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Senate

(Legislative day of Monday, October 19, 2020)

The Senate met at 12 noon, on the expiration of the recess, 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.

Great God and Father, Your anger lasts only for a moment, but Your favor lasts a lifetime. Lord, open our eyes to see the wonders of Your grace and the majesty of Your love for people everywhere. Keep our lawmakers from being blind to the work You are doing in our world. Bring healing to the sick and liberation to the oppressed.

Lord, You have watched over this land we love from generation to generation, in prosperity and adversity, in peace and war. Today, keep our Senators so dedicated that they will do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with You.

We pray in Your Holy 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.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The Senate resumed consideration of the nomination of Michael Jay Newman, of Ohio, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Ohio.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRUZ). The Senator from Iowa.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO DAN GABLE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, fellow Iowan Dan Gable is one of the greatest athletes and coaches in American history. President Trump has selected Dan to receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom—the highest civilian honor. I sent a letter to the White House after hearing about grassroots support in Iowa for this award.

Dan Gable is a household name for every Iowa sports fan. As a wrestler at Iowa State University, Dan won two collegiate championships—a world championship and an Olympic Gold Medal. His overall high school and college records are 181 victories, 1 defeat. That one defeat came in the finals of the NCAA tournament of his senior year. In his coaching career at the University of Iowa, he led to 15 national team championships out of the 21 years that he coached.

As a coach at the University of Iowa, Dan developed All Americans, national champions, Big Ten champions, and Olympians. Dan is the paragon of the American dream in his achieving success through community, courage, hard work, and determination.

I congratulate Dan on this outstanding achievement.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

PAYCHECK PROTECTION PROGRAM

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, “It would have been really hard for us to get through without it.” That was the coowner of Apollo Pizza, which has a handful of locations throughout Kentucky.

“It touches my heart just knowing that I can bring folks back and gainfully employ people who need to work.” That was a restaurateur in Fayetteville, NC.

“It’s pennies from heaven as far as our business is concerned.” That was

one small business owner in Highlands Ranch, CO.

“It just made sense to us that if we’re going to be able to get money from the government . . . spend it on our employees.” That is from a fourth-generation owner of a bagel shop in Ferndale, MI.

Those are just four of the millions and millions of hard-working Americans who have had an economic lifeline to help them endure this crisis year. That lifeline is the Paycheck Protection Program, the PPP.

About 7 months ago, our Nation’s top medical experts recommended we do something without precedent—shutter whole sectors of the economy to protect Americans from the pandemic. Congress needed a historic plan to help workers, and our colleagues Senator Rubio and Senator Collins stepped forward. They realized we could not simply let Main Street go under. We could not simply tell millions and millions more workers to forget about their jobs and join the unemployment lines. We couldn’t just let every storefront except the biggest corporate retailers turn into permanent pandemic ghost towns. We had to give small businesses and their workers a fighting chance.

The senior Senators from Maine and Florida found the solution. They literally invented the PPP. It would fund emergency loans to employers, and those loans would be forgivable so long as the money would be used to keep paying their people. As far as emergency government rescues go, their idea was actually a bold, free-enterprise policy. Don’t just sign everyone up for welfare; fight to save jobs. Keep workers connected to their jobs and their paychecks.

As we wrote the CARES Act, Senators Rubio and Collins got together with Senator CARDIN and put the finishing touches on the program. Soon, the PPP had become law without a single dissenting vote in either Chamber.

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



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The program proved so popular that it quickly committed all its funding. So, in April, we refilled it with more money. That was unanimous in the Senate as well. Then, in June, we tweaked the program on the fly to help small businesses even more. Once again, it was unanimous—no objection from any Republican or any Democrat here in the Senate. This program has had the most bipartisan pedigree possible, and those bipartisan beginnings have led to a major policy success story.

For millions of Americans from coast to coast, the PPP has made all the difference in the world. It has kept paychecks coming into their mailboxes and bank accounts where there otherwise would have been pink slips. Every State, every town, every city knows the difference it has made.

So where are we today?

That historic first draw of the PPP has wound down; the program has closed to new applications; many firms have run through their funds, but, clearly, our economic recovery remains a work in progress. For many workers, business has not come roaring back to normal, and it won't until the health situation allows it.

Fortunately, Senator RUBIO and Senator COLLINS have stepped up again. Our colleagues have legislation that will refund and reopen the PPP. It will establish a whole second round for the hardest hit small businesses that need help the most, and thanks to the efforts of several colleagues, the legislation will also streamline the program and strengthen oversight.

I would submit that, even for a Congress this divided, even in the year 2020, reopening the PPP really ought to be a no-brainer. There is bipartisan agreement that American workers still need help, and there is already bipartisan infrastructure in place to provide that help, but there is a problem. The PPP has been taken hostage. Just like the funding for safe schools, more funding for testing, more funding for vaccines, more funding for Federal unemployment benefits, and commonsense legal protections that charities and university presidents have been pleading for, the PPP has been taken hostage by Speaker PELOSI and Leader SCHUMER.

The Democratic leaders have spent months holding out for a long, far-left wish list of non-COVID-related priorities and obstructing any additional aid until they get it. All or nothing—that has been their position. Either Democrats get every unrelated policy they want or American families get nothing. So, for months, they have blocked bipartisan aid at every single turn. The Democratic leader even tried last night to adjourn the Senate so we could do nothing at all for 3 weeks—nothing at all for 3 weeks. That is how urgent he thinks it is to help working people. He wanted to go home for 3 weeks.

Because President Trump will not just cave to the entire Democratic Par-

ty's platform—for example, the President won't simply hand out endless sums of cash to chronically mismanaged State and city governments out of proportion to COVID needs—Speaker PELOSI has seen to it that working families have gotten nothing rather than something.

So, look, every Senator in this body knows this is not how people act if they actually want an outcome. American families, working families, have waited months and months for Speaker PELOSI to end her “Marie Antoinette” act and let Congress find common ground. There is no reason this second round of the Paycheck Protection Program should wait another single day. So we are going to vote on this legislation today—one clear vote on one clear program that all in this Chamber say they want to pass.

Well, I will let you in on a secret. There is something Senators do when we want something to pass. Here is what we do when we want something to pass: We vote for it. It is no counter-argument to complain that the PPP legislation does not also contain 100 other things. The entire point is to agree where we can and make law while we keep arguing over all the rest.

If my Democratic colleagues oppose the job-saving PPP, they should come to the floor and say why they oppose it. Otherwise, this afternoon should bring another unanimous vote.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, COVID-19 has changed just about every aspect of American life—every aspect. The bottom line is very simple: The way Americans work, the way we send our kids to school, and the way we run our businesses have all changed. COVID has derailed the economy.

Millions of Americans have missed the rent, missed the mortgage, applied for unemployment, been forced to skip meals. American poverty is beginning to increase more dramatically. More than 8 million have gotten sick. More than 220,000 have died.

The response here in Congress to a pandemic that affects our country in a way we haven't seen in decades should be to comprehensively provide relief. Our mission is not to pick out one or two industries and say “maybe later” to the rest. We can't privilege a small issue here or there and ask everyone else to wait. Our mission is to deliver big for a country and a people who are suffering direly. Our mission is to meet the needs of the country and leave no one—and leave no one—behind.

But Leader McCONNELL and the Republican majority have failed to grasp the gravity of this situation from the beginning. They put the Senate on pause for more than 5 months, while cases went up and the death toll mounted. When the time came for them to pull together in August, they couldn't even get Republican Senators to agree on one. Eight months into this long and brutal crisis, the Republican leader is filled with stunts and playing the smallest of small ball, when so many are hurting.

Today, the Republican majority will try to force a stunt—not even a real vote on a bill—but it leaves almost the entire country out of the picture. They are holding the vote over a backdrop of a dire increase in cases. The majority of States are seeing spikes right now. Half of all States have had their highest single day ever in total cases in the last month.

Experts say we have hard months ahead of us. It is possible the worst is yet to come—a second wave. We must act now to provide relief to the whole country, and our Republican leader and the Republican Senate are up to a stunt and not even negotiating or putting a bill on the floor, and the American people know it. They know who is to blame. They blame President Trump and the Republican majority. We know that.

We know, when it comes to COVID, that the blame correctly falls on the shoulders of Leader McCONNELL and all his Republican Senators, who are afraid to do anything, who are divided. Anytime Mr. Mnuchin gets on the phone with them, they say: Don't do anything. We are too divided.

Everyone knows that.

We must provide real relief. That is what Democrats want to do. But in the Republican proposal today, there is no funding—zero funding—for testing or tracing, the best way to stop this COVID menace.

And in the Republican bill tomorrow, the funding for testing and the plan for testing is so completely inadequate that it is laughable, especially given the recent spike in cases.

In the Republican proposal today, there is nothing for American families, schools, daycare, or food assistance. They are left behind—all of them. Renters, homeowners, folks struggling to keep a roof over their heads—they are left behind. Americans who have lost their job through no fault of their own and need unemployment insurance—they are left behind in these Republican proposals.

State and local governments that are being forced to slash critical public service in the middle of a recession—they, too, are all left behind.

Even on the issue of small business, the issue on which this bill is focused, it lacks specific funding for restaurants, for independent theaters and venues, for local newspapers, TV, radio stations, critical-need hospitals, minority-owned businesses, and all of our