

defund police at State and local levels because these units of government won't have the resources to hire the policemen they need, the law enforcement officials they need, nor the firefighters, nor the teachers, nor the healthcare workers. But that is priority one for Senator McCONNELL: no help—no help for State and local governments for fear that you might actually send money to a Democratic mayor or a Democratic Governor. Spare me. That fire is not looking for party registration; it is looking for kindling to light the fire of infection.

Now, on housing, well, how does the McConnell proposal deal with housing? No funding—no funding for housing or rental assistance.

Now, on the stimulus checks—\$1,200 stimulus checks. I listened to talk radio back in Chicago, and people are wondering: Is it possible we are going to see a \$1,200 check? Well, you won't see it in Senator McCONNELL's proposal. There are no direct stimulus payments.

How about unemployment benefits? The Federal unemployment benefits that expired on July 31 were \$600 a week over the State amount, whatever it might be. Some people may have made more in the process than they did at work, but most were struggling to get by. If Members of the Senate had not been in touch with real America in a while, they may think that folks with these checks were binging on Netflix and eating chocolate-covered cherries night and day. That is not the case that I saw back in Illinois. People who had lost their jobs, even at the time they received these unemployment checks, were still struggling to pay for the mortgage, pay for the rent, pay for the car, keep up with the credit card bills, and put food on the table.

So what does Senator McCONNELL propose that we do? He proposes we cut in half that amount—to \$300 a week. I guess back in Kentucky it is a little bit different world, at least the way he sees it, but where I live, that means a pretty dramatic cut in survival pay—survival pay—for people who have lost their jobs.

On the healthcare side, this is the one that troubles me the most. Couldn't we all agree that we don't test enough for the COVID-19 virus in America? There are about 1 million people tested a day. Public health officials say: Well, you need at least 4 million. Others say: But if you truly want to reopen the economy and reopen the schools, you need 14 million a day. So you would guess that anything we pass would really zero in on testing to find out those who are positive, to do the contact tracing to warn those who may have been exposed, and to try to contain the virus.

So let's take a look at what Senator McCONNELL thinks about the priority of testing. There is \$16 billion for testing. How much did the Democrats—NANCY PELOSI—propose? She proposed \$75 billion. And let me add that the

McConnell bill provides no funding for hospitals or healthcare clinics and no dedicated funding for nursing homes, where we know the populations are so vulnerable. When it comes to the reality of what we are facing in this COVID-19 pandemic, the McConnell bill, which is coming before us this afternoon, is deficient in testing at a time when we are facing so many infections.

On nutrition, the McConnell bill says that there will be no SNAP benefit increases or funding for food banks and, on education, provides \$105 billion for education stabilization funds. Two-thirds of the K-12 funds will be held until schools provide a reopening plan and, of course, the voucher program.

On postal assistance, the McConnell proposal alters the language in the original legislation to change the borrowing authority. The Postal Service is doing its best, and I thank the men and women who are engaged in it. We should do more than thank them. We ought to fund them and give them a helping hand.

So what it boils down to is this: If this is a real pandemic, if we want to believe the public health experts—whom the President has called “idiots,” like Dr. Anthony Fauci, who has been my friend for 20 years—if we want to believe the public health experts, we need to address this in a serious manner as we did last March in passing the CARES Act. This is not a time for people to cover their backsides politically. It is a time to remember that the American people need our help more than ever. A halfhearted and half-inspired effort to do this will not answer the call.

We need to stand as a nation on a bipartisan basis. How does it start? It starts when Democrats and Republicans sit at the same table, which has not happened. It starts when we agree—both parties agree—on what the priorities must be, and it starts when we stop the speeches and start with real action to pass legislation like the CARES Act, which passed 96 to nothing on this floor. It is time to take this deadly virus and epidemic seriously.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

RECESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess until 2:15 p.m. today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:07 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. CAPITO).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

NOMINATION OF AMY CONEY BARRETT

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, last week, the Judiciary Committee held

its hearing on Judge Amy Coney Barrett's nomination, and it was easy to see why Judge Barrett is held in such high regard by her colleagues, students, and peers and why the American Bar Association gave her its highest rating of “well qualified.”

We knew long before the hearing that Judge Barrett possesses an extraordinary intelligence and a comprehensive command of the law. But over 3 days of testimony, Americans got to see her qualifications for themselves, and they saw why she has been described as “a jurist of formidable intellect,” a “brilliant and conscientious lawyer,” and “a staggering academic mind.” Even the Democratic ranking member on the committee, the senior Senator from California, couldn't hide the fact that she was impressed.

Most importantly, however, Americans saw that Judge Barrett understands the proper role of a judge in our system of government. As Judge Barrett made clear, she understands that the job of a judge is to interpret the law, not to make the law; to call balls and strikes, not to rewrite the rules of the game; or, as Judge Barrett said to the Democrat whip at the hearing last week: “I apply the law. I follow the law. You make policy.”

Judge Barrett has made it clear that when cases come before her on the Supreme Court, she will consider the facts, the law, and the Constitution, and nothing else—not her personal beliefs, not her political opinions, just the law and the Constitution. That is the kind of Justice that all of us—Democrat or Republican, liberal or conservative—should want.

I could spend hours highlighting all the extraordinary tributes to Judge Barrett that have poured in since her nomination, from lawyers and scholars of every background and political persuasion, but I don't want to tie up the Senate floor. So I will just mention one piece of testimony that struck me in particular.

As I mentioned, the American Bar Association released its rating of Judge Barrett last week, a rating that the Democratic leader, by the way, has called the “gold standard”—the “gold standard”—by which judicial candidates are judged. Well, the ABA gave Judge Barrett its highest possible rating—“well qualified.” And the chairman of the American Bar Association's Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary, the ABA committee that issues these ratings, testified before the Judiciary Committee during Judge Barrett's hearing. I would like to read from the testimony that he submitted to the committee.

Lawyers and judges uniformly praised the nominee's integrity. Most remarkably, in interviews with individuals in the legal profession and the community who know Judge Barrett, whether for a few years or decades, not one person uttered a negative word about her character. Accordingly, the Standing Committee was not required to consider any negative criticisms of Judge Barrett.

His testimony went on:

All of the experienced, dedicated, and knowledgeable sitting judges, legal scholars, and lawyers who have worked with or against Judge Barrett had high praise for her intellect and ability to communicate clearly and effectively. . . . Given the breadth, diversity, and strength of the positive feedback we received from judges and lawyers of all political persuasions and from so many parts of the profession, the Standing Committee would have been hard-pressed to come to any conclusion other than that Judge Barrett has demonstrated professional competence that is exceptional.

We are fortunate to have a nominee like Judge Barrett, and I look forward to confirming her to the Supreme Court in the very near future.

CORONAVIRUS

Madam President, in addition to considering Judge Barrett's nomination this week, the Senate will once again be taking up coronavirus relief legislation.

We tried this in September, of course, but Senate Democrats filibustered our relief bill. But we are going to try again because we believe there are priorities that need to be met—priorities that everyone should be able to agree on. They are things like helping the hardest hit small businesses, getting schools the resources they need to safely reopen and safely operate, and providing additional healthcare resources to fight the virus.

Democrats, of course, have spent a lot of time talking about how we need to pass additional coronavirus relief, but despite being given every opportunity to come forward with a realistic compromise bill, they have continued to insist on bloated legislation that would not only spend taxpayer dollars on noncoronavirus-related measures but would not have a chance of becoming law.

It is very difficult for me to understand Democrats' thinking—that is, if they really want to get more COVID relief to Americans and don't just want to use this as a political issue.

I realize that Democrats would like to pass exactly the bill they want, but their liberal wish list simply wouldn't make it through Congress. Democrats could, however, get something through Congress.

Republicans have made it clear from the beginning that we are willing to compromise with Democrats if they will just come to the table with a reasonable offer, but Democrats have so far decided that they would rather see Americans get no relief—zero relief—than compromise with Republicans. That is really difficult to understand, unless, as I said, Democrats aren't really interested in getting more COVID relief to Americans.

The Democrats' position makes a lot more sense if they are just trying to exploit this crisis for political gain.

But Republicans are going to try again this week. The bill that we are bringing up would address some of the Nation's most important coronavirus priorities—priorities, I would add, that are bipartisan priorities. I hope that

some Democrats will join us to get additional relief to the American people.

The Democrat leadership may be holding coronavirus relief hostage, but rank-and-file Democrats don't have to. They don't have to have their all-or-nothing wish list. They can come to a reasonable compromise and give much needed resources to the American people. Instead, what they are saying is zero relief—no relief—is better than compromising with Republicans. Unfortunately, that is an unfortunate position for them to be in and a very unfortunate position for the American people.

I yield the floor.

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.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I rise this afternoon in support of the amendment that Senator RUBIO and I have introduced to extend and strengthen the Paycheck Protection Program. It would allow our Nation's hardest hit small businesses to get a second forgivable PPP loan that they so desperately need. Our amendment would make available \$258 billion for new PPP forgivable loans.

Madam President, as I know you are aware from your experience in West Virginia, the Paycheck Protection Program has been hugely successful. In the State of Maine, three out of four of our small businesses have received forgivable loans totaling \$2.9 billion. To put that in context, that is equal to approximately half of the entire State budget. Most important of all, those loans have helped to sustain the jobs of more than 250,000 Mainers.

Nationwide, the PPP has been a critical lifeline for more than 5 million small employers, helping to sustain upward of 50 million American jobs.

As the Washington Post wrote in June following a dramatically better than expected jobs report: "Give some credit to the government relief efforts, especially the Paycheck Protection Program, for bringing back jobs."

This program has provided one-time loans sufficient to support 8 weeks of payroll plus a limited amount to help cover certain overhead expenses, which were completely forgivable as long as borrowers retained and paid their employees. Our purpose was to help small businesses save jobs and pay their workers, keeping that all-important employer-employee relationship intact so that, when businesses could reopen and Americans could go back to work, it could happen quickly when the pandemic subsided.

When Chairman RUBIO and I, together with Senators BEN CARDIN and JEANNE SHAHEEN, put the PPP together at the onset of the national emergency,

none of us could have envisioned that the pandemic would be so persistent, that here in October it would still be forcing shutdowns and mitigation measures that many months later.

Yet, the cruel fact is that the virus is still spreading, and many of the steps taken to fight it, while necessary to protect public health, threaten catastrophic damage to many small businesses and their employees who have been sustained by the PPP loan funds, but they are still unable to return to normal operations.

According to the NFIB, our Nation's largest advocacy group for small business, 84 percent of its small business members exhausted their PPP loan funds by mid-August. Many fear that they will have to lay off their employees—the last thing they want to do—or even cease operations altogether if more support is not forthcoming soon.

In a key letter in support of our amendment circulated today, the NFIB also said that its most recent survey shows that 49 percent of its members anticipate needing some sort of additional financial support in the next 12 months.

Let me give you an example. I recently learned of a T-shirt printing shop in Maine that received a PPP loan. It provided a lifeline to get this business through the past several months, but with many youth sports leagues and school activities still suspended, this business and its employees need more help to sustain them until springtime, when they hope to once again be printing T-shirts for little league teams and other sporting events.

The impact of the pandemic has been critically acute for our hotels, our restaurants, our B&Bs, and our seasonal businesses that rely on a strong summer to pay their bills throughout the year. A State like mine, which is so dependent on tourism, has been particularly hard-hit since many of our tourism-based businesses lost the first part of the summer.

A recent survey by the American Hotel and Lodging Association showed that, if we do not act and act soon to provide additional assistance, 74 percent of our Nation's hotels will be forced to lay off more workers, and two-thirds could even be forced to close their doors entirely.

The same is true in my State of Maine. An article published last month in the Bangor Daily News reports that the State could stand to lose two-thirds of hotels and direct lodging jobs if Congress doesn't approve more aid soon.

Our restaurants are also struggling. While tourists finally started to return to Maine in August, this summer season has understandably been one of the slowest on record for my State. With the warm weather gone and outdoor dining no longer feasible, many of our restaurants can accommodate only about half as many customers as they used to be able to accommodate and