

commonalities and make law here, and, up to now, our Democratic colleagues have declined to do that.

Remember, their side said in March this pandemic was “a tremendous opportunity to restructure things to fit our vision.” So when Republicans tried to pass commonsense relief measures in July, in September, and in October, as well, our Democratic colleagues actually blocked policies they do not even oppose.

It has been heartening to see a few hopeful signs in the past few days. After months of arbitrary attachment to sky-high dollar amounts that the Speaker of the House claimed were essential—that it would be an insult to settle for a nickel less—those baseless claims have suddenly evaporated.

That is at least movement in the right direction, but the underlying reality is still with us. There are many important policies that have strong bipartisan support. There are many others that do not, and the way to help the country is for our Democratic colleagues to finally let the former group be signed into law while we keep arguing over the rest.

The targeted second round of paycheck protection that we have been trying to establish since July would help a huge number of small businesses survive to the finish line and help huge numbers of workers to keep their jobs. And it can pass the Senate today, probably with 95 votes.

With the apparent success of Operation Warp Speed, it makes no sense to skimp on the systems to distribute and deliver vaccines around the country. Those funds could pass the Senate today, possibly unanimously.

University presidents have made it clear they need certainty for their reopenings. Let me say that again. University presidents have made it clear they need legal certainty for their reopenings. That shouldn’t be partisan. Liability protections should be able to pass the Senate today.

A number of our Democratic colleagues have focused especially on several of the unemployment relief programs that are set to expire in a matter of days. I specifically made sure to include those programs in my framework a few days ago. That extension could pass the Senate today.

The House of Representatives is spending this week on pressing issues like marijuana—marijuana—you know, serious and important legislation befitting this national crisis. But here in the Senate, I put forward a serious and highly targeted relief proposal including the elements which we know the President is ready and willing to sign into law. Why should these impactful and noncontroversial life preservers be delayed one second longer?

At long last, let’s do what Congress does when we want an outcome. Let’s make law on all the subjects where we agree and on all the areas where President Trump is ready to sign bipartisan relief into law.

I promise, our deep differences will still be here to debate. Our disagreements will be right where we left them. But do you know what can’t wait? What can’t wait are American workers, American small businesses, K-12 schools, the vulnerable Americans and frontline healthcare workers for whom speedy vaccine distribution will literally be a life-or-death matter.

Yesterday, my home State of Kentucky experienced yet another dreadful—dreadful—record-setting day. But Kentuckians also know that hope is in sight. Our State’s workers are standing by at the UPS Worldport in Louisville and the DHL Express American Hub in northern Kentucky, key logistics centers that will play crucial roles in sending vaccines all around the country.

Our people are hurting, but they are ready to finish this fight. Congress should not keep them waiting for reinforcements that should have arrived literally months ago.

So compromise is within reach. We know where we agree. We can do this. Let me say it again. We can do this, and we need to do this. So let’s be about actually making a law.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BARASSO). 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 senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Christopher Waller, of Minnesota, to be a Member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for a term of fourteen years from February 1, 2016.

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

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I was pleased that the Senate unanimously agreed yesterday to proceed to conference on the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act.

The NDAA is one of the most important pieces of legislation that we pass here every year. It is the bill that authorizes funding for our troops and lays out our defense priorities.

Like the last two NDAs, this year’s bill focuses on restoring military readiness and ensuring that our Nation is prepared to meet threats posed by major powers like Russia and China.

In November of 2018, the bipartisan National Defense Strategy Commission released a report warning that our readiness had eroded to the point that we might struggle to win a war against a major power like Russia or China, and the Commission noted that we would be especially vulnerable if we were ever called on to fight a war on two fronts.

Over the past 2 years, we have made real progress on restoring military readiness, but we still have more work to do.

This year’s National Defense Authorization Act continues our investment in ensuring that our military is prepared to meet current and future threats in any domain.

Of course, no matter what weapons or tanks or planes we have, our greatest military resource will always be our men and women in uniform, and this year’s NDAA invests in improving the quality of life for our military members and their families. The bill supports a 3-percent pay raise for our troops, and it builds on previous measures to improve military healthcare and housing. It will also provide support for our military families in areas like childcare and professional development for military spouses.

As I said, this bill is one of the most important measures that we pass every year, and we need to make sure that we pass the final version of this legislation before Christmas. Failing to pass this legislation would send the wrong message to our troops and our allies and to our adversaries.

While this may not be a perfect bill, it contains a lot of important provisions to rebuild our military and to give our men and women in uniform the tools they need to defend our Nation. We need to pass it as soon as possible.

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL ENZI

Mr. President, yesterday afternoon, MIKE ENZI delivered his farewell address. While MIKE has more than earned his retirement over a long and dedicated career in Washington and in Wyoming, we are going to miss him here in the U.S. Senate.

MIKE is an accountant and spent years as a small business man, and he brought that background and common sense to Washington, DC, with him.

In many ways, he has been the conscience of the Senate on spending issues, reminding us that we don’t have an unlimited amount of money to spend and that every dollar we add to the debt is a burden that will have to be met by our children and grandchildren.

As chairman of the Budget Committee, he has passed budgets with an eye to restraining spending and lessening the burden we place on future generations. His 2018 budget also paved the way for the landmark Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which reformed America's outdated Tax Code, helped create jobs and opportunities for workers, and put more money in the pockets of American families.

MIKE is an outstanding legislator, and he is also one of the finest human beings you will ever meet. I think all of us have benefited from his thoughtfulness at one time or another. I remember when I was experiencing heel pain a few years ago with an ailment called plantar fasciitis, and I mentioned it to MIKE because he was a shoe salesman and a shoe store owner. It wasn't more than a few days later when MIKE came to me with some heel inserts to put into my shoes, which, I might add, helped a lot. Obviously, he had a lot of experience through the years dealing with people with foot issues. But it was typical of MIKE ENZI—thoughtful and practical, down-to-earth.

In business, as everyone knows, the customer comes first, and MIKE has brought that attitude to his 24 years here in the U.S. Senate. As a shoe salesman, he put his customers first, and as a Senator, he always put his constituents and the American people first. He has never forgotten how to help people. He has never forgotten where he comes from. He has worked hard every day that he has been here in the Senate to make life better for the people of Wyoming and for American citizens.

He is an outstanding colleague and a friend, and I will miss his wisdom and expertise—and his great fishing stories.

MIKE, I wish you the very best of everything in your retirement. I am glad you will have more time to spend with Diana and the kids and grandkids and more time to enjoy your beloved home State of Wyoming. While no State will ever compare to South Dakota in my book, I have to say that Wyoming is spectacularly beautiful, and I am glad you will be able to be there now on more of a full-time basis. But you will be missed here. I want to thank you for your service and your friendship. May God bless you and your family in your retirement.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the floor.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CORONAVIRUS

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I rise today to talk a little bit about what is happening in Nevada. Last week, I had the opportunity to be home, and I went to one of our mobile

food banks in East Las Vegas just before Thanksgiving. The mobile food bank is one of our food pantries throughout the State of Nevada, and this particular one is run by Three Square. I arrived around 8 a.m. in the morning to a line of cars waiting at the site. That line sometimes gets so long, police have to direct traffic around it. Literally, they lined up at 3 a.m. The food pantry doesn't even open until 7 or 8 in the morning, but they were there at 3 a.m., around the block, in their cars to stay safe from the COVID-19 pandemic. There were over 350 of them throughout that morning. That is not unusual with what is happening in Nevada right now. That is not unusual, and it should be, but because this pandemic has hit Nevada and so many States so hard, we are seeing the consequences of inaction by this body in the Senate.

As I got there that morning, I imagined those people in the middle of the night with their lights and power off in their cars to save fuel in the cold desert night. And they waited patiently. They were quiet because they knew assistance would be there when morning came. And sometimes that food runs out for those many people who are waiting, and then they have to come the next day. But because of the inaction in this Chamber, most Nevadans who are hurting don't have that reassurance that there will be immediate, swift relief for them because they don't know when Federal help will come. Lifeline organizations like Three Square, which are working tirelessly to help families fill the gaps, are running out of resources.

It has been 223 days since the Senate last approved funds to help all Americans endure this once-in-a-lifetime catastrophe. Meanwhile, too many people in Nevada are languishing in the dark, hoping for economic assistance that still hasn't arrived.

In Nevada, we continue to have the second highest unemployment rate in the country at 12 percent. That is almost twice the national rate. Unemployment is so high in Nevada because of the coronavirus pandemic. It has stopped conventions, entertainment, hospitality, and travel operations in the Silver State and across the country. In August, in Nevada, employment in travel and tourism was down 25 percent over last year. Nationwide, spending on travel has declined by 42 percent compared to 2019. As a result, there are 60 percent fewer travelers to McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas and 50 percent fewer travelers to Las Vegas itself. The American Hotel and Lodging Association estimates that without more funding, nearly 70 percent of hotels may close by the end of this year.

Because of the devastation to what had been a thriving hospitality industry in Nevada, many of the jobs aren't there right now, and too many workers in Nevada can't pay their bills. More than 175,000 people in the Silver State continue to claim unemployment in-

surance. People without jobs are struggling right now to pay rent or mortgages or healthcare.

Let me tell you, housing assistance from the CARES Act helped tens of thousands of Nevadans and millions of Americans keep a roof over their heads. That was legislation we passed immediately in a bipartisan way—one of four. But those funds have run out. They are gone, and they need to be replaced. When the limited CDC eviction moratorium expires on January 1, Nevada is bracing for 250,000 to 400,000 possible evictions. That is more than 20 times the national number of evictions in 2019.

Families and seniors can't get enough to eat. In August and September, 234,000 Nevadans said their households were experiencing food insecurity. That is 11 percent of Nevada households going hungry—the second largest share in the country. One hundred and twenty-nine thousand said that the children in their homes didn't have enough food.

The longer we delay passing additional economic relief, the more jeopardy we create for our entire economy, nationwide. Don't take my word for it; just listen to Chairman Powell of the Federal Reserve, who has been saying this over and over again—most recently in a hearing in the Banking Committee, which I am a member of.

The Senate must do more to help people not just in my home State but across the country, especially now, as case counts are climbing. We are only months away from being able to give the population at large immunity to this deadly virus. We have to do everything we can to help people get to that time, to ensure that for the coming months, Nevadans can stay in their homes, they can take care of their kids, they can keep their businesses running, knowing that they will have an opportunity to open them in the future, and they can protect themselves from this virus. The only way to do that is to get them the relief they need now.

That relief simply has to include more money for State, local, and Tribal governments, which have had to cut back on critical services in the middle of a pandemic.

It should include extended unemployment benefits and pandemic unemployment assistance, as well as more loans for our small businesses and for PPP.

It must have housing assistance to prevent a wave of homelessness and illness.

It should do more to protect workers, fund education, and stave off hunger for families.

It also needs to include billions that States have asked for to help with vaccine distribution. We are going to be rolling out millions of doses of vaccines, all of which will need to be stored, handled, and tracked across 50 States. Healthcare workers not just in Nevada but across the country will