthcare workers in the Rio Grande Valley who, even at such a young age, are amazed by the heroic work of their parents.

As our war against this virus carries on, we need to ensure that our frontline workers and healthcare providers have the resources they need to sustain this fight.

I also visited with the Family Health Center in Waco, which is 1 of 73 federally qualified health centers in Texas operating more than 500 sites. This is really a critical part of our healthcare safety net in my State and across the Nation.

I have always been a strong supporter of our community health centers and cofounded the Senate Community Health Centers Caucus several years ago. As I said, these facilities make quality healthcare a reality for so many Texans, whether they have Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance, or no insurance. Texans can go to these health centers and receive the care they need when they need it.

The particular Family Health Center I visited in Waco was founded more than 50 years ago to address a shortage of doctors and primary care access for low-income patients and has since grown to 15 clinics across McLennan County, which provide not only primary and preventive care but dental and behavioral healthcare too.

As Family Health Center CEO, Dr. Jackson Griggs, said community-oriented primary care is difficult in any era, and it has been uniquely challenging during COVID-19. Unexpected operating costs and lost revenue created serious financial hardship, but because of the \$3 million in the CARES Act and other Federal funding they got, they have continued to provide quality healthcare during this time of critical need. Because of Federal funding, they have been able to test every person who comes in with symptoms. They received the equipment, the kits, the mobile computer systems, tents, and the air-conditioning units that allows staff to test patients outdoors, even during a hot Texas summer.

During our visit, Dr. Griggs told me they conducted more than 7,400 tests, with over 1,500 patients testing positive. Of those, 53 percent were unin-

sured. Without legislation passed by Congress, who knows what these patients would have been able to afford or even get access to a COVID-19 test. This funding has also provided more than 187,000 pieces of PPE to the Family Health Center's doctors, nurses, dentists, social workers, and staff who are trying to stay safe and healthy while they continue to care for their patients.

On top of that, the funds have provided the information technology infrastructure to get telehealth services started in record time and nearly 11,000 hours of paid leave for healthcare workers and other staff members who become ill or need to quarantine because of the virus.

The legislation we passed has also helped community health centers, hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, and healthcare facilities throughout the State continue to serve their communities.

As we keep working to deliver the assistance for the American people, we need to continue to support our healthcare response. This means ensuring that the providers continue to have the resources needed to operate throughout this crisis. It means more resources for testing and contact tracing to stop the spread. It means an even greater investment in the race to discover a vaccine and treatment so we can finally bring this crisis to an end. It means continuing to provide healthcare coverage for those who are laid off or furloughed or lost employer coverage.

I recently introduced a bill with my friend Senator MCSALLY from Arizona to provide some degree of certainty for folks who found themselves without a job or health coverage through no fault of their own. It is called the Continuous Health Coverage for Workers Act, which would provide premium assistance for COBRA coverage during the rest of the year. As the coronavirus has wreaked havoc on our job market, it has filled countless Texans' lives with uncertainty. By passing this legislation as part of the next relief bill, we can ensure that those who previously maintained their health coverage through their employer can continue to do so through the end of the year.

Let me just say in conclusion that COVID-19 is not a partisan issue. It hasn't been up until this point. Unfortunately, the wheels came off, at least for the time being. We need to put those wheels back on the car. We are all on the same team fighting a common enemy. I hope we can rediscover the sense of bipartisanship and common purpose that helped us pass four bills up through and including March.

During August, I was able to spend time speaking with countless of my constituents about the bills we had passed and discussing what more was needed. In addition to hearing from the healthcare workers and providers who had been on the frontlines, I also joined students and teachers for socially

distanced conversations about the challenges that had been brought on by the start of the new school year. I held a video call with restaurant owners about the ongoing impact of the pandemic on their businesses. On telephone townhalls, I heard from constituents about their struggles to make ends meet after they lost their jobs and then lost the extra \$600 a week in Federal unemployment benefits, which lapsed because our colleagues wouldn't allow us to take up and consider, at some level, a continuation of those enhanced benefits.

As our Democratic colleagues have continued to play games, these are the folks who have been hurt, and I am sure there are similar situations in each of their States. For these Texans whom I have described, COVID-19 isn't about political points or sound bites—it is about their health, their families' safety, and their livelihoods.

While it seems like some have yielded to the temptation of using this pandemic for political gain, I am committed to continuing to work with all of our colleagues who are willing to ensure that we don't lose any of the ground we have gained in the war against COVID-19. We are literally up against the clock, and enough time has been wasted on name-calling, finger-pointing, and political posturing. It is time for the games to end so that we can finally provide our constituents, including our frontline heroes, with the resources they need in order to sustain and win this fight.

I yield the floor.

## RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:01 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. KENNEDY).

## EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

### VOTE ON BLUMENFELD NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all postcloture time has expired on the Blumenfeld nomination.

The question is, Shall the Senate advise and consent to the Blumenfeld nomination?

Mr. CRAPO. 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 legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.