

the Great Depression. She has openly advocated a return to the gold standard. She has long questioned the need for Federal deposit insurance, and, in March 2009, in the midst of our last economic crisis, she questioned: Why do we need a central bank?

Imagine someone like Ms. Shelton, with her retrograde views, sitting on the Federal Reserve during a time of economic crisis? Imagine someone like that making decisions about monetary policy back in April, when our economy was in free fall? We should not confirm to the Federal Reserve someone who would likely stymie efforts to dig ourselves out of this economic crisis.

I urge every one of my colleagues, Democratic and Republican, to reject this terrible, terrible nomination.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, COVID-19, as we know, unfortunately, has upended nearly every aspect of American life for the better part of a year. But as impatient as we all are for our lives to return to normal, the harsh truth of the matter is that the coming months may be, by far, the worst of the pandemic.

Cases have skyrocketed to well over 150,000 Americans per day. We are now recording more than 1 million new COVID cases a week. Hospital ICUs and morgues in many parts of the country are approaching or even beyond capacity.

Americans must brace themselves for a long winter. We cannot tire of the simple precautions that limit the spread of the disease and save lives. Wear a mask, social distance, avoid large indoor gatherings, and stay vigilant. We must all continue to do our part to prevent this next surge from overwhelming our health systems and endangering our fellow citizens. Congress, as well, should be doing all that is necessary to support those efforts and prevent the worst from happening.

Too many Americans have lost healthcare coverage as a result of losing their jobs this year. Medicaid has seen a huge increase in new enrollees and needs resources. As unemployment remains in the tens of millions, extending unemployment insurance is paramount, and many more things besides.

Speaker PELOSI and I have been in regular communication with President-Elect Biden and his transition team. Unlike the current administration, the incoming administration wants to move rapidly to get a handle on the virus and recover our economy. Today, President-Elect Biden urged the Senate to pass the Heroes Act—comprehensive legislation that leaves no one behind. That is just the right approach. Our country deserves a bill that meets the needs of the American people and that meets the needs of the moment.

If Leader MCCONNELL and our Republican colleagues want to sit down and

negotiate a bipartisan solution with a bipartisan process, Democrats are ready and willing and able to do so, but, unfortunately, it has been 2 weeks since Leader MCCONNELL said he was in charge of negotiating the next COVID-19 relief bill, and he still hasn't spoken to Speaker PELOSI or myself.

We have 14 votes on the floor this week on nominations for a lame-duck President, but we have nothing—nothing—pertaining to COVID. There is, however, a bit of good news today. A second U.S. company announced that it has discovered an effective vaccine in phase 3 trials. Early figures suggest it is close to 95 percent effective. As these two vaccines move through the final approval process, we should prepare the country to produce and distribute them to everyone in a comprehensive bill that includes robust vaccine funding.

Finally, there is light at the end of the tunnel, but we are still in that tunnel and may be so for several months. So we must pull together, once again, to do everything in our individual power to turn the tide of the virus.

2020 ELECTIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, instead of working to pull the country back together so we can fight our common enemy, COVID-19, the Republican majority is busy spreading conspiracy theories denying reality and poisoning the well of our democracy.

It seems like Republicans all over Washington are auditioning for "Profiles in Cowardice," nudging each other aside to say who can say the most outlandish thing in support of President Trump's baseless claims of election fraud. Two Members of this Chamber went so far as to accuse their State's election result of not being delivered honestly because President Trump didn't win. They demanded their own Secretary of State, a fellow Republican, resign. The two Senators provided no evidence—not a shred—to support the claim that the election wasn't conducted honestly.

A Republican Governor this weekend supported the idea of States sending alternative slates of electors to the electoral college. He encouraged Republican State legislators and States that voted for Joe Biden to literally ignore the will of the voters to send electors who would vote for Donald Trump.

I understand my Republican colleagues dislike the results of the Presidential election, but this has gone beyond ridiculous. This is reckless. President Trump is working to convince millions of Americans that the election wasn't fair and was stolen without a scrap of evidence. Whatever fears my colleagues might have about President Trump abandoning their party if they don't show sufficient support, that is no excuse for sanctioning his efforts to discredit our democratic elections.

The percentage of Republicans who now believe that the election was not free and fair has doubled to 70 per-

cent—70—in the United States of America. How much longer will Senate Republicans stand by while President Trump shreds Americans' faith in our democracy.

So I have a very simple message for my colleagues. The election is over. President Trump lost. Joe Biden will be the next President of the United States. KAMALA HARRIS will be the next Vice President of the United States. All over the country legal claims by the President are being laughed out of court. Ironically, the President's legal challenges have accomplished one thing: They have revealed just how secure our elections were. As courts from Pennsylvania to Michigan, to Arizona dismiss these claims, they are confirming there is no credible evidence of fraud or irregularities. So far, not one vote has been tossed out. These are facts, and the longer Republicans refuse to acknowledge them, the more damage is done.

In order to keep up this charade, the Trump administration is now actually denying national security briefings to President-Elect Biden. It is actively refusing to coordinate with the incoming administration on the coronavirus. How unimaginably stupid is that? We shouldn't even be discussing for 1 minute whether or not Republicans will accept the democratic results of our Presidential election or whether the next President should receive security briefings. That should be a given. But it appears, sadly, unfortunately, my Republican colleagues will follow President Trump all the way down the rabbit hole to the very bitter end of his very bitter Presidency. And every day that goes by, the more damage is done to our country, to our national security, to our ability to fight COVID, and to America's faith in our democracy.

So I plead with my Republican colleagues: Stop denying reality. Stop recklessly sowing doubt about our democratic process. Stop going down to the lowest common denominator that President Trump seems to live with all the time, and start focusing on COVID. Let's bring this country together and get some things done.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Kristi Haskins Johnson, of Mississippi, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Mississippi.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am struck by the fact, as I call people around my State of Vermont, which, like your State and every State, has suffered from COVID—although I compliment our Republican Governor, who has kept the numbers down lower than practically any other State in the country. But we are facing winter, and even today, the outgoing President does not seem to be willing to acknowledge the huge mistake he made in not accepting the fact that we had a COVID pandemic coming to this country. We lost too much time preparing for it. We are still not adequately prepared for it. We could take some hope in the news of new vaccinations, but even that is going to take months before than can be fully implemented.

The reason I mention this is that the Senate time and again is voting on judicial nominees who have been recommended predominantly by a special interest group or a couple of different special interest groups. We have to vote on these special interest judges for lifetime appointments, but we can't do a single thing to help the average people who are suffering because of COVID. It should not be a Republican or a Democratic issue.

In my State, I hear from business people who have small B&Bs, may have a restaurant and a small business—they don't identify themselves as Republicans or Democrats; they just say: We can't open. What are we going to do?

I hear from parents who say: What is being done so our kids can go back to school? The schools say they could probably do something, but they need the money to set up various COVID protections.

Small hospitals are overwhelmed. We have seen this in States all over the country. The hospitals are being overwhelmed, and the people working there are being overwhelmed.

The U.S. Senate hasn't done a single thing. We had a bill before us from the House in June and July. We could have voted on it. The Republican leader said: No, we can't, because there are some parts we Republicans may not like. Well, that is why you vote. Bring it up. Vote it up or vote it down. Bring up amendments. Vote for them or vote against them, but do it. Instead, we spend our time day after day after day

voting on special interest judges—people who have been proposed by special interests groups, who are picked because they feel they would vote with these special interests groups. What we should be doing is taking a little time off from that and voting for the American people.

In my State, we have Republicans and Democrats. We have a Republican Governor who is doing an excellent job. He has just been reelected. We have a wonderful Democratic woman who has been elected as the new Lieutenant Governor. They both want to work together to get people back to school, back to work, protect their health. They keep saying: When is the help coming from Washington?

I think that instead of spending all of this time talking about fanciful thoughts—I saw one of the Trump supporters on television saying that she was there to rally for Donald Trump, to resist those millions of votes that came in at the last minute from China, into these voting booths. She thoroughly believed it, and she seemed like a really intelligent person. But let's talk about reality.

The reality is that COVID did not go away in the spring, as the President said. The reality is that you have to wear masks. The reality is that you have to take steps to keep from getting COVID. The reality is that our schools are suffering, our families are suffering, our small businesses are suffering, our government agencies are suffering—America is suffering.

I think about a few years ago when we had the Ebola plague, and the Obama administration put in place, with strong bipartisan support, a special unit at the White House to react to plagues or serious novel diseases coming here. As a result, America was protected. But what we also did, as America does best, is we helped other countries to handle the question of Ebola.

What did we do when this administration came in? Well, because President Obama set up that infectious disease unit, they quickly disbanded it. For months, as these reports were coming in making it very clear we were facing a serious threat to the United States, they ignored it and refused to acknowledge it. Now at least they have acknowledged it somewhat but are unwilling to take the steps necessary to fight it.

So I suggest that the U.S. Senate do its job. Hold off for a while on these special interest judges and actually vote for the things that help people who don't have special interests—the vast majority of Republicans and Democrats, men and women, families throughout the United States of America. Do something to help them. Bring up the bills. Bring up the COVID bills. Bring up the appropriations bills. Certainly, Senator SHELBY and I are prepared to bring them to the floor. If people don't like a particular bill, then bring up an amendment. Vote it up or down. What are we afraid of? Why are

we afraid to vote? Vote it up or down. Let the American people see what we are doing.

Certainly, I do not know a single person, Republican or Democrat, in my State who would tell me: Well, I would much rather have you vote on these special interest judges than to vote on things that might actually help us keep our businesses from closing, help us be able to afford our kids going to school, help us put food on our table.

That is what we should be doing. Let's vote on real things. Let's vote on the COVID appropriations. Let's vote on the help. Let's bring up our appropriations bills. After all, in just a few weeks, all funding for the government stops. Bring it up and vote on it. Vote up or down. If people don't want to fund the government, then vote no. If they want to fund the government, vote yes. If they don't like a particular part of the funding package, bring up an amendment and have the courage to put your name on it and then vote up or down.

I will speak further on this as we go on. I see one of my colleagues on the floor. I think he wants to speak.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from the Kansas.

RISER ACT

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I am on the floor this afternoon to encourage us in the U.S. Senate to address at least some of the needs related to the consequences of COVID-19.

There is a deadline that is fast approaching. This problem was created in the statute by legislation that was passed, the CARES Act. I have introduced legislation called the RISER Act to offer a solution to the issue I am about to describe.

As COVID-19 has swept across the country, businesses and community institutions have been forced to adapt to the virus, fundamentally changing the way in which they operate. More people are working from home today than ever before, while others are being asked to dedicate increased resources for public health precautions and support management. Virtual education and healthcare have also expanded greatly as communities are forced to conduct ordinary functions from afar to prevent the spread of the disease.

Adapting to the realities of this newly virtual economy is costly. To aid in this transition, as part of the CARES Act, Congress established the Coronavirus Relief Fund, or CRF. It is a multibillion-dollar fund for State and local governments to disburse, covering a variety of expenses that have arisen due to COVID-19. Expenses that can be paid from the CRF funds include providing small businesses and other organizations with grants to reimburse them for costs associated with handling coronavirus.

This funding was partly intended to address immediate, unforeseen costs absorbed by our public emergency officials and healthcare providers. Kansas