

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, here we are, the 21st of December, 4 days till Christmas, and Congress is finally getting around to doing its duty on COVID-19 relief, as well as the Omnibus appropriations bill, which will keep the government open and keep the lights on through the end of the fiscal year next September.

I have to editorialize here that I think this is a terrible process. It is a terrible process. I just saw one of the Texas delegation House Members saying: I am expected to review thousands of pages of an appropriations bill and COVID-19 relief bill in the next couple of hours and then vote on it this evening?

Well, we will be in the same posture. As terrible as this process is, it was intentionally created. I am sure that the Appropriations chairman, RICHARD SHELBY, and Leader MCCONNELL would have loved to have had a regular appropriations process to vote out each of the subcommittee appropriations and pass them using regular order, giving the Members of the Congress a chance to offer amendments and maybe improve the bill, but we weren't provided that opportunity because, essentially, the Democratic leader and the Speaker of the House of Representatives understand that this kind of broken process empowers them to the detriment of individual Members of the Congress and to the detriment of the people we represent. It empowers them, not the rank-and-file Members.

So, I believe this is a—and the same thing is true on COVID-19, of course. We passed the CARES Act in March. We tried to come back and replenish some of those funds. We were successful in doing so, for example, in the Paycheck Protection Program, but it was obvious there was more need, and on at least three occasions—maybe four, but at least three—we offered another half trillion dollars in relief, only to be blocked by Democrats here in the Senate.

Speaker PELOSI was candid. She basically said: Well, this is about politics. We don't want President Trump to get credit for Congress stepping up in a bipartisan way to provide relief to the American people in the runup to the election.

So this is where we are. We know what we have to do. We have to prevent the government from shutting down. We know that there is genuine need across the country for more COVID-19 relief, so we need to do that. But I would also point out, we are going to do roughly \$900 billion of an additional COVID-19 relief bill when Speaker

PELOSI and the Democratic leader in the Senate, Senator SCHUMER, turned down a \$1.8 trillion offer from Secretary of the Treasury Mnuchin. So, rather than accept twice as much earlier because it didn't fit their political playbook, now they are accepting half when they realized they have run out of runway.

Well, the monthslong stalemate has finally broken. Yesterday evening, the so-called "four corners"—the Speaker, the Republican leader in the House, the Democratic minority leader here in the Senate, and Senator MCCONNELL—they reached agreement on a bipartisan package of bills to support the American people through the continued fight against COVID-19. And despite my comments about the process and what brings us here with so little time and ability to affect some of the content, I hope this legislation will pass and reach the President's desk in a matter of hours.

I think we could all agree that this bill could not have come soon enough. Since this summer, Republicans and Democrats have been miles apart on the size and shape of the next COVID-19 bill. Democrats, as I indicated, wanted a \$3 trillion bill they called the Heroes Act, while we supported a more targeted approach. That is when Speaker PELOSI uttered those now famous words: Nothing is better than something.

Well, I have always believed that something is better than nothing. But the big-picture disagreements prevented any progress from being made, even though we, by and large, agreed on about 80 percent of what needed to be done, and that is included in the bill that we will vote on here in the next few hours.

Well, after the election, the Speaker and Democratic leader here in the Senate, I guess, decided that they no longer needed to hold the American people hostage because the election had now come and gone. So there were bipartisan negotiations that broke out, which have led to targeted package bills—to a targeted package that could earn the support of both parties and the signature of President Trump. It is safe to say there could not be a more urgent need for action from Congress.

The last several days have proven that we are, indeed, at an inflection point—turning point—in our ongoing fight against the virus. One successful vaccine has already been administered to thousands of healthcare workers across the country. In my State alone, the Governor estimates that a million people will be vaccinated by the end of this month. That is something we should all be thankful for and applaud.

On Friday evening, the FDA authorized a second safe and effective vaccine made by Moderna, meaning that millions more doses will be reaching Americans—in particular, our frontline heroes—in the coming days. These are developments that we have been waiting, hoping, investing, and praying for,

but it is not a silver bullet. We are still battling this pandemic, and it is likely to be with us for the foreseeable future. But the good news is, people who are particularly vulnerable because of their age or underlying chronic illnesses will likely be able to get the vaccine no later than March. Dr. Fauci said that by June, anybody in America who wants the vaccine can get it.

This next phase of our fight will determine how quickly we are able to defeat COVID-19 and regrow our economy. This legislation will clearly help us get there.

First, it will provide the needed support for vaccine distribution. Not only has there been a modern-day medical miracle in developing these safe and effective vaccines, but now the logistics of getting it to 330 million people in America are completely daunting, but it is happening. Millions of doses have already been delivered to hospitals across the country, and in the coming months, tens of millions more will be distributed as we launch this massive vaccination campaign.

While the cost of the vaccine has already been covered, the range of associated expenses that come with it has not been. For everything from transportation infrastructure to deliver the vaccines to ultra-low temperature freezers to store them, to personal protective equipment for our healthcare heroes to safely administer them, those costs have added up and need to be provided for in this legislation. This legislation will, in fact, provide billions of dollars to help cover these kinds of costs and to ensure the race to distribute these vaccines is as successful as the race to develop them.

Part of that is through relief for airlines, which will transport the vaccines to communities across the country. This assistance will enable our airlines to carry out their important role in the vaccine relay race, all while keeping their employees on payroll and preparing for a strong postpandemic recovery.

These two successful vaccines so far are moving us closer and closer to the end of this crisis, but we still have a ways to go, and the American people need and deserve our support in getting there.

Millions of workers have no way to earn a paycheck. Food banks are experiencing Depression-era lines each week. Farmers and ranchers have lost their traditional markets. Small businesses are sinking, and parents and teachers are still worried about a safe return to in-person learning for our students.

This targeted relief package will send desperately needed support to each of these groups for each of those causes. The workers who had the rug pulled out from them earlier this year will continue to receive the federally enhanced unemployment benefits under the CARES Act that would otherwise expire the day after Christmas. And State unemployment benefits will be

bolstered, as I said, by \$300 a week in Federal benefits through March 14 of next year.

We will also provide a second, more targeted direct payment to the hardest hit Americans, with up to \$600 per individual. That means that a family of four making up to \$150,000 will receive \$2,400 in the coming days. This bill will ensure that the basic needs of low-income households, schoolchildren, and those in long lines at food banks will be met.

It also provides \$13 billion for a time-limited Federal nutrition benefit increase, as well as at least \$1.9 billion for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program at food banks.

Our farmers and ranchers and producers who have lost significant or all the value of their crops will also receive \$13 billion in agricultural assistance to strengthen the farm safety net which benefits us all.

This has been a difficult year for millions of families in Texas and across the country as parents have worried about how to pay bills and buy groceries, let alone Christmas gifts under their tree for their children.

I know this will not erase all of the financial uncertainty, but it will go a long way to provide some help to those whose livelihoods have been thrown into chaos, and I hope it will also provide reassurance for the parents and teachers who have worried about a safe return to in-person learning.

This legislation provides \$82 billion for education and will help our K-12 students, colleges, and universities get their education programs back on track.

This relief bill will also extend additional support to Texas small businesses. Our small businesses continue to struggle with the arrival of winter weather. That has been especially true for restaurants and other businesses that have relied on outdoor seating.

Many of these businesses utilized the Paycheck Protection Program to help them cover payroll and other expenses earlier this year, but the program expired in August, and our hardest hit small businesses are in dire need of more support.

This legislation will provide another \$284 billion in the Paycheck Protection Program. This has been an enormously successful program in my State, with 414,000 loans that are convertible into grants under some circumstances worth some \$41 billion. This has been a lifesaver for many of our small businesses and the workers they employ. The hardest hit businesses will be able to take a second draw of the PPP and provide for stability for their businesses and their employee until this crisis ends.

I am glad this bill also includes language from a bill I introduced to clarify tax deductibility for business expenses paid with a forgiven PPP loan. The average PPP loan in Texas was \$99,000, and without this change, those businesses that received that PPP loan

and grant would face a \$36,000 tax liability.

That would start to show up in January with the estimated taxes being paid by many small businesses that pay on a quarterly basis. That sort of unexpected tax liability would be a slap in the face for those businesses that saw this life ring and decided to grab a hold of it. This change will ensure loan recipients aren't saddled with an unexpected tax liability that could absolutely sink their struggling businesses that have been hanging on by a thread.

I appreciate Chairman GRASSLEY of the Finance Committee, Ranking Member WYDEN, and their staffs for fighting to include this change, which will clarify that these expenses should have been tax deductible all along. That is what Congress intended in March when we passed the CARES Act.

I am also glad the Omnibus that is paired with this package includes other legislation that I introduced with our friend AMY KLOBUCHAR, the Senator from Minnesota, called the Save Our Stages Act, designed to help our small independent entertainment venues across the country from closing their doors for good.

These Main Street businesses were excluded from the original Paycheck Protection Program, even though they were among some of the hardest hit small businesses. Event venues were the first to close when COVID-19 hit, and they are likely to be the last to open once it is gone. This funding will help them stay afloat until that long-awaited day finally arrives.

I thank Senator KLOBUCHAR, who has been my partner in this bipartisan effort, as well as Senator RUBIO, who has been a champion for these venues during the final critical stages of negotiations.

The government funding legislation includes a number of other bipartisan bills which have had nearly unanimous support in both the House and the Senate, including a bill I introduced with our colleague BOB MENENDEZ from New Jersey.

This legislation will finally, after 25 years or more, establish a National Museum of the American Latino, which will improve Latino representation within the Smithsonian Institution. This museum will honor the contributions of Latinos throughout our Nation's history and give their stories a brick-and-mortar home here in our Nation's Capital. I am thrilled that generations of Americans will be able to get a more accurate view of our Nation's history when they visit this new Smithsonian museum, and I can't wait to be among its first visitors.

There is no question that there are additional measures I would have liked to have seen included in the coronavirus relief legislation, and I am sure that is true for every Member. But this targeted package includes critical funding and support for Texans and Americans at this watershed moment,

and it will break the stalemate which has paralyzed Congress for months now.

The American people are suffering. It is not time for politics as usual. It is a time to come together to compromise and to make good on our commitment to support them.

I appreciate the work of our colleagues who fought for a deal that will give our country added strength during this next critical phase of our fight, and I look forward to voting for this legislation.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

BUILDING UP INDEPENDENT LIVES AND DREAMS ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be discharged from further consideration of S. 371 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 371) to provide regulatory relief to charitable organizations that provide housing assistance, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. CORNYN. I ask unanimous consent that the Fischer substitute at the desk be considered and agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 2729) in the nature of a substitute was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Building Up Independent Lives and Dreams Act" or the "BUILD Act".

SEC. 2. MORTGAGE LOAN TRANSACTION DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS.

(a) TILA AMENDMENT.—Section 105 of the Truth in Lending Act (15 U.S.C. 1604) is amended by inserting after subsection (d) the following:

"(e) DISCLOSURE FOR CHARITABLE MORTGAGE LOAN TRANSACTIONS.—With respect to a mortgage loan transaction involving a residential mortgage loan offered at 0 percent interest with only bonafide and reasonable fees and that is primarily for charitable purposes by an organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986