

emergencies like 9/11. We have even given some protection to pharmaceutical companies, which we have asked to take risks to come up with world-class vaccines and therapies, to encourage them and to incentivize them to do that because we know it is in the public interest.

But across the country, we are already seeing these lawsuits rolling in, and without action from Congress, we are going to emerge from this pandemic only to find ourselves in not another wave of the virus but in a second wave of litigation that will be devastating for many.

In order for our country and our economy to recover, these workers and these institutions need to know that they can follow the guidelines and then safely reopen their doors and do their jobs with confidence. They need to know that if they follow these guidelines and act in good faith, they won't be subjected to perhaps business-ending litigation that could tie them up in court and drain their remaining resources dry.

As I have said, the way we reach agreements around here is through bipartisan negotiations. It took a little compromise, and neither side achieved 100 percent of what they wanted, but we eventually have gotten there. We have done that four times in the coronavirus response, and I hope we can do it again here.

I hope our Democratic colleagues will approach these negotiations with the gravity they deserve. We can't leave people waiting and wondering what their future looks like any longer if there is something we can do to provide them some safety and security and some confidence about what the future may look like.

I hope we will all work together to deliver these critical liability protections for folks across the country in all 50 States.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

#### HONORING THE LIFE AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF FORMER UNITED STATES SENATOR PAUL SPYROS SARBANES

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I take this time, along with my colleague from Maryland, Senator CHRIS VAN HOLLEN—and I am also pleased that we are joined by Senator STABENOW and Senator REED. We take this time, on a very sad note, to announce the death of Paul Spyros Sarbanes, our former colleague in the U.S. Senate, who passed away on December 6, 2020, at the age of 87.

I first got to know Senator Sarbanes when he first ran for public office in 1966. We both were elected to the Maryland General Assembly that year, and we became good friends. Delegate Sarbanes at that point made a name for himself on the House Judiciary Committee in the Maryland General Assembly and was a rising star from his first day in the Maryland General Assembly.

He shortly thereafter ran for the House of Representatives. He served three terms in the House of Representatives with a very distinguished career. During that time, it was the time of the Watergate issues, and Congressman SARBANES was on the Judiciary Committee and was given the responsibility of the first Article of Impeachment against President Nixon. That article dealt with obstruction of justice. It was the key engagement against President Nixon on impeachment, and it is very telling that that responsibility was given to a young Member of the House of Representatives, Congressman Paul Sarbanes. It was because of his work ethic, his commitment to scholarship, and his understanding of issues that he was entrusted with that responsibility.

He then served five terms in the U.S. Senate, the longest term for any Senator in Maryland. Paul Sarbanes was known as a Senator's Senator for his integrity, for his public commitment to public service, and his strong commitment to principles. He was a Rhodes scholar who chose to serve the public rather than using his skills in the private sector for his own personal gain. His entire life was devoted to public service. What a legacy he has left us by his incredible public service.

In 2002, the Enron scandal hit America, and Chairman Sarbanes, the chairman of the Banking Committee here, teamed up with Chairman Oxley in the House to pass the Sarbanes-Oxley legislation. George W. Bush—President Bush—said it was “the most far-reaching reforms of American business practices since the time of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.” The leadership of Senator Sarbanes was deeply needed at that time, and he delivered on behalf of the American people.

Senator VAN HOLLEN and I know firsthand what Senator Sarbanes did in helping to create the Federal partnership in the Chesapeake Bay Program. It was during the time that he was the junior Senator from Maryland, along with Senator Mathias, that the two of them partnered in order to develop the Federal program for the Chesapeake Bay, and then Senator Sarbanes carried the burden of that partnership. For many years, it was through his efforts in the U.S. Senate that we were able to continue and expand the Federal partnership for the bay.

Now, those of us who live in the bay region—and I know that Senator STABENOW has heard me talk about this many times when we talk about the great water bodies. We know that the Chesapeake is the largest estuary in our hemisphere. It is the most diverse estuary, and it is a challenge because of the way that the water flows and it cleanses itself. So we started this Federal partnership—Senator Sarbanes did—and it has provided incredible dividends for the people of Maryland and the people of our Nation—indeed, the global community.

He was an expert on foreign policy. He served on the Senate Foreign Rela-

tions Committee. He was involved in the leadership of passing ratification of the Panama Canal Treaty, and there are so many other areas in which Senator Sarbanes excelled.

We all receive honors; I know that. I am just going to mention three because they were really reflective of what Senator Sarbanes accomplished during his career. He got the Paul H. Douglas Ethics in Government Award for his incredible standard of integrity and ethics; the Roth Award for extraordinary impact on policy, on economic business, and finance—his lasting legacy on the financial institutions here in America; and the Cox, Richardson, Coleman Award for distinguished public service. He was a Senator's Senator. He devoted his life to public service.

In a way, Paul Sarbanes represents the American success story. He was a son of Greek immigrants, grew up on the Eastern Shore of Maryland in Salisbury, and rose to serve in the U.S. Senate.

His lifetime partner was Christine. All of us remember Paul and Christine together. What a couple they made. What a love story it was.

There are three children. JOHN, whom we all know very well because he serves in the House of Representatives, holds the seat in the Third Congressional District. It is the same seat that Barbara Mikulski held, the same seat that I held; the same seat that Paul Sarbanes held is now being held by Paul's son JOHN, and what a great job he is doing. It is interesting that he was the leading sponsor of H.R. 1 in this Congress, which was basically the good governance legislation that passed overwhelmingly in the House, and so many other things that follow in his father's tradition.

Paul's other son Michael has had a distinguished career, and Janet, his daughter, has also had a distinguished career.

Paul had seven grandchildren. Christine predeceased Paul.

I want to just talk a moment about the partnership between Senator Sarbanes and Senator Mikulski. They had different styles. I think most people would acknowledge that from the beginning, Paul was very much stately and represented the traditional, I guess, demeanor that you would expect of a U.S. Senator. And I love Barbara Mikulski, but no one would ever accuse her of having that type of demeanor. But the two of them had an incredible relationship together. They were called the “Diner Democrats” because Paul's father's family ran a diner, and Barbara Mikulski's family ran Mikulski's Bakery, as we all know. They worked together in true partnership over so many years. It was a friendship that was really one of total trust and respect.

I had a chance to communicate with Senator Mikulski, and she, because of COVID, could not join us tonight.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that her statement be printed in the RECORD of these proceedings.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

MIKULSKI STATEMENT ON THE PASSING OF  
SENATOR PAUL S. SARBANES

BALTIMORE.—Retired U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-MD) today issues the following statement remembering Senator Paul Sarbanes:

"We join Maryland and all of America in mourning the loss of Senator Paul Sarbanes. We extend our condolences and sympathies to his family and loved ones during this time.

America has lost a great statesman, the state of Maryland has lost a champion, and I, along with so many others, have lost a friend.

The Maryland Delegation calls itself Team Maryland, and we became a team because of Senator Sarbanes's work in reaching hands across the aisle to Senator Mac Mathias. Senator Sarbanes knew that each of us could make a difference but working together was how we would make change. His legacy of bringing Marylanders together to make change lives on in the Delegation today.

Senator Sarbanes never forgot his family's strong immigrant roots or their belief in the American Dream. He knew the transformational power of education and championed an opportunity ladder and increased access to higher education. An unabashed believer in America's promise, he became a voice for civil rights and voting rights. And in his advocacy on housing, he worked to eliminate barriers of discrimination. He championed the stabilization of the Social Security and Medicare trust funds and worked tirelessly to protect and preserve the Chesapeake Bay for tomorrow while advocating for jobs on the Port of Baltimore today.

Senator Sarbanes believed that discussion and debate should always be based on civility, intellectual rigor, and respect for others. He was a workhorse, not a show horse, who cared more about the getting job done and getting it done right, than in taking credit.

We served together in Congress for 30 years, 20 of them together in the Senate. And just as he was Maryland's champion, he was my champion, too. As well as my ally and friend. We joked that we were "diner democrats," not "dynasty democrats." He was the son of a diner owner, and I was the daughter of a grocer. We were both raised to ask how we could help those around us every day. Senator Sarbanes took that lesson to heart; it was his commitment to helping not only the people of Maryland, but every American that drove him. And each of us is better off for having been helped by him.

He was always there when you needed him. He will be missed."

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, let me conclude by just quoting from Senator Sarbanes himself on the final speech that he gave when he left the Senate. He said:

Throughout my years in public service, I have worked to the limits of my ability to provide the people of Maryland and the Nation dedicated, informed, and independent representation based on the fundamental principles of integrity and intelligence. I have been guided in this effort by the vision of a decent and just America, based on a strong sense of community and offering fairness and opportunity to all its people.

Service in this body has reinforced, many times over, my understanding and commitment to the institutions upon which our system of Democratic governance critically depends.

So long as [that] vision of America's promise continues to shine brightly in this body,

I have every confidence that our Nation will prevail in the face of great challenges and that its future will be assured.

It is our responsibility to heed those words of Senator Sarbanes and strive to carry out his legacy.

Before I yield to Senator VAN HOLLEN, the two of us, on behalf of all of the Members of the U.S. Senate, have filed a resolution to honor Paul Sarbanes. This has been cleared.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 797, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 797) honoring the life and achievements of former United States Senator Paul Spyros Sarbanes and expressing condolences to the family of Paul Spyros Sarbanes on his passing.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. CARDIN. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to; that the preamble be agreed to; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 797) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions".)

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I now yield the floor in anticipation that my colleague from Maryland—the two of us have joined together to pay tribute to Senator Sarbanes—be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I want to start by thanking my friend and colleague, the senior Senator from Maryland, Senator BEN CARDIN, for his remembrance of Paul Sarbanes. I am honored to join him and others in offering a resolution in memory of Senator Paul Sarbanes.

I should say that Senator Sarbanes was very pleased that BEN CARDIN succeeded him in his seat here in the U.S. Senate. So I am honored to join with him, Senator STABENOW, Senator REED, Senator DURBIN, and others in remembering somebody who was a friend, who was a mentor, and who was the excellent role model for every elected official—Senator Paul Sarbanes.

He was a thoughtful and brilliant Senator, a kind man, and a dedicated public servant. As we have heard, he was born on Maryland's Eastern Shore to parents who emigrated from Greece. He graduated from the local public high school, Wicomico High School, and was recruited to attend Princeton on a full scholarship. He excelled in his studies as he would in his career, becoming a Rhodes scholar and graduating from Oxford before attending Harvard Law School.

He went on to a very distinguished career in public service that ended here in the U.S. Senate, but he never ever forgot his humble roots in Salisbury, where his parents owned a small restaurant they called the Mayflower.

In his farewell speech in the Senate, Senator Paul Sarbanes said:

My parents came to this country as immigrants from Greece, both my mother and [my] father, and it was from them that I first learned about the meaning of a democratic society and the potential it offers to move up the ladder of opportunity on the basis of ability, hard work, and conviction. Their memory is still a very powerful influence in my life.

As we heard from Senator CARDIN, Senator Barbara Mikulski, who served here so well, was his friend and partner, and for years she always joked that they were the "Diner Democrats," a nod to the Mayflower restaurant, owned by Paul Sarbanes's father, her roots in the Polish-American community in Baltimore, and their mutual commitment to fighting for working people, for the dignity of work, for the reality of the struggles so many Americans face, and the need to give every American a fair shot.

Paul Sarbanes carried the values he learned from his parents on Maryland's Eastern Shore, first to the Maryland House of Delegates, then to the House of Representatives, and later here to the U.S. Senate.

From the very start, he developed a reputation for thoughtfulness and honor. He could make simple and confident arguments, based on evidence, to win others to his cause—Members from both parties.

He was in his first term in the House of Representatives during the Watergate hearings, and he approached the proceedings on the Judiciary Committee with his signature seriousness of purpose. He considered the evidence, he listened to President Nixon's counsel's statements, and methodically addressed and responded to their arguments. Because of his own unimpeachable conduct, the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee called upon him, a new member, and asked him to introduce the first article of impeachment against President Nixon—the charge of obstruction of justice. Paul Sarbanes had the legal acumen to take on that responsibility, but he also had the integrity to be a moral voice in the Congress at that moment for the country.

Writing about his dignified work during the Watergate proceedings, journalist Elizabeth Drew commented: "Paul Sarbanes would not have looked at all bad at the Constitutional Convention; he might have [even] been one of the great ones."

After three terms in the House, Paul Sarbanes ran for the Senate. I first met Senator Sarbanes in the 1980s, when I was serving as a staff member on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

I know everybody who served with Paul Sarbanes will understand what a master class it was to watch him during a hearing. On cross-examination,

he asked thoughtful, probing questions, and before a reluctant witness realized what was happening, he had them cornered with no way out but to concede to the point that he wanted to make or look deliberately evasive. Woe be it to any witness who came before Senator Sarbanes unprepared.

He was a Senate workhorse in the truest and best sense. Former Majority Leader George Mitchell once said: "Paul was effective because he didn't seek credit, which endeared him to his colleagues."

He wasn't afraid to take his time to get to the bottom of an issue, build his case, and convince his colleagues. In the wake of the Enron scandal, he held 10 hearings to ensure that the congressional response would be thorough and effective and rallied the entire Senate to support the ensuing Sarbanes-Oxley Act, the law that is credited with restoring greater investor confidence in the market and providing transparency and oversight for corporate governance.

He loved the State of Maryland, and especially the Chesapeake Bay. As Senator CARDIN indicated, he took on the mantle of forging and strengthening the Federal partnership to clean up his beloved Chesapeake Bay.

He wanted everybody to have a fair deal and worked to improve access to affordable housing and to protect consumers from his seat on the Banking Committee. He believed in the United States as a force for good in the world and supported foreign assistance, the treaties to return control of the Panama Canal to Panama, and strongly supported legislation to impose sanctions under the then-apartheid regime of South Africa. He opposed senseless and unnecessary wars.

I came to the House of Representatives in 2003, along with my friend and colleague from Baltimore, Congressman Dutch Ruppersberger. Senator Sarbanes was then the leader of our delegation. He welcomed us kindly, but as captain of Team Maryland, he characteristically was eager to allow all Members, however new they were to the delegation, to play an important role.

Not surprisingly, Senator Sarbanes was a favored son of the Greek-American community. He was a member of the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of the Annunciation in Baltimore and held the highest lay office in the church. We shared strong bonds in the Greek-American community because, like Paul's parents, my wife Katherine's mother's family immigrated from Greece.

As a strong believer in promoting democratic values at home and abroad, Senator Sarbanes was proud of those Greek roots and spoke often of democracy's roots with the ancient Greeks. He used to speak to students about the importance of public service, telling them that in ancient Athens, people who lived only a private life, without view of the public good, were failing to live fully.

Indeed, the power of democracy and its promise of opportunity was the driving force behind his governing philosophy—to open the door to others, to keep your promises, and to achieve based on your merit, not on your connections, money, or power.

As extraordinary a public servant as he was, Paul Sarbanes was, above all, a family man. He was devoted to his wife Christine, whom he met at Oxford. Recalling their first encounter, Paul said:

She came to a meeting of the American Association I headed. I forgot what was on the agenda. All I remember of that meeting was that was where I met Christine.

She was brilliant and kind, an educator in Latin, Greek, French, and the classics, who matched Senator Sarbanes's intelligence and shared his love of service. They used to knock on doors together during his political campaigns, and she was a sounding board throughout his career. They raised three children, including our friend, JOHN SARBANES, who now serves Maryland so well in the House of Representatives. He was enormously proud of them and his seven grandchildren.

I also extend my condolences today to Senator Sarbanes's former staff. His legacy goes well beyond the laws he wrote to the way he worked. He shared with them: Do your homework, understand the details, act with integrity, and hold firm to your values. It is an example for all of us to follow.

Senator Sarbanes was not a flashy presence. In fact, political opponents once tried to belittle him with the name "the stealth Senator." But as he joked, stealth "is one of the most important weapons in our military arsenal. . . if you let somebody else take the credit, you can get the result."

That was Paul Sarbanes—enormous accomplishments, never taking the credit. His quiet confidence left an impression on all who served with him.

We have lost a great Senator. America has lost a great Senator, and many of us have lost a very good friend. But we should be comforted in the knowledge that he achieved what we would all wish for ourselves: He served well, he made the world better for others, he treated all he knew with respect and earned their respect in return, and he leaves us with fond memories.

May God grant those who loved him the strength to bear his loss, and may his memory be eternal.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROMNEY). The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise this evening with my colleagues from Maryland and with Senator REED from Rhode Island to pay tribute to someone whom I was lucky enough to have as a mentor when I first entered the Senate. And I want to associate myself with all of the wonderful words of my friends from Maryland.

With any new job, there is a learning curve. There are certainly things that you don't know and that you don't

even know enough to know you don't know. That certainly is true in the Senate.

In 2001, I was a former Member of the House who had just been elected to the Senate. It was an exciting time—a lot of new people to meet, rules to learn, and procedures to follow. One of my new assignments was the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee, where Senator Sarbanes served as the chairman.

By that time, Senator Sarbanes was already an institution. As my colleagues have mentioned, he introduced the first article of impeachment against President Richard Nixon, as a junior Congressman. And as a freshman Senator in 1978, he was a forceful advocate for treaties that gave control, among other things, of the Panama Canal to Panama. So it felt a little surreal to find myself at the table with a brilliant leader like Senator Paul Sarbanes.

But he could not have been more gracious and more generous with his time for me as a freshman Member. He was always willing to answer my questions. He was a wonderful mentor. We, of course, worked on banking issues together, including the crafting of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, where I was able, up close, to watch his legislative mastery.

We also worked on public transit provisions in our transportation bill, which was very important for us in Michigan.

We shared a passion for protecting our water. My colleagues have talked about the Chesapeake Bay. For me, it was the Great Lakes, and we often talked about the beauty of the lakes, as well as the bay.

Senator Sarbanes gave his final speech on the Senate floor on this very day, 14 years ago. He was a humble man, and his remarks were quite brief. He closed, in part, with this: "I want my colleagues to know how deeply I appreciate their friendship and [their] counsel and how highly I value the privilege of having been their colleague."

Today, I can say exactly the same words about Senator Paul Sarbanes. He was a statesman, and I was lucky enough to call him my friend. I value the privilege of having been his colleague.

I want to offer his family, including Congressman JOHN SARBANES, all of Paul's friends, and the entire State of Maryland my deepest condolences. We have lost an incredible leader and public servant.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, it is an honor to join my colleagues from Maryland, Senator CARDIN and Senator VAN HOLLEN, and my colleague from Michigan, Senator STABENOW, to take a moment to recognize and remember my esteemed former colleague and dear friend, Senator Paul Sarbanes, who passed away last Sunday.

Paul Sarbanes spent 30 years in this Chamber doing what he knew was right. In that time, he built a legacy most could not achieve in two lifetimes.

Paul's work on banking, the economy, housing, transportation, and so many other issues had a profound and significant impact on our country. But, more importantly, his work had a direct impact on so many families whose lives were made better because of his unsung efforts over three decades.

I had the distinct honor of serving with Senator Sarbanes and working directly with him on the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee and the Joint Economic Committee.

Senator Sarbanes was a constant and steady champion of commonsense fiscal policies to help create jobs, expand our economy, and increase consumer and investor protections. Indeed, he used his power and influence to help those with the least power and influence in our society, which is a hallmark of our finest public servants. And Paul still remains one of our finest public servants—indeed, one of the finest of the finest.

Many would agree that the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 stands among his best work. Responding to a number of major corporate accounting scandals, Senator Sarbanes' legislation began the process of trying to restore investor confidence in corporate America and our securities markets. Eighteen years later, this law continues to be a critical pillar of our financial system.

During his tenure as chair of the Joint Economic Committee in the late eighties and early nineties, Paul framed many of the important economic issues and debates that the country was experiencing at the time. He held timely hearings on income inequality, trade deficit, and unemployment during a time at which the country was only beginning to come to grips with the notion that there needed to be a different direction in our economy.

Unfortunately, our Nation is now battling a pandemic that is furthering economic inequalities, and both the Senate and the country could use and greatly misses Senator Sarbanes' thoughtfulness, incisiveness, and compassion during these difficult times.

Senator Sarbanes was also one of our Nation's greatest champions for affordable housing. He fought his entire career for our Nation's working families, trying to make it possible for more families in our country to have decent, safe, and affordable housing.

Most notably, Paul was one of the original authors of the Home Investment Partnerships Program, known as the HOME Program. This program has provided critical funding to our Nation's States and localities, helping them maintain or expand their supply of affordable housing for many Americans.

Paul also fought aggressively for funding of the section 8 voucher pro-

gram and was one of the chief supporters of improvements to our Nation's public housing programs during his Senate tenure.

Senator Sarbanes also recognized the essential role that public transportation plays in bringing communities together, fostering economic development, and promoting a cleaner environment. As ranking member of the Banking Committee, he led the effort to reauthorize the Nation's transit programs and the fight to ensure that transit received its fair share of funding.

Time after time, Paul Sarbanes did the right things for the right reasons. He could not care less whether he got the credit, the press, or the fanfare. His primary motivation was simply knowing that he made a meaningful difference in the lives of his constituents and the American people, and, in this regard, there are few who are as accomplished as Paul Sarbanes.

His keen intellect, his extensive knowledge of the issues, and his concern for Americans across this great country all contributed to his impressive body of legislative accomplishments.

Now, I had the occasion to speak with JOHN SARBANES, Congressman from Maryland, who is carrying on the proud tradition of the Sarbanes family, and he said his dad was best described as a workhorse, not a show horse, and that is right. Paul Sarbanes did the work of the people. He did not try to garner the praise and the acclaim; he just wanted to make sure the work was done and done well. And he did throughout his entire career.

My best wishes go to Paul's family, including his sons Michael Sarbanes and Representative JOHN SARBANES; his daughter Janet Sarbanes; and his grandchildren. They have lost a father and a grandfather. The country has lost one of its greatest champions. And I have lost a dear and precious friend.

May he rest in peace.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator VAN HOLLEN and myself, I want to thank our colleagues for their tribute to Senator Paul Sarbanes—Senator STABENOW and Senator REED. I know that Senator SCHUMER and Senator DURBIN have spoken on the floor. Many of us have and many have expressed their condolences through our office to the family. We just want to express our appreciation.

As Senator VAN HOLLEN said, I had the honor—or the challenge—to follow Senator Sarbanes in this body. I have his seat in the Senate. When I was sworn in almost 14 years ago, Senator Sarbanes escorted me to take the oath of office. As I mentioned earlier, he is an inspiration to all of us.

I want to thank our colleagues for the tribute they have paid to an outstanding Marylander, an outstanding American, and he will be missed by all.

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.

Mr. PORTMAN. 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

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I am here on the floor today to talk again about the need for Congress to act to pass a COVID-19 bill that helps the people we represent. I am told this is the 20th time I have come to the floor to make this plea, meaning that I haven't been all that convincing, I guess.

But the reality is there is hope in the air. There is a bipartisan group that is working on a package. I am part of that group, as is the Presiding Officer. It is bipartisan: about five Democrats, about five Republicans.

Maybe more significantly, today the White House apparently made an offer to Speaker PELOSI to reengage in conversation to try to get to a package that meets the needs of everyone. The package that was presented was actually very similar to the package that this bipartisan group has been working on over the past few weeks. So there is hope in the air, and that is good because we need the help, and we need it now.

Let's talk for a minute about why we need this help. I would guess that pretty much everybody in this Chamber has seen firsthand the health crisis that we are facing. The number of cases is up. The number of people in intensive care is up. Hospitalizations are up. And, sadly, fatalities have increased.

Some of my colleagues in this Chamber have had to fight cases of COVID-19 themselves. Thank God they are all OK. But that is not true with everyone we represent. I would bet that everyone in this Chamber knows somebody and probably multiple people who have had a very tough time or who have even succumbed to this terrible disease.

Last week, another friend of mine died because of COVID-19. His name was Mike Crabtree. Mike was a county commissioner in Scioto County, OH—a friend, a standup guy who helped me on a lot of tough issues in Southeast Ohio. He was always there for his community and for me. Today, of course, we offer our prayers to his wife Diane, his family, and to all of his friends in Scioto County.

It is personal. In the face of these personal tragedies and the sad reality that in many States we are now experiencing this higher number of cases—in many States it is the highest we have had since the beginning of this pandemic—we do have some promising news on one front, and that is on the vaccine front.