

nonprofits. In each of those areas in which the Republican bill is deficient, so many are left behind.

We have bipartisan support for programs that are not even being considered here today. And why is that? Why is MCCONNELL doing stunts? The truth is, because the leader can't pass anything on the floor, he is resorting to a series of political stunts. That is all. Everyone knows it.

The Republican leader himself admitted that as many as 20 Republican Senators don't want to vote for "a dime more"—"a dime more," his quote—of relief for the American people—so out of touch, so callous, so cruel.

So what we have here is a series of show stunt votes designed to fail because the Republicans want them to fail. It is not going to get the job done for the American people. They can't even put a real bill on the floor. The only bills that they can pass are filled with poison pills that they know no Democrat will support in the House or Senate.

That was the only way they could get them to vote even for this meager amount in tomorrow's bill—by telling the big corporations: No liability for you if you egregiously hurt a worker who has COVID; by telling wealthy parents: You can pay for private school education with a complete tax break—free, free, but public schools get left out, middle class people get left out, poor people get left out. Wealthy people who send their kids to private schools—that is it—while they refuse to give money to the public schools that need the money.

If Leader MCCONNELL were serious, you know what he would be doing. He would be negotiating. He wouldn't be saying: I can't negotiate; my caucus is divided. He would be leading instead of following the 20 hard-right, cruel, callous thoughts of those who don't want to spend any money because their wealthy paymasters don't want to pay taxes: Let people suffer. I don't want to pay taxes. Let people suffer. I don't want government to do anything—when we all know the only real hope here is for a strong, active, and bold government-led program. The private sector can't fight COVID alone. The private sector can't get us out of this deep recession alone. We know that, but not the hard-right Republicans. They are stuck in their narrow ideological prison.

So instead of stunts, Senators will actually have a chance today to vote on a real comprehensive bill to address the current state of the country. For months, Democrats have been pushing for the Heroes Act, a second installment of the kind of comprehensive COVID relief we passed in the first bill that brought so much to people, helped them stay in their homes, brought pandemic unemployment insurance, helped our hospitals, helped our local governments, helped do some testing—testing money, by the way, and tracing money, which the Trump administration hasn't even distributed to the States.

This bill passed the House over 3 months ago, and since then, Democrats have modified the bill to move closer to our Republican counterparts. Still, Leader MCCONNELL refuses to even bring it up for a vote in the Senate. So today Democrats will move to have the Senate take a vote on the Heroes Act, a comprehensive bill that does so much, that doesn't leave all the people behind that this proposal does. We will see where every Republican Senator stands on real COVID relief—not a stunt, a fake that leaves people out.

Unlike the partisan, emaciated Republican COVID relief bill, the Heroes Act will not leave large portions of the country behind. It will not include poison pills like sweeping corporate immunity provisions that Leader MCCONNELL has insisted on in every version of Republican legislation. It will deliver actual relief to American workers, American families, American States and localities and Tribes. It provides assistance for food, rent, and housing; real funding for testing and tracing; unemployment insurance and aid to small businesses of all kinds, not just a few.

This morning, a poll conducted by the New York Times and Siena Research showed that 72 percent of Americans, including a clear majority of Independents and Republicans, support another \$2 trillion stimulus package. In other words, 72 percent support the Democratic plan to provide COVID relief. Even President Trump has told our Republican Senate colleagues to "go big or go home."

If my Republican colleagues were listening to the American people, they would not be playing these partisan games around small-bore, stunt-driven COVID bills. They would be working with Democrats on something that absolutely meets people's needs. Instead, the Republican leader is wasting the American people's time on a vote he knows will fail, and he doesn't even seem to mind.

NOMINATION OF AMY CONEY BARRETT

Mr. President, on SCOTUS, yesterday, on a 4-to-4 split ruling, the Supreme Court declined to hear a case that could have prevented the State of Pennsylvania from counting all the votes in the November election. It was an important decision for democracy but also a reminder of what is truly at stake in a Supreme Court vacancy left by Justice Ginsburg. One more vote provided by a hard-right, Trump-nominated Justice could be the difference between voting rights and voting suppression.

Over the past several years, closely divided decisions of the Supreme Court have meant the difference between having the ability to marry the person you love or not; the ability to have your right to vote protected or not; the ability to make personal choices about your own healthcare or not.

The American people should know exactly what is at stake in the nomination of Judge Barrett to the Supreme

Court—nothing less than their fundamental rights as Americans. So, frankly, it was an insult to the intelligence of the American people for Judge Barrett to spend the entire Judiciary Committee hearing dodging every single question of substance, including questions as to whether voter intimidation is illegal or whether the President could unilaterally delay the election—to not be able to answer whether the President could unilaterally delay the election? Whoa.

Just think about what it means for a sitting judge to refuse to answer a question about voter intimidation—voting, the wellspring of our democracy—because she thinks it is too controversial. Think about what it means for a sitting judge to refuse to answer a question about the peaceful transfer of power—the bedrock of our democracy—because it might upset her patron, President Trump. It is absurd. No one is buying it.

Every election season, Republicans promise to nominate judges who will tear down our healthcare and roll back the clock on women's rights. The far right promises to deliver judges who will dismantle the environmental regulations that keep our air and water clean and protect our planet from runaway global warming. President Trump has made the same promises out loud many times. But as soon as someone is nominated to be a Justice, all of a sudden that person becomes a legal vacuum, a cipher, totally devoid of ideas, views, or opinions, even on the questions of basic legal, uncontroversial fact.

The truth is, Judge Barrett does have, unfortunately, hard-right views and opinions on these issues. Her views are so far away from the American people that none of them could pass in this Senate—even though it is controlled by Republicans—and certainly not in the House.

She has harshly criticized decisions to uphold the Affordable Care Act. She has been closely affiliated with organizations that advocate for the elimination of a woman's right to choose. She has drafted judicial opinions on the issue of gun safety that put her far to the right of even Justice Scalia.

That is why, in the hearings last week, the president for the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law said: "Judge Barrett's views are far outside the mainstream." That is why yesterday the plaintiffs in the decisions that resulted in marriage equality—Obergefell and Hodges—said they oppose Judge Barrett for the Supreme Court because she will endanger those hard-won rights.

So the idea that Judge Barrett is some sort of neutral arbiter who will only interpret the law as it is written is just not believable. She will make hugely impactful decisions that will alter the fabric of American society, starting with what will be one of her very first cases—a lawsuit pushed by President Trump and Republicans to

rip away healthcare from millions of Americans.

God save us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. DURBIN. “Idiots.” “Idiots.” That is what the President called Dr. Anthony Fauci and the public health experts in the Federal Government.

The President said:

People are tired of COVID. I have the biggest rallies I’ve ever had. And we have COVID. People are saying: “Whatever. Just leave us alone.” They’re tired of it.

Then he added:

People are tired of hearing Fauci and these idiots, all these idiots who got it wrong.

Those are the words of the President of the United States, Donald Trump, in the midst of the worst pandemic America has seen in over a century—220,000 dead and counting.

What lies ahead with this COVID epidemic, which the President is so tired of hearing about? What have the so-called “idiots” told us about the future of COVID-19? Here is what they have told us: More than 70,450 new coronavirus cases were reported in the United States on Friday, the highest figure since July 24, according to the New York Times database. More than 900 new deaths were recorded, and over the past week, there have been an average of 56,615 cases per day—an increase of 30 percent from the average 2 weeks earlier.

Is this a political commentary, these facts? No. These are the numbers and statistics of reality—a reality which President Trump refuses to acknowledge.

How are we doing when it comes to the COVID-19 pandemic compared to the world? Well, we have five times the infection rate of the nation of Germany. What is going on here? The great United States of America has five times the infection rate of Germany?

Well, let’s get across the ocean. Let’s bring it to this side of the Atlantic. How are we doing in comparison to the nations here? Well, let’s compare the United States to Canada. The COVID death rate in the United States is 2½ times the death rate in Canada.

What does Justin Trudeau know about this epidemic that Donald Trump did not? He knew that it took leadership to deal with it. He knew that we had to step up as a nation and gather together all the people of this country in common purpose to beat back this virus, and he failed to do it—President Trump failed to do that. He said to the Governors “You are on your own. Go out and find protective equipment. Find ventilators. See what you can do on the open market” instead of using the power of the Presidency and the leadership of the Presidency to help make certain that every American had access to what they needed to stay safe.

How did he do in setting standards for dealing with this deadly virus?

First, he denied it was deadly. He argued it was going to go away. When it gets warm outside, it will go away. It is a hoax. You remember those statements. And do you remember that incredible press conference where the President went off on some tangent about disinfectant and Lysol? It was sickening to think that the leader of the free world would do that.

How about the example set by the President. To this day, to get this President to wear a mask is a rare occurrence. And there he was, just days after being helicoptered out to Walter Reed Hospital, returning to the White House, making his triumphant balcony scene, standing before the American people and ripping off his mask just to tell them how tough he was, how lucky he was. He was really telling the American people: Don’t take this mask business seriously. He can say the words, but he just mouths them. The fact that you can see his mouth is an indication that he doesn’t believe it. And here we are.

Fortunately, in the early stages of this pandemic, this Congress rose to the occasion. It was March 26. We called it the CARES Act. It was indeed a comprehensive effort to deal with the coronavirus, a comprehensive approach. We imagined all the possibilities, we saw the economy sinking under our feet, and we came together with a vote of 96 to nothing here in the U.S. Senate—a bipartisan vote of 96 to nothing—for a bill that we wrote together, Democrats and Republicans sitting together.

It was an amazing day, and I am glad we did it, but there was one clear shortcoming. We assumed when we passed the CARES Act that, come the end of July and first part of August, this crisis would be behind us. It isn’t. At the end of July, for example, the Federal supplement of unemployment insurance ran out for millions of Americans. In the first part of August, the loans to small businesses dried up as well.

What has happened since? Well, on the other side of the Rotunda, in the House of Representatives, Speaker NANCY PELOSI, 5 months ago—5 months ago—passed her Heroes Act. It was \$3 trillion—comparable to the first effort. She sent it to the Republican leader of the Senate, Senator MITCH MCCONNELL of Kentucky, for him to do his part. It is a bicameral legislature. His part would require coming up with an alternative and taking that to conference.

Did he do that? No. He refused to acknowledge it and mocked day after day after day the efforts of Speaker PELOSI, questioning whether they were enough or sincere or too political, on and on and on. Did he pass his own measure? No.

Then negotiations started between the President, his White House representatives, Speaker PELOSI, and Leader SCHUMER. They invited Senator MCCONNELL, head of the Republicans in the Senate, and KEVIN McCARTHY, head

of the Republicans in the House, to join in this bipartisan negotiation. MCCONNELL and McCARTHY declined. They would not even sit in the chairs during negotiations. In Senator MCCONNELL’s case, he simply came to the floor on a daily basis to mock every effort to respond to this COVID-19.

Well, this is not a news bulletin, but we are 2 weeks away from the election, and guess what we are going to do on the floor of the Senate today. We are going to entertain a new idea by Senator MCCONNELL of how to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. It turns out that it is a scant list of his priorities. Not surprisingly, the first priority is an issue he has called his redline on the floor over and over again—to give immunity from liability to businesses that fail to take the necessary steps to protect their employees and their customers from the spread of this deadly virus. That is his first priority. He has said that. Even before the first issue was raised as to what would be included in this, the first thing that Senator MCCONNELL insisted on was protecting these businesses.

How do the American people feel about that? Well, they are pretty clear. They believe if you put that immunity in place, that many businesses won’t do what they need to do to protect their employees and customers. They worry that this gets them off the hook instead of putting the responsibility clearly on their shoulders.

The good news is the overwhelming majority of businesses that I know are really trying to do the right thing. The bad news is they are not sure what that is. They hear about CDC guidelines that are ignored and mocked by the President, and they hear about the possibility of other standards that will be used.

We have had hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee when a Texas businessman with a string of convenience stores, I think, came to us and in good faith said: I don’t know where to turn for a standard of care. What am I supposed to do if I want to protect everyone coming into my store—employees and customers alike?

I thought his statement was genuine. I really believed him, and I still do. But it is no excuse for what we have failed to do here. We have failed to come up with a national standard to protect people from the spread of this virus.

Instead, Senator MCCONNELL comes to the floor and says: If you can find any standard by any level of government, it is good enough. You are off the hook. That is no way to lead in the midst of a deadly pandemic.

It is not the only issue. There are many others. Take a look at what is missing in Senator MCCONNELL’s proposal. There is no new funding when it comes to State and local governments. Remember the phrase “defund the police”? You heard it from the rightwing about the leftwing of American politics wanting to defund the police. Well, Senator MCCONNELL’s action will