

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

relief bill to give financial aid directly—directly to those Americans. It could mean the difference between Americans paying the rent or not, affording groceries or not, the difference between hanging on until the vaccine helps our country get back to normal.

Now, the only objection we have heard is that this will add too much to the deficit. That is why a Republican Senator rejected a similar request earlier today—to push a baseless agenda of austerity. Please.

By now, Republican objections over the debt and deficit are comical. They added \$2 trillion to the debt with a massive tax cut for corporations and the wealthy, and that was during a steady economy. But now the economy is on life support. Americans are queuing up on bread lines and filing for unemployment. Just as a Democratic President is about to take office, all of the sudden the deficit scolds are back.

It is ludicrous. Chairman Powell—hardly a big liberal—of the Federal Reserve insisted: “The risk of overdoing it is less than the risk of underdoing it.”

The quickest way to get money into the pockets of the American people is to send some of their tax dollars right back where they came from. So let’s step up to the plate and deliver the \$1,200 survival checks to millions of Americans before the holidays.

I support Senator SANDERS’ request fully and hope the Senate will consent.

I yield back.

Mr. SANDERS. Let me thank the senior Senator from New York, the Democratic leader, for his strong statement. He is exactly right. In this kind of crisis, it is comical that suddenly our Republican friends, once again, discover that we have a deficit. This is a moment of emergency—of emergency—and we have to respond to the needs of working families. And I thank Senator SCHUMER for his strong support for this legislation.

Members of Congress should also be aware that we are far behind other major countries in terms of protecting working families during this pandemic. Not only does every other wealthy country guarantee healthcare to all people as a human right, almost all of them are providing far more generous benefits to the unemployed and the struggling in their countries than we are doing in our country.

Several months ago, I introduced legislation, along with Senator KAMALA HARRIS—now our Vice President-elect—and Senator MARKEY that would, during the course of this economic crisis, provide \$2,000 a month—\$2,000 a month—to every working-class person in this country. And, frankly, that is exactly what we should be doing. But, unfortunately, given the conservative nature of the Senate, I understand that is not going to happen.

Yet, at a time of massive income and wealth inequality, as Senator SCHUMER just indicated, at a time when huge corporations were making record-

breaking profits, the Republican leadership here in the Senate was able to provide over \$1 trillion in tax breaks to the 1 percent and large corporations.

Yes, at a time when climate change—yes, climate change is real—threatens the entire planet, this Congress was able to provide hundreds of billions of dollars in corporate welfare to the oil companies and the gas companies and the coal companies that are exacerbating the climate crisis.

Yes, just the other day, here in the Senate and in the House, legislation was passed which would provide \$740 billion to the military—the largest military budget in history, more than the next 10 nations combined. We spend more on the military than the next 10 nations combined.

So we could do all of those things—tax breaks for billionaires, massive corporate welfare, huge military expenditures—but in the midst of the worst economic meltdown since the Great Depression, somehow Congress is unable to respond effectively to the needs of working families.

As the Presiding Officer may know, I have recently introduced legislation to provide every working-class American an emergency payment of at least \$1,200, which is \$2,400 for a couple and \$500 for each of their children.

This is not a radical idea. This is an idea that is supported by President Donald Trump. It is an idea that is supported by President-Elect Joe Biden. It is an idea, by the way, that according to a recent poll, is supported by 75 percent of all Americans, including 77 percent of Democrats and 72 percent of Republicans.

Further, importantly, this amount of direct payment is exactly what Congress passed unanimously 9 months ago as part of the \$2.2 trillion CARES Act. Let me repeat. In March, every Member of the House and Senate, appropriately, including myself, voted to provide a direct payment of \$1,200 for working-class adults, \$2,400 for couples, and \$500 for their kids.

That was the right thing to do 9 months ago. And given the fact that the crisis today is, in many respects, worse than it was 9 months ago, that is exactly what we should be doing right now.

As a result of the pandemic, the government told restaurants, bars, retail stores, movie theaters, schools, malls, small businesses all over this country: Shut your doors. It is too dangerous for you to be open now. And they did that because that is what the public health experts said was the right thing to do in order to control this horrific pandemic.

But what the government has not done is provide the workers who lost their jobs and lost their incomes as a result of those shutdowns with the help that they need in order to pay their bills and to survive economically.

The \$600 a week in supplemental unemployment benefits that Congress passed unanimously in March expired

in July—over 5 months ago—and during that time, the Republican Senate has done nothing to help working families pay their rent, feed their children, go to a doctor, or pay for the lifesaving prescription drugs they need. And the Senate has not done anywhere near enough to provide help for the struggling small businesses in Vermont and all across this country that are desperately trying to stay afloat.

Further, as bad as the economy has been in general, it has been far worse for African Americans and Latinos. During the pandemic, nearly 60 percent of Latino families and 55 percent of African-American families have either experienced a job loss or a cut in pay.

For 9 months, we have asked tens of millions of working people in this country to survive on one \$1,200 check, with no help for healthcare, no support for hazard pay, no assistance for rent relief—absolutely nothing. Meanwhile, I should mention that over the same 9-month period, 651 billionaires in the United States became over \$1 trillion richer. A trillion dollars in increased wealth for the very richest people in our country and one \$1,200 check for tens of millions of Americans desperately trying to survive. That is unconscionable, that is immoral, and that has to change.

Now, let us recall that way back in May, the House of Representatives passed the \$3.4 trillion Heroes Act, which, among other things, included \$600 a week in supplemental unemployment benefits; another direct payment of \$1,200 for working-class adults and \$500 for their kids; and generous support for small businesses, hospitals, education facilities, and State and local government. In other words, the House passed a \$3.4 trillion bill that was, in fact, a very serious effort to address the enormous crises facing our country.

I should also add that in July, several months later, the House passed another version of the bill, so-called Heroes 2, and this legislation was for \$2.2 trillion.

That same month, in July, Senate Majority Leader MITCH MCCONNELL proposed a \$1.1 trillion bill that also provided a \$1,200 direct payment for working-class adults and \$500 for their kids. Then, in October, Secretary Mnuchin, in negotiations with Speaker PELOSI, proposed a COVID relief plan for \$1.8 trillion. That is Mnuchin representing the Trump administration.

So in the last number of months, we have had major proposals of \$3.4 trillion, \$2.2 trillion, \$1.8 trillion, and from Majority Leader MCCONNELL, \$1.1 trillion. Yet today, right now, after months of negotiating by the so-called Gang of 8, we are now down to just \$908 billion in legislation, and that includes \$560 billion in offsets, in unused money, from the CARES Act.

So what we are talking about now is going from an original House bill passed in May calling for \$3.4 trillion in new money, down to today \$348 billion

in new money—roughly 10 percent of what Democrats thought was originally needed. In my view, the \$348 billion in new money that is included in the proposal now being discussed is totally inadequate given the nature of the unprecedented crises that we face.

The American people cannot wait any longer. They need economic relief right now. Their kids are going hungry. They are being evicted from their homes. They can't go to the doctor. They need help, and they need it now. Every working-class American needs \$1,200 at least, \$2,400 for couples, and \$500 for children.

Let me be clear to emphasize a point that Senator SCHUMER made, and that is, what I am talking about now is money that must not be taken from other important priorities like 16 weeks of supplemental unemployment benefits; aid for small business, nutrition, housing, education; and the other important provisions in this bill. We need adequate funding to address the unprecedented crises that we face. We should not and cannot and must not take from Peter to pay Paul. We cannot cut unemployment benefits in order to help small business. We have to do it all, right now.

So, Madam President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 5063, which I introduced earlier today, which would provide a \$1,200 direct payment to every working-class adult, \$2,400 for couples, and \$500 for their children; and that the bill be considered read three times and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MURKOWSKI). Is there objection?

The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON. Reserving the right to object, the Senator from Vermont made a couple of statements that I would just like to repeat the words: that we are in a crisis; this is an emergency; we can't turn our backs on the suffering.

I agree. I have agreed for months. But he also said something that is completely incorrect. You might call it a lie. He said that Republicans have done nothing. That is not true.

I was on daily calls during the August recess after we had attempted and were debating internally a trillion-dollar package at the tail end of July before the August recess, recognizing—and I was one of the ones pointing out—the fact that we had already passed, as the good Senator from Vermont said, over \$3 trillion in four different COVID relief financial packages early in the pandemic. At that point in time, there was \$1.2 trillion of that unspent. A big chunk of that wasn't even obligated. Today, as we stand here debating this now, we still have a little under \$600 billion unspent and unobligated.

So the point I was making to my Republican colleagues during those last

few weeks in July and those conference calls in August was, before we authorize any more money, before we further mortgage our children's future, why don't we first repurpose and redirect what we already passed because what we passed, we passed very quickly because we had to. We had to do something massively, and we did something massively so that markets wouldn't seize, so that the people—the individuals who were out of work through no fault of their own and the businesses that were shut down through no fault of their own could get financial relief.

So we came together unanimously, and we did that, but doing it fast, doing it massively—I certainly knew it was going to be far from perfect. We found out the Federal Government actually has a hard time spending \$3 trillion because, over the course of a number of months, they didn't spend it all. They couldn't even obligate it.

So what Republicans did during the August recess—because we couldn't come to an agreement by the end of July—was we worked long and hard on a targeted bill, more than \$600 billion, \$300-plus of it for people on unemployment, \$260 billion for small businesses, \$100 billion for education, and tens of billions of dollars for vaccines and testing and agriculture and childcare. We offered that on the floor, and 52 Republicans voted to proceed to that bill. Democrats just said no.

I felt it was a crisis, an emergency, and we shouldn't have been turning our backs on these people who are suffering in September. Democrats said no. All they had to do was say yes. They couldn't take yes for an answer.

Madam President, I often use this analogy: I go up to you, because I know you are a generous person, and say: Madam President, give me 200 bucks. And you kind of look at me with a little shock and say: Well, I won't give you 200, but I will give you 100. Then I go stomping off and say: No; it is \$200 or nothing.

That is what the Democrats did to over \$600 billion in needed and necessary relief for the crisis, for the emergency, for the people we don't want to turn our backs on because they are suffering. If they were really serious and they actually wanted a result, if they wanted to relieve the suffering, wouldn't the logical thing have been to say yes, take \$600 billion, pocket it, get that relief flowing in September, and then come back and argue for more? But they said no. They were cynical. They played politics with it. And that is what they are doing here today.

I am sure, to paraphrase a widely known saying, that the road to total national bankruptcy is paved with good intentions. I am sure that is true. I don't question the good intentions of any Member of this body. We all want to provide the relief. We all want to relieve suffering. We all want to help fellow Americans who are hurting through no fault of their own.

But we talk about suffering. We use words. We don't look at numbers very

often. The Senator from Vermont has offered a few numbers, but let me quote a couple. Let me just kind of lay it out. I didn't have enough time to do a chart, so I will try and go through this slowly, but I think it is important to put this all in perspective.

Prior to the COVID recession, we had a record number of Americans employed at the end of December 2019. Just under 159 million Americans were employed. By April, 2 months into the pandemic, 3 months into the pandemic, employment had dropped to 133 million. That is a loss of over 25 million jobs—25 million—which is why we acted, why we acted in a bipartisan fashion to provide relief for those people—25 million—who had lost their jobs.

Now, the good news: It is hard to keep the American economy down when you don't overtax, when you don't overregulate. So in November—the latest figures we have—there are now just shy of 150 million Americans employed again. I realize some are underemployed, but still you have 150 million Americans employed—down about 9 million jobs from that record high when unemployment was only 3.5 percent. We had a record economy because we stopped overregulating and we had a competitive tax system. Now the unemployment rate is 6.7 percent.

In the CARES Act, which I supported because I want to help people, part of that was the economic impact payments—basically what the Senator from Vermont is proposing here in this bill he wants to pass by unanimous consent. It spent \$274 billion. It was paid to just under 166 million Americans, for an average check of about \$1,673 per person.

You can break that down into households because, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, the average check per household was \$2,400. That is 115 million households that got a check—115 million. Now, remember, at the low point, 25 million Americans had lost their jobs. We sent checks to 115 million households—4½ times the number of people who had lost their jobs.

My problem with the CARES Act, with the first four packages, is it was a shotgun approach. We just spent money. We just opened up the spigot, and we just sent it all over the place. We didn't have time to target it to those who really needed it. As a result—and we are seeing today—businesses that needed it, business owners, small business owners, have been wiped out of their life savings. They didn't get relief.

It wasn't well designed. It wasn't well targeted. And we probably spent hundreds of billions of dollars and sent it to people who didn't need it.

We are \$27.4 trillion in debt today. That is 128 percent of the size of last year's economy. If this bipartisan deal goes through, about \$1 trillion, we will be at \$28.4 trillion in debt—132 percent of our GDP.

I remember the good old days when I first got here. I ran because we were mortgaging our kids' future. We were a little over \$14 trillion in debt, and when the economy was over \$15 trillion, we were under 100 percent debt-to-GDP ratio.

What the Senator from Vermont is proposing is basically duplicating, without any reforms that I know of, those economic impact payments from the CARES Act, another \$275 billion, for a total of \$550 billion—a half a trillion dollars sent out again to 115 million households when right now we have only—not “only,” this is tragic. Every job lost is a tragedy. But we have 9 million jobs less than we had when we had a record level of employment before the recession—9 million jobs lost, 115 million households. That is 12.6 times the number of jobs that have been lost.

I think the question needs to be, if we are going to do this again, is there any sense, any information in terms of how the \$275 billion is spent? Well, we have an answer from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. They do a monthly internet-based survey called the Survey of Consumer Expectation. They did two special surveys, one in June and one in August. The June survey took a look at how those households spent the \$2,400 checks. Here are the results: 18 percent of those checks were spent on essential consumption—essential; 8 percent was on nonessential, the fun stuff, I guess; 3 percent on donations—Americans are still generous—for a total of 29 percent spent on consumption. The marginal propensity to consume was 29 percent. For the remainder, 71 percent, half of it was put to savings—spent on increasing savings—and the other half was paying off debt.

They also studied how the unemployment plus-up was spent. It had pretty similar results: 24 percent of those dollars went for essential consumer goods; 4 percent, non-essential; 1 percent, donations. Again, a total of 29 percent was consumed; 71 percent was either saved or used for debt reduction.

They did another special survey in August, asking those same 1,300 households that they surveyed: How would you spend a \$1,500 check? Not \$2,400—\$1,500. The response was that 14 percent would be spent on essential items, 7 percent on nonessential, 3 percent on donations. But only 24 percent of a new check would actually be spent on consumption; 76 percent would either be saved or pay off debt.

That is not very good economic stimulus. Again, the numbers are without any reforms, without trying to target the dollars to people who really need it. I would want to do that. I would like to work with anybody to try and get that relief flowing as quickly as possible to get it to the individuals who need it. I am sure the need is still great. It is greater than 9 million. I understand that. But let's look at some figures.

I do want to point out a past stimulus in terms of its effectiveness. In

2009, we had the great recession. Let me quote some employment figures from that.

In January 2008, we had 146 million Americans employed. Remember, today we have 149 million. Our record was 159 million, but there were about 146 million before the great recession.

By December 2009, it had dropped, hit the low point of 138 million people working; 8 million people had lost their jobs.

In January, 2009, President Obama was inaugurated, had total control of government, a filibuster-proof Senate, control of the House. He could pass anything he wanted, and they did. They passed the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. They did that in February 2009. At that point, there were 141.6 million Americans working—141.6 million Americans. The unemployment rate was 8.3 percent. Again, throughout 2009, that stimulus didn't work too well because unemployment fell to 138 million Americans. It took 3 years—3 years—until January 2012, because of overregulation and overtaxation, to return to February 2009 levels of 141.6 million Americans working—3 years. That is what we call a slow, non-existent recovery.

Oh, a quick aside: The Senator from Vermont is talking about how we need the \$600 plus-up for the unemployed because they are suffering. President Obama, with Speaker PELOSI and Majority Leader Reid, with a filibuster-proof Senate—they provided a \$25-per-week plus-up to State unemployment when they had total control. Now they are demanding \$600. I know that is not part of what the Senator from Vermont is asking for in terms of a unanimous consent request. I thought it was just somewhat noteworthy.

Again, I am not heartless. I want to help people. I voted to help people. I voted for the \$2.2 trillion CARES Act, but I also am concerned about our children's future and the fact that we are mortgaging it. We do not have an unlimited checking account. We have to be concerned about these things.

My complaint about the Senator from Vermont's bill—and, quite honestly, the bipartisan effort—we have \$600 billion unspent, unobligated. Let's work long and hard. Let's look at economic data. Let's target it properly. Let's not just shotgun it out to the economy again, wasting tens, if not hundreds of billions of dollars. Let's focus on that. Let's pretend it is like real money—like it is our money—and spend it well. We don't need to mortgage our children's future by another \$300 or \$400 billion. We don't need to do that.

We can alleviate suffering. We can help our fellow Americans. We could have done it in September, but the good Senator from Vermont and all of his colleagues on the Democratic side simply won't take yes for an answer, and my guess is, they are taking that same stance today. So, Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, the Senator from Wisconsin talks about Democrats not taking yes for an answer. Let me tell you what we did not take for an answer. We did not take for an answer the Republican bill, which did not have a nickel for unemployment benefits. We did not take yes for an answer for a bill that did not have a nickel for direct payments.

The Senator from Wisconsin talks about the deficit. Yet the Senator from Wisconsin voted for over \$1 trillion in tax breaks for billionaires and large, profitable corporations. That is OK.

The Senator from Wisconsin voted for a bloated military budget, \$740 billion. That is OK.

The Senator from Wisconsin supports hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars in corporate welfare. The Senator from Wisconsin threw out some numbers. Let me throw out some other numbers. Half of the people in this country are living paycheck to paycheck. Millions of workers are trying to survive on starvation wages of 10 or 12 bucks an hour. Ninety million people are uninsured or underinsured, can't afford to go to a doctor. Nineteen million families are spending half of their limited incomes on housing.

Today, we have the most severe hunger crisis in America that we have had in decades. Children in this country are going hungry while half a million people are homeless and many millions more fear eviction.

Today, as a result of the pandemic, not only do we have the worst healthcare crisis in 100 years but the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

I say to my colleague from Wisconsin, yes—I will not support proposals that do not provide a nickel in unemployment benefits, not a nickel in direct relief to tens of millions of low-income and middle-income families.

I would hope very much that this Congress appreciates the pain that is out there and that instead of worrying about tax breaks for billionaires or corporate welfare, let's pay attention to the needs of working families, and let us pass legislation which includes \$1,200 direct payments to working class families, as we did in the CARES Act, 500 bucks to their kids, and certainly not taking a nickel away from unemployment and the other important provisions that are currently being negotiated.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, to my colleague from Vermont, my understanding is that in a room somewhere near here right now, those negotiations are ongoing, and there certainly better be unemployment insurance. That was in our bipartisan framework that I worked with the Presiding Officer on. And there certainly better be not just an extension of the existing Federal assistance for self-employed workers and

gig economy workers and for those who are now benefiting from the Federal extension, the 13-week extension, but also additional funding. My understanding is direct payments are also in the mix.

I just wish they would get their work done. It has been 9 months since the CARES Act was done. I just hope we can figure out a way to get through the hurdles that remain. I have spent much of the day—as have my colleagues, I am sure—talking to colleagues, trying to figure out how to fix the last couple of issues that apparently are out there. But my hope is that even if it is not a perfect bill for me—and it won't be. I know it won't be. We spent 3 or 4 weeks working on legislation that is bipartisan that isn't what any of us would have crafted individually, but it provides that needed help right now. We need it both for the economic crisis that has been caused by this virus but also the healthcare crisis, which, unfortunately, is getting worse in my home State of Ohio and not better.

The vaccine is on its way. That is very exciting. I believe that the vaccine development and now the distribution are actually quite impressive. I think the administration deserves credit for that, as do so many hard-working scientists who have been sleeping in their offices, making sure that we have this vaccine available. But there is going to be a bridge here. There is a time period between now and March and April when it is not going to be readily available to everybody we represent. During that time period, we need a bridge. We have needed it for a while, so my hope is we will get that done tonight.

#### TRIBUTE TO TERESA SIMMS

Madam President, I also want to mention briefly, I just came in on the underground subway from the offices and ran into a woman who has spent 41 years working here for us—one of those selfless, hard-working employees of the United States Capitol. Her name is Teresa Simms. Many of you know Teresa. She always has a smile on her face. She is always optimistic. She always has a focus on providing the best service to all of us—staff, other employees, Members. She started in the cafeteria. She then went to the night cleaning crew, cleaning offices here in this place at night. And then she was promoted to being one of the drivers of the subway. For 41 years, again, she has done that job dutifully, with great commitment.

She is going to retire and spend more time with her family and, particularly, take care of her mom, who is ill. Tonight we want to offer our thanks and gratitude to her and our best wishes to her in retirement.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

The other thing that is going on tonight—I will say, I guess it is obvious—is that we are about to hit the government shutdown time period again. I mean, we are only about 6½ half hours from another government shutdown. That is totally unacceptable. We

should never have these shutdowns. They don't make any sense. By the way, to my Republican friends who think these shutdowns are good because you shut down a lot of government, and it seems like you would save money—we never save money. The taxpayers always pay more. You go back and provide backpay even for services that aren't provided.

I think we have to figure out a way, when we can't get our work done here—and that is why this is happening. We have not gotten our spending bills, appropriations done here. Therefore, we are facing a government shutdown again. At midnight, we turn into pumpkins. It means the government starts to get shut down.

By the way, it creates confusion and uncertainty for Federal workers, of course, who are wondering, are they going to have their job and are they going to get paid, but also confusion and uncertainty for a lot of citizens who are depending on the services that would otherwise be provided. It is so inefficient. If you believe in the efficiency of government and you believe in, you know, not wasting money, you shouldn't want these government shutdowns.

My hope is that we do pass a continuing resolution at least to kick us into the next couple of days so that we don't have a shutdown tonight. That would be such a disaster for so many people. And it could last a long time, by the way, as these shutdowns did over the last couple of years. It doesn't just mean it is a few days. Let's just not go into shutdown at all.

I have introduced legislation called End Government Shutdowns for 10 years now. I have introduced it in five different Congresses. We have 33 cosponsors. I think it has more cosponsors than any other bill like it, but there are other ideas out there, and I am open to them—just some way to get away from these shutdowns. Our bill says you just can't shut it down. When you are going for a shutdown, instead, you just do a continuing funding from the previous year. And then, by the way, over time, you reduce that by 1 percent every 90 days and every 60 days to get the attention of the appropriators to get them back to work. Other people have other ideas. Our bill has been bipartisan in the past. I don't believe it is today, but it does have 33 cosponsors.

My hope is that we can figure out a way to end these government shutdowns with simple legislation that says: Let's just not do it. I don't think it provides healthy leverage. I think it provides, again, uncertainty and confusion.

#### CYBER SECURITY

Madam President, 2020 has been a tough year, let's face it. And, unfortunately, it looks like the challenges haven't ended. I came to the floor tonight, primarily, to talk about some shocking and disturbing news we just heard over the last few days, and that

is that there has been a massive, highly sophisticated, and ongoing cyber attack that has compromised the networks of multiple Federal agencies and the private sector.

According to reports, for months now—months—hackers—our intelligence experts think they are most likely connected with the Russian Government in some way. That is what they tell us. But these hackers have engaged in an espionage effort to access information in some of our biggest Federal agencies that hold some of our most sensitive data and our most sensitive and important national security secrets.

Also, again, many U.S. private companies were hacked, as well. These hackers are smart. They targeted some of these agencies that do handle things like national security—the State Department, for instance, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Energy and its Nuclear Security Administration.

This is scary stuff. Others, like the National Institutes of Health, were hacked. Of course, they are closely involved with our work to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, so also a lot of important, sensitive information could have been hacked. They are a treasure trove of information. These are agencies that protect our homeland, promote our freedom abroad, and are on the frontlines battling this pandemic.

But what we know today may be just the tip of the iceberg, we are told. Experts expect the number of agencies as well as a number of private companies victimized by this attack will only continue to grow.

The main IT monitoring platform believed to have been hacked was used across the government and by 33,000 private companies. Shockingly, we also know that FireEye, the preeminent cyber incident response firm, was also breached. So think about this. FireEye, which is a company that people call when they are hacked, was hacked.

We are still learning the details about this attack, but what we know is chilling. Federal investigators from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, CISA, under the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, and also the Office of National Intelligence, the ODNI, are all working to determine how this happened, what the extent of it is.

But it looks like the main vulnerability was through a SolarWinds' platform, which is an IT monitoring platform widely, again, widely used by the government and the private sector to oversee the operation of other computer networks.

The hackers disguised their entry into these Federal agencies and company systems in a troubling and clever way. They exploited a vulnerability in a security patch sent out by SolarWinds to update its software. I want to emphasize that—the security patches that we all advocate to be installed as soon as possible to protect