

the right to worship, especially as we see countries around the world like Communist China and Iran deny their citizens these same rights. Americans have the right to worship, and government doesn't get to decide for them.

I am clearly very disappointed that my colleague doesn't want to protect the First Amendment, but I will continue to stand against these misguided and hypocritical attempts to target religious institutions. I am never going to stop fighting for the religious liberty of all Americans, even during a pandemic.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I know that my colleague, I understand, is going to be the next chair of the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee, and he has every right to do that, but what he has no right to do is misrepresent in this resolution what, at least in my State, is going on.

You cannot say that churches were designated by the State of New Jersey as nonessential or essential. That simply is not true. It is simply not true. You cannot suggest that somehow these purposes are to target religions. They are to save lives.

Now, maybe if my colleague and others here had spoken up when the administration was asleep at the switch as this pandemic was raging, maybe if my colleagues had spoken up when we found out that the President knew back in January, early February of this year, of how vicious this pandemic could be, how contagious it could be, how it was transmitted, but said nothing to the American people—and that silence was echoed in this Chamber—well, maybe then we wouldn't in the position that we are in. Maybe we wouldn't have lost 300,000 of our fellow Americans.

So I find it really, really upsetting that, in the midst of a raging pandemic, one would seek to obtain a political value out of something that is simply not the case—simply not the case. I think there is a lot more to be done in this Chamber to stop this pandemic, to stop more lives from being lost, to save our brothers and sisters, to help those who have been ravaged by the pandemic, but not to pick a few States that happen to be Democratic—please.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT. So if my colleague from New Jersey's concern is the paragraph numbered 4 on page 3, I would ask him if he would object if we just take that paragraph out and then he would be willing to affirm that the Senate believes in religious freedom.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. The resolution is replete with inaccuracies, and, therefore, I will continue to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Let's remember, the concern was that he didn't like the section about New Jersey and said that was inaccurate, but the idea that the Senate will support religious freedom, he is not willing to stand behind. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). The Senator from Michigan.

CORONAVIRUS

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, we truly don't have any time to waste. The American people are in desperate need of help. And I want to start by thanking all of my colleagues who have been working so hard together across the aisle to bring us to a point where we can actually provide some help, albeit temporary, to the American people. So, thank you, and I am pleased to have been involved in elements of that negotiation and appreciate it.

But we are stuck right now, and I just want to remind people of a few numbers. More than one in three American adults in a recent survey said they are struggling to pay household expenses, including rent and mortgage. If we don't get something done in the next hours or days, we are going to see thousands of people in Michigan lose their homes in the middle of the winter.

There are 7.8 million Americans who have fallen into poverty since June—7.8 million people have fallen into poverty since June. The number of people applying for unemployment keeps rising. There were 885,000 people who filed initial claims last week, and thousands and thousands and thousands of people who are self-employed, who are contract workers, and others, will find themselves with zero support right after Christmas, unless we take action.

A recent survey found that one in four small businesses are in danger of closing if the economic conditions don't improve—one out of four. I have talked to so many friends, so many people in Michigan, vibrant small businesses—they put it all on the line for that business they always wanted to have—and now they are barely holding on. They need help, and they needed help before now. They need help now. They are waiting and waiting and waiting and holding their breath.

Up to 50 million Americans are struggling to feed their families right now. One out of four American households have experienced food insecurity in this last year—so one out of four households. People who volunteer at the food bank and people who have always contributed to the food bank now find themselves waiting in their car for hours and hours for a box of food in the United States of America. We not only have a health pandemic; we have a hunger crisis going on, and people need help now.

On top of that, this past Wednesday, 3,638 Americans died in 1 day of coronavirus, and we are now looking at government services shutting down in less than 12 hours—the backdrop of everything that is happening for Ameri-

cans. And despite all the good work that has been going on, on a bipartisan basis, we are now looking at less than 12 hours of services for people and to our country shutting down.

And why? Because my colleague, the Republican Senator from Pennsylvania, thinks it is more important to take away the Federal Government's ability to help people and help businesses and create jobs than it is to actually help people. Now, I want to say, Senator TOOMEY and I had a wonderful hearing this week in our HELP Subcommittee on Finance, of which he chairs, and we have been working together doing really important, meaningful things on Alzheimer's disease, and I very much enjoyed doing that. But on this issue—on this issue, at this time, with so many people in pain and so much hardship at this moment—I don't understand when he said that preventing the next Treasury Secretary and the Federal Reserve from relaunching the emergency credit facilities that support manufacturers and other job providers is “the most important thing” in this COVID-19 package. Really? Really? The most important thing in this package is to take away the tools of the Treasury and the Federal Reserve that have been used when we are in crisis, and we need to be a backstop for our businesses in the credit market, when we need to be supporting job providers and jobs? Really? Really? That is the most important thing?

Tell that to a mom who is afraid her kids will end up on the street because she can't pay her rent in January, which is what, 2 weeks away. Tell that to the small business owner who is having to lay off their entire staff a week before Christmas. Tell that to a senior citizen who is risking his health by waiting in an hours-long line to get a box of food. Tell that to the healthcare workers who are literally putting their lives on the line right now fighting this pandemic.

Really? Taking away economic tools from the Treasury and the Fed are more important than people in our country? Small businesses? Farmers, who have been hanging on? Really?

Tell that to the thousands of American families who are preparing for their first holiday without loved ones who have been lost to the virus. Just yesterday, another loss in Michigan—so many losses, thousands of losses—but a dear friend, a sheriff of Wayne County, Benny Napoleon, his family, today, a funeral for a friend as well in Detroit.

So the most important thing is not supporting families, is not helping people at least get through the winter, at least get through the next several months to put food on the table and a roof over their heads and help their businesses and make sure the vaccines can be distributed and support our healthcare workers and put money into education and all the other things that are needed right now—the most important thing is to have a fight with the

Treasury and the Fed because you want to limit what they can do in terms of their powers to help people and to help businesses in a crisis.

Our Nation is in a crisis, and we would be in an even deeper crisis right now if it weren't for the Federal Reserve. The Federal Reserve stepped in early during the crisis. Under the current administration, I might add, where nobody was suggesting that we provide these kinds of amendments or restrictions then—under the current administration, under the Trump administration, I didn't hear that debate. Maybe I missed it, but I didn't hear that debate. But thank goodness we didn't have a debate because they stepped in early, taking extraordinary measures to keep credit from freezing up for our businesses. This is the money that businesses use to provide services and keep people employed.

And I have to say, as someone coming from a major manufacturing State like Pennsylvania, like Ohio, like Indiana, like Wisconsin, that having the capacity for the Fed to step in and provide some confidence in the marketplace so that our auto suppliers and our other manufacturers could get what they needed in terms of the credit, it was critical to jobs—thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of jobs.

The emergency powers that the Federal Reserve passed were put in place during the 2008 financial crisis so that the Fed could respond quickly to the next crisis. Well, here we are in the next crisis. The crisis is all around us, and yet some are laser-focused on taking away the Fed's ability to respond in the future with a new President—not the current sitting President but a future President. This is like a fire department selling off their fire trucks while houses down the street are burning.

Now, 2020 has been brutal—really brutal—on families and businesses and communities across the country. And this crisis is not over. I really wish it was. I mean, we have hope because of the vaccines and more effective testing and so on, but this isn't over, and things could get worse in 2021 if we sabotage the very things that helped us this year. If this is how you are setting up a new President to not have the tools to make the economy better, what does that say about what people care about—the people we represent? Because, ultimately, it is about people losing their jobs; it is about businesses. This is more than just about cross-partisan politics.

My friend Senator SCHATZ, who has a way with words, on Twitter, put it this way:

We almost have a bipartisan COVID package, but at the last minute Republicans are making a demand that WAS NEVER MENTIONED AS KEY TO THE NEGOTIATIONS. They want to block the FED from helping the economy under Biden. It's the reason we don't have a deal.

Is that really the reason we don't have a deal to help people in our coun-

try right now? Just cross-partisan politics wanting to set up a way for the next President to fail? Because when colleagues take away tools that a President—any President—and the Federal Reserve have to boost the economy and prevent economic collapses, they are saying they care more about that cross-political fight—make sure somebody looks bad and make sure somebody fails—rather than caring about the people we represent who create the jobs, the businesses, large and small, and the people who have those jobs and the people who need those jobs.

Michigan is the proud home to so many small- and medium-sized manufacturing businesses that employ thousands of people. I know there are those same businesses across the country, including the State of Pennsylvania, where my colleague is advocating for this.

I would urge—strongly urge—at this moment in time, at the end of what has been such a horrible, difficult year for Americans, I would urge my colleague from Pennsylvania and any others supporting him to try stop trying to undermine American jobs and our ability as a country to respond to the economic crisis that is still happening. Let's stop stalling. We need to do our jobs to keep our military going and healthcare and education and transportation and all the other critical services that the Federal Government funds. And we need to pass this critical COVID legislation today and give the American people the help they need and the help they deserve to survive the next few months of this health and economic crisis.

A wonderful bipartisan effort brought us to this moment where we can provide a critical lifeline to Americans across our country.

It would be a tragedy and an outrage if efforts to undermine our economy and the success of our incoming President stop this urgent help from being passed. We need to get this done now.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 5063

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, this country faces the worst set of public health and economic crises that we have faced in over 100 years.

As a result of the pandemic, more people than ever before are becoming infected, right now. Hospitalization is higher than it has ever been before, right now. And more people are dying than ever before, literally day after day.

Now, we all hope and pray that the new vaccine will be distributed as quickly as possible and that it will put an end to this nightmare. But, today, the truth is that millions of low-income and middle-class families are suffering in a way that they have not suffered since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Today, the reality is that over half of our workers are living paycheck to

paycheck, trying to survive on a starvation wage of 10 or 12 bucks an hour. The reality is that millions of our senior citizens are trapped in their homes, unable to see their kids or their grandchildren, unable to go to a grocery store, and many of them are trying to get by on \$12,000-, \$14,000-a-year Social Security and scared that they may come down with the virus and die.

In addition, millions more with disabilities are suffering. Further, in our country today, one out of four workers is either unemployed or makes less than \$20,000 a year. And in the midst of this pandemic, because we are the only major country on Earth not to guarantee healthcare to all people as a right—in the midst of this pandemic, the worst healthcare crisis in 100 years, over 90 million Americans are uninsured or underinsured and unable to go to a doctor when they need to.

Further, we have the worst eviction crisis in modern history. Some 30 million families worry that because they cannot pay their rent, they may end up out on the street.

That is where we are today economically, and if this country means anything—if democracy means anything, if the U.S. Government means anything—it means that we cannot turn our backs on this suffering, not in Vermont, not in Wisconsin, not in New York, not in any State in this country where people are hurting in an unprecedented way.

It means that we cannot leave Washington, as Senators, for the holidays to go back to our families unless we address the pain and anxiety of other families throughout this country.

Mr. SCHUMER. Would my colleague from Vermont yield for some support for his amendment?

Mr. SANDERS. I would be happy to yield to the minority leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. I will speak briefly. And I thank my colleague.

I join my friend Senator SANDERS to support his amendment to give \$1,200 in direct financial support to the American people in the year-end emergency relief bill.

Now, this effort should not subtract from any other program already in the bill, like enhanced unemployment, aid to small businesses, education, healthcare, or any other provision. We don't need to offset the cost or cut from elsewhere in the bill to make sure the stimulus checks are \$1,200 for each adult and then money for children and others, as he will elaborate. Much of the money will go back into the economy anyway.

The reason for the amendment is simple. Over the course of this pandemic, working Americans have taken it on the chin. Millions have lost their jobs through no fault of their own. Twenty-six million have had trouble putting food on the table in the last 5 weeks, bread lines stretching down American highways. Twelve million Americans will owe an average of \$6,000 in rent and mortgage payments. So we have an opportunity in this emergency