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Senate

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Beautiful Savior, Your mighty power makes us glad. We celebrate the victories You have given us in the past and trust You with our future.

Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations, and we are sustained by Your steadfast love. Today, surround our Senators with the shield of Your favor as they labor to keep our Nation strong. Inspire them to be obedient to Your commands, doing what You desire of them as You fill them with Your wisdom.

Lord, manifest Your power through their labors so that this Nation will fulfill Your purposes. May Your angels guard us in all our ways.

We pray in Your mighty Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

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

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 1 minute in morning business.

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

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, history will look back at 2020 and find many lessons and even some silver linings to unpack.

The loss of more than 300,000 American lives so far will be mourned for

years to come. Operation Warp Speed, which President Trump launched, turned out to be a historic public-private partnership. It has delivered a lifesaving vaccine in record time, shattering scientific benchmarks along the way. For the last 9 months, Americans have pulled together in shared sacrifice to do their part.

As the COVID-19 vaccine makes its way into the communities across our country as it is right now, I encourage my fellow Iowans to keep pulling together. When public health officials say it is your turn to get a vaccine, roll up your sleeve. I will be doing the same when my turn arrives.

Getting immunized is the only way we will beat the virus and get back to the normal way of American life. History will show Americans turned the page on the pandemic when all of us roll up our sleeves.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday leaders in the Senate and the House and the Secretary of the Treasury reached a major agreement that struggling Americans have needed for months.

We are going to pass another historic rescue package to help American families through this pandemic. We are going to pass full-year government funding so the Armed Forces and all Federal Departments have the resources and the certainty they need. And we are going to do both of these things as soon as possible.

Senate Republicans have been trying since July—July—to get more targeted, bipartisan relief into the hands of the American people. Back in July,

we proposed to send about \$1 trillion to priorities including a second round of the Paycheck Protection Program, direct checks for households, and funding for healthcare providers, testing, and K-12 schools—back in July.

Democrats said no. They said they would block anything short of their multitrillion-dollar leftwing wish list. Here was one headline that particularly underscores their view: “\$2 trillion or bust: Democrats draw red line in coronavirus spending battle.”

So, in July and in August, when Republican Senators tried to extend expiring Federal unemployment benefits, Democrats blocked us. Laid-off workers lost their benefits.

In September and again in October, as people kept hurting, the virus kept spreading, and schools tried to find footing, every Republican voted for a multihundred-billion-dollar package. Both times Democrats blocked the relief. Their view was all or nothing.

But a few days ago, with a new President-elect of their own party, everything changed. Democrats suddenly came around to our position that we should find consensus, make a law where we agree, and get urgent help out the door.

In a few days of hard work, we have assembled another historic bipartisan rescue package: just under \$900 billion of relief targeted toward our fellow Americans who need help the most.

I will begin where this pandemic will end: vaccinations. Thanks to the genius of science and the leadership of President Trump, Operation Warp Speed has produced safe and effective vaccines. Now, we need to distribute them nationwide.

This rescue package provides many billions more dollars to expand vaccine purchasing and vaccine distribution. Until we have won, we need to keep wearing masks and taking precautions. Even so, more Americans will fall ill, so this legislation continues to fund health providers and COVID testing.

• This “buller” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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The pandemic has fallen especially hard on children and parents. Our legislation includes major funding—more than \$80 billion—for K–12 schools to reopen safely and get kids' educations back on track. There are billions more for childcare providers to reopen safely as well, and new investments in rural broadband will improve both education and telehealth down the road.

Then there are Americans' personal finances, the impossible kitchen table questions that millions of working families have faced this year through no fault of their own.

Back in March, thanks to Chairman RUBIO, Senator COLLINS, and Senator CARDIN, we created a Paycheck Protection Program. It saved small businesses and helped millions of American workers keep receiving paychecks rather than pink slips.

It would be insanity for us to have saved these jobs all this time only to drop the ball with the end in sight, so this bill will send more than \$280 billion to reopen the PPP for a targeted second round, and we made sure churches and faith-based organizations will continue to be eligible.

Of course, millions have already been laid off, so months after Republicans tried to stop benefits from expiring in the first place, this package will resume a temporary Federal supplement to unemployment insurance, and it extends other programs for the self-employed and gig workers that would have expired.

Thanks to the particular leadership and direction of President Trump and Secretary Mnuchin, households will receive a second round of direct relief checks—\$600 per adult and per child. This is just some of the aid that will be heading Americans' way in a matter of hours. No sprawling leftwing wish list, no unconstrained bailouts for State and local government with no connection to COVID needs—just smart, targeted, bipartisan policies, what Senate Republicans have been recommending since the summer.

I cited a figure of \$900 billion, but listen to this. The net new cost—new cost—is less than roughly \$350 billion. We are recovering more than half a trillion dollars in unspent money that Congress had already set aside and channeling it to these urgent needs.

Thanks to our colleague Senator TOOMEY, this legislation winds down some of the temporary emergency powers we lent the Federal Reserve to make sure our financial system survived last spring.

A lot of talented leaders helped make this happen. Leader MCCARTHY has been an invaluable partner. White House Chief of Staff MARK MEADOWS has been central. Colleagues such as Senators COLLINS, MURKOWSKI, ROMNEY, CASSIDY, and PORTMAN helped prod the Senate toward consensus with their bipartisan work. And I just mentioned Senator TOOMEY.

I want to give particular thanks to the Secretary of the Treasury, Sec-

retary Mnuchin. Before the pandemic, Steven was already a crucial partner for the Republican majorities in Congress. We enacted the most consequential tax reform in a generation. We helped create the conditions for explosive job growth, wage growth, and record-low unemployment. Our country had the strongest possible starting point to weather this storm.

This year, the Secretary has been even more essential. He helped Congress develop and pass the historic CARES Act in record time. It prevented a complete economic collapse at the hands of the virus. From drafting CARES to implementing it, to the intervening months, to this latest package, Secretary Mnuchin has been an extremely capable and patient partner. He helped guide our Nation through this dark period toward the daybreak that lies ahead.

On behalf of the Senate and the country, I thank the Secretary for his countless hours of work and his incredible effectiveness in extraordinary times.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on a related matter, while this rescue package will dominate headlines, we are also set to fund the entire Federal Government on a bipartisan basis.

We must not overlook the tireless work from Chairman SHELBY, Senator LEAHY, and our Appropriations Committees in both Chambers. Their hard work goes beyond just avoiding shutdowns. Full-year funding bills give our Armed Forces the certainty to make plans and budgets so we can continue to modernize our capabilities and keep pace with competitors like Russia and China.

This year's bills also tackle important domestic priorities. Everything from agricultural research to the fight against opioid abuse, to border security and law enforcement are provided for. We aren't defunding the police or abolishing ICE around here—not on our watch.

Federal law enforcement from the U.S. Marshals to the Border Patrol will get the resources they need to protect innocent Americans and uphold the rule of law.

And I want to especially thank Chairman SHELBY and Congresswoman GRANGER for beating back a number of far-left poison pills. These bills maintain pro-life guardrails on funding, secure President Trump's approach to title X, and respect our citizens' Second Amendment rights.

The Senate is about to cast some incredibly impactful votes. None of us think any of this legislation is perfect, but a big bipartisan majority of us recognize the incredible amount of good it will do when we send it to the President's desk.

The American people have waited long enough. I am glad for our country that we are now moving ahead together.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

WINTER SOLSTICE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, before I say anything else, I want to say happy winter solstice. And 2020 is almost gone. It is an announcement I made to my family this morning, and I hope America shares it. We are turning a corner as a nation and to a new year and a new season, and, I hope, a much better day for all of us across this country.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, 9 months ago, in March, we created the relief known as the CARES Act, and it passed the Senate by a vote of 96 to 0. It was a measure intended to address the pandemic and the resultant economic downturn in America. I have heard various estimates of the total cost, but it is somewhere in the range of \$2 trillion to \$3 trillion. It was the largest single investment in our Nation in our history. It was a massive national response to a massive national health crisis, and it worked, at least on the economic front. I believe that it created demand in our economy that otherwise would not have been there, and it gave some businesses a chance to survive. Sadly, all did not, and many are still suffering. But it was necessary. It was done on a bipartisan basis. It was massive, and I believe it achieved its goal.

It started us on the course of dealing with the COVID-19 coronavirus, and one has to look back and say it only had limited success in that regard. As of today, we have lost more than 317,000 American lives, and millions have been infected. Our hospitals are still overrun with patients. But we did the right thing, and we quickly realized what we did could make a difference.

The unemployment compensation, which we provided for millions of Americans, was not only the humane thing to do but, as economists would tell you, it was the best single thing you could do to fight a recession. A