

9 months, 10 months, to get us to this point. These are scientists who are now working around the clock to look carefully at these vaccines to determine whether they are approved or not. These are the scientists who are making decisions, not the politicians. It is the people in the white coats. We need to trust them, for the sake of our country, because we need to reverse this terrible virus and the pandemic that is causing all of the issues that we talked about earlier today, to our communities, to our families. So the way to do that is to ensure that we do, in fact, not just have this vaccine available but that people take advantage of it and are willing to be vaccinated.

I hope, if you are listening this evening, that you will pass that word along and that you, again, will do your own research. Look at it. But my hope is that the conclusion will be to get to the period we want to get, which is to have people feel like they can reengage in the economy and feel like they can be back with their loved ones and congregate and feel like they can go back to church or their other place of worship; they feel like they can send their kids back to school; they feel like they can get back to a more normal life. That will happen through the accessibility and the ability to actually get that vaccine.

So my hope is that those listening tonight will do that and do their part in spreading that message instead of spreading the virus.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

CORONAVIRUS

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I had an opportunity to listen to my friend and colleague from the State of Ohio outline in great detail the efforts that a bipartisan group has been working on for just a month now.

It was just a month ago, I was reminded—November 17, apparently—that I had an opportunity to invite some colleagues over to my house for dinner and conversation. And while it wasn't pizza, it didn't make any difference what we were eating. It was all about the conversation and what we could do to be responsive to the urgency of the need.

As my friend from Ohio has said, people in Ohio are suffering. People in Alaska are suffering. People around the country are suffering. And they are looking to us for answers and for hope.

I felt on Monday that there was that sense of hope that we could offer. It is not the end-all and be-all in terms of a legislative proposal, but it was a dozen Members, bipartisan—Republicans and Democrats from this body, as well as Republicans and Democrats from the House—coming together over the course of a month, hours on Zoom, digging into the details and the issues in a way that, as someone who has been part of this body now for 18 years, I

have not had the opportunity to be as engaged in every level of the debate and aspect as we were in these conversations.

The Senator from Ohio, while he might not have been at that dinner, was with us every step of the way and was truly leading on the negotiations when it came to the liability provisions and the input in so many other areas.

But what we were able to outline, given a framework of how we can be responsive to the pandemic and the economic crisis at hand, focusing on the most vulnerable—those who have lost their jobs, those who have a small business that is open but just barely open because there are no customers or because the limitations on your restaurant are so small you can barely even afford to keep your doors open—to be responsive to those who have lost their jobs, to those who are looking at the first of January and wondering if they are going to be able to stay in their home or in their apartment, to those families who have children at home who haven't been in a classroom since March of this year, for those rural healthcare providers that have been struggling as they have tried to meet the crush of demand and need within their small hospitals.

What we tried to do was build a package that was responsive to the emergency at hand. And as Senator PORTMAN has noted, this was not designed to be a stimulus bill. This is not designed to be the end-all, be-all for how we move forward. It is targeted emergency relief.

What we were able to present on Monday, which I felt was so hopeful, were not only the debate and the contours of the framework but then to actually put that into legislative text—5 or 6 inches of legislative language, a bill—a bill for this body to consider, a path to move us forward at a time when it is so incredibly critical.

Also on Monday, we were met with hope because the vaccine—the long-promised vaccine—has come about in extraordinarily short order, historic efforts by so many to get the development to this point, to get the approval, the safe approval, and now moving forward to distribution.

The headline in our largest newspaper yesterday was “Morale gets a boost” as vaccine arrives. And, boy, do we need a morale boost.

This is a dark time in Alaska right now. The sun sets about, I don't know, maybe about 3:45 in the afternoon right now, so it makes for a short day. But we are used to short days because we know that in the darkest times of winter, there is going to come that time when things start to change and the days actually begin to get longer; the sunlight is with us more and more.

And as Alaskans are considering the very deep, deep economic strife that we are in right now, we know that there is light at the end because the vaccine is arriving; that is coming.

But in the meantime, they need to get from here to there. So what we

have outlined in this proposal—this bipartisan, bicameral proposal—is just exactly that. It is that lifeline that can get them from December to March, to April, when hope really starts to return.

So I know that there is a great deal that is being considered right now. As I have shared with folks, I say: Well, we were able to advance the ball significantly with this effort that we have made. But when we presented that multihundred-page package to the public, to the administration, to leadership, we basically said: Here is a gift. Take it.

So we have kind of lost ball control, if you will. That is good. That is fine. That is what this process is all about. But I am just urging that we commit with every sense of expediency and urgency to do our business quickly and fairly, with the politics aside, because the last thing that folks back home need, whether it is in Ohio or Alaska, is to know that we might have wrapped up our business here, and we didn't hear them. We didn't respond to their need. We left them hanging. That is not an option for us, and that will not happen.

We are all pledging to make sure that we resolve this before Christmas or we are not going home. But we can do better than that. We don't need to draw this out. We have an opportunity, working together, so I encourage those who are negotiating. We have provided not only a template and a framework, but we have really given you considerable meat in terms of this legislation.

My hope is that we are going to have good news very, very shortly that will allow us to not only address the urgency in response to this COVID pandemic but also be able to resolve our end-of-year appropriations and other matters that we have had working before this body.

But as they say, we are running out of daylight, so let's get moving with it.

TRIBUTE TO BRIAN HUGHES

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, speaking of moving, I wanted to take a few minutes on the floor this afternoon to recognize a couple of individuals who are moving on.

We have heard some floor speeches in these past several weeks from colleagues who have been with us, some for decades, like Senator ALEXANDER, Senator ENZI, and some who were with us for not quite as long, Senator JONES. We have had an opportunity to hear from them and to share our thanks, but I think we all know that as Members of Congress, Members here in the Senate, we are as good as our staffs—the staff who help guide us, who help give us the information, who work with us as we not only help to build policy but just kind of probe and develop and encourage us. The work that our teams do for us is considerable, and it is appreciated, and we need to show that thanks and appreciation.

I want to talk about two gentlemen today, and I want to start first with a longtime friend and a longtime member of the Senate, a gentleman who has provided absolutely outstanding service to the Senate and to the State of Alaska, and that is Brian Hughes, an Alaskan who has worked tirelessly for our State. He has served as my staff director on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee for the past several years.

Brian has been here a long time. In my view, he has been kind of a fixture on energy issues, and many of you know him.

But Brian is going to be leaving on a well-deserved sabbatical when this Congress adjourns. He says he is going to spend some time with his sister and brother-in-law. They have 4-year-old twins out in California, and I know he dotes on them.

I am excited for his next steps. He is going to figure out where he is going to be going next, taking a breather right now, which is important. But Brian is one of those types of individuals who are very humble. He is always giving the credit to others. I did not want Brian's Senate service to conclude without giving it and Brian himself the recognition that he has assiduously avoided for years.

Brian first came to the Senate during his college years at Washington State. His previous summer jobs were working up on Alaska's North Slope and on commercial fishing boats.

In 2004, he qualified for Senator Ted Stevens' intern program. I am very familiar with Senator Ted's intern program because I, too, was an intern for Ted Stevens. Brian was pretty much a standout, though. He was there not only once, but he participated in two successful intern summers. Even before he finished his studies in finance, Senator Stevens said: Why don't you just come back? And Brian, in his characteristic generosity, skipped the fun of his final semester and returned instead to Washington, DC, to work full time here in the Senate while finishing his degree remotely. It was true to form for Brian because he is an extraordinarily hard worker.

It wasn't only the Alaskans, though, who recognized Brian's talent. Less than a year and a half after he had come back and with the blessing of Senator Stevens, Senator Domenici "poached" Brian to work on the Energy Committee staff. I had the opportunity to work with Senator Domenici when I first came to the Senate, and so I first met Brian at that time. Brian came over to the Energy Committee with Senator Domenici. He pretty much has gone through just about every job on the committee. He took a brief timeout in 2012 to serve as a speechwriter for Senator ROMNEY's Presidential campaign, but other than that, he has been there throughout. Every step of the way, Brian has distinguished himself as an original thinker and a voracious reader. I don't

know where he finds the time to do all of the reading that he does on top of all the work he does. I think he doesn't sleep. He is an eloquent writer and a versatile high-achiever. So when I had the opportunity in 2017, it was pretty much a natural and obvious pick to appoint Brian as staff director for the Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

During Brian's tenure, we have had some pretty considerable and notable successes and victories that I will look back on for a long, long time, the efforts that he led relating to development and conservation of our natural resources and modernizing America's energy laws. Brian oversaw the staff work leading to enactment of the Dingell Act. He helped ensure that a talented group of nominees were confirmed to their posts in the executive branch. He was also very key, very central to the small ENR team that drafted the legislation to open up Alaska's 1002 Area to responsible oil and gas development.

As we are working to conclude the business here in the Congress—knock on wood—Brian will be able to add the Energy bill to his list of accomplishments as we seek to close that out. This is something we have been working on in the committee now for over a dozen years to update and to modernize our Nation's energy policies, and I am pleased to be at this point and to know that it will be Brian who will be bringing it home for this Energy bill.

Although Brian has a list of legislative and administrative wins that speak for itself, his true gift, his talent is writing and storytelling. For years now, when anybody on the Energy staff is writing a particular document, they take their best work, but they won't just end it there; they go to Brian. Every time, without fail, he will take their work, and he will move it to the next level by adding what they call "the Brian gloss," usually driving home the point more effectively when he throws in an anecdote, a funny story, or a joke or whatever, but it is just "the Brian gloss."

Brian has a little bit of a sense of humor. As I say, he works very hard, but he doesn't let the seriousness of the work take over. We were working on an energy bill back in 2016, and we had been on the floor for a couple of weeks. There was an amendment that was pending for a voice vote, and it had to do with wild horses. Just prior to the vote, Brian and I were talking in the cloakroom, and he jokingly said to me: You know, when the ayes and the nays are called, you should say "nay" like a horse. Of course, I am not going to say that on the floor of the Senate.

So then it came down, and the yeas and nays were requested, and I don't know where it came from, but I literally blurted out "neighhh" without realizing that my microphone was on. I was leading the bill there. The whole Chamber heard it. I turned beet red. I looked straight back at Brian, who was

sitting on the bench with several of his staff, just laughing.

Yeah, Brian, thank you for that one. I know that I am going to be looking back very fondly on the time Brian spent on my team. In part, that will be because Brian exemplifies three principles to which congressional staff who excel consistently adhere.

The first is that staff must be well prepared, honest, and straightforward. I have always, always been able to count on Brian to just be straight with me, "shoot me straight." He knows the facts, good and bad, and he shares them no matter what.

Second is that you have to work hard and treat everyone on both sides of the aisle with respect and fairness. I think Brian's successes are the direct result of the many strong relationships that he has forged even as he has relentlessly pursued his long list of to-do's. Everyone recognizes that Brian is one of those guys who is a workhorse. He is not a show horse.

Finally, the best staff discharge their delegated authority wisely and to good effect, and Brian really takes that to heart. He constantly reminds those around him that only Senators are Senators, even if sometimes people would have it otherwise.

I have been fortunate enough to have been on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee since I came to the Senate 18 years ago. It is the best committee out there. I have been privileged now to chair the committee for 6 years, and prior to that, I was privileged to be the ranking member on that committee for 6 years. Everybody—everybody—on the ENR Committee works their tail off. They are hard workers. They are an extraordinary team. But I think that work ethic is set by our staff directors. I have been so blessed to have staff directors who show and model that work ethic, and Brian has done that over the years.

Whether on a late night or an early morning call on pending legislation or a trip to check up on our volcano monitoring systems, Brian has been there at my side as an indispensable aide and an inspiration to all of my colleagues. He really is one of those extraordinary staff who helped me refine my thinking, hone my voice, multiply my strengths, overcome my weaknesses, and really helped serve the people of Alaska and our country.

So, Brian, I want to say a very genuine and sincere thank-you for the years you have devoted, not just to me but the years you have devoted to the Senate and the years you have devoted to our home State of Alaska and to the Nation. I hope that rather than being up at 2 a.m. trying to resolve a scoring issue, the only things that will be keeping you up at night will be the Yellowstone supervolcano and your little niece and nephew. I will miss your leadership, your wit, and your friendship. Brian, I speak for so many here in the Senate when I wish you a well-

earned break and a confident and bright future.

I have been blessed to have extraordinary leadership on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and I am going to miss Brian and so many of the team.

I am not leaving the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, but I have maxed out, termed-out in terms of chairmanship or ranking member. So it is a different place for me, but I am still going to be involved with so many who continue to do good, strong things on the energy front.

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL PAWLOWSKI

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, another individual who came to me through the energy front, if you will, is a gentleman by the name of Michael Pawlowski. Most of you who know me and know my chief of staff don't know that my chief of staff's name is actually Michael Pawlowski because nobody refers to him as that. They refer to him simply as "Fish"—no last name, just "Fish." And I think that is actually somewhat appropriate for my office, where we celebrate a lot of good things with fish. I was fortunate to be able to share some filets of salmon with some colleagues as Christmas appreciation, and I would say nothing says "thank you" more than fish.

This is now my opportunity to say thank you to my Fish.

Fish came to Washington, DC, back in 2015, when we brought him on to the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Again, all good things come through ENR. We brought him back to be senior policy adviser in 2015, and he served in that capacity until I brought him over to be my chief of staff in 2016. He has served me here in my personal office since that time.

Fish is an Alaskan through and through. His family has lived in Alaska for five generations. He was raised in Anchorage. He has worked for multiple State legislators. He has worked in our State government. He has worked on budget and energy policies. He was deputy commissioner of revenue. He has worked to help build up so many different energy projects—the Alaska LNG project. He served on the AIDEA board, on the Alaska Energy Authority.

He has been involved in so many different aspects of what is making our State move that when he first agreed to come back to Washington, DC, I figured I would be able to keep him back here for just a couple years. Somebody with this much potential, somebody with this much on the ball—how was I possibly going to be able to keep him here? I figured out how to do it—just make sure he could get back to Alaska for work throughout the summer so he could do the fishing that he really, really wants to do first and foremost.

But that is just the human, personal side of him. What Fish has provided me is a view towards relationships and

how we operate in business and professional relationships here in the Senate, working with different offices. He has worked to build relationships because he truly and genuinely cares about the people he is talking to. He is genuinely interested.

He has taken upon himself the mentoring of our youngest staff, more particularly. In the order that we have in many of the offices, you have levels of seniority, and oftentimes the younger staff, those who may have just graduated from college, come to Washington, DC, and they may be answering phones and they may be answering letters, but they don't feel like they have a real say in what is going on in the decisionmaking and are kind of out of the loop. And Fish—Fish decided that he was going to bring them into the loop with what he called "morning stand-ups." They were designed for the young legislative correspondents to come on in, and we will just kind of tell you what is going on. You can ask questions. We will talk about process. We will talk about issues. And they were not required meetings but more informational. I think now everybody comes to the morning stand-ups just because the communication that goes back and forth is so uplifting to so many.

Because of the relationships and how he conducts himself, his level of professionalism, Fish is respected within the business community, the Native community, and by the political types. He has become viewed as one of these guys—if you want to talk about proposals where you are looking to bring Republicans and Democrats together, Fish is there. Fish is part of those discussions.

He is engaged with the bipartisan chiefs. He works to build those relationships across the aisle—not because he is looking for something but because he knows that is how we are going to get something done. And when we can get something done that benefits Alaska, it is ultimately going to benefit all.

He is a brilliant thinker—I mean, just a brilliant thinker with a strategic mind. He is one of these guys who can come up with things that I swear nobody else has thought about.

I was reading an article—this is something that was published a few years ago by a former teacher and mentor of his from college, and this is from Lynn Paulson. It provides a quote from Fish talking about his educational background at Alaska Pacific University. He said: I have learned to think strategically in a way that is unique and invaluable and has allowed me to do anything, from developing financing for renewable energy programs to negotiating multibillion-dollar deals.

Lynn Paulson goes on to say that Fish "has the temperament to be in the middle of this highly charged and polarized arena and to emerge unruffled . . . supremely well informed and his trenchant logic." These are words that others have used to describe him.

But when I think about how Fish will take an idea—whether it was from a constituent when we were working on the 2017 tax bill—and provide assistance to our Native corporations to be able to better utilize their resources, really brainstorming to come up with what we now have in law that we refer to as settlement trusts—Fish is one of those individuals who—you know his mind is just on fire all the time. But he doesn't present as "I have the best idea, and you need to listen to me." He takes the good from so many. He builds and uplifts and empowers, and that is good leadership. That is management.

Fish gets frustrated every now and again because not everybody communicates the way he does. Not everybody is a relationship builder. And he will say: Pick up the phone. Just go talk to the person. This building isn't that big. Put your device aside. Don't send a text. Get up from your desk, and go across and talk.

That may be old school, but let me tell you, it has worked extraordinarily well for this man.

I mentioned that Fish's passion is fishing; thus the name. He likes to spend a lot of quiet time on the river just out where it is cold and it is clear, or it is wet and you are with the water and you are with the fish, and I think it gives him a lot of time to do some just deep, deep thinking. He collects his thoughts. He is able to process and to really dream. So when he comes back to the real world where it is busy and loud, he has this reserve within him that he draws on, and it helps. It helps him present these ideas and the vision that he is able to articulate.

But like all good Alaskans, we seem to find our way back home, like a salmon returning to its stream. And Fish is going to be returning. I have no doubt he will continue to do great things for the people he loves, and I think he knows that we love him and will miss him, as we will miss Brian Hughes and as we will miss so many great colleagues who will be leaving us at the end of this year. I have taken time on the floor today to recognize some of those individuals who make us as Members stronger and better able to do the jobs we do.

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

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

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, here is where we are: Conversations are still underway and making progress on the major pandemic relief package we have all been seeking for the American people.