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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Father of life, awaken in our Senators the joy of living this day with all its new challenges and hopes. May they see in the challenges opportunities to grow in grace and in a deeper knowledge of You. May they find in their hopes seeds to plant that will bring a harvest of healing to our land. Lord, fill their working hours with Your redeeming radiance and their hearts with Your peace. Keep them safe, for they have found in You a refuge. Instruct them with Your truth as You give them faith to believe in the certainty of Your ultimate triumph.

We pray in Your strong 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will pro-

ceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Isabella Casillas Guzman, of California, to be Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

(Mr. WARNOCK assumed the Chair.)

NOMINATION OF ISABELLA CASILLAS GUZMAN

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed just how important the Federal Government can be in helping workers, families, and businesses during a time of crisis. Congress has passed trillions of dollars in urgent relief, and we have relied on Federal Agencies to implement that aid quickly, reliably, competently.

So, while it might not normally be as high profile as other Cabinet-level Agencies, the Small Business Administration has recently been in the spotlight. Over the last 12 months, the Small Business Administration has overseen two pandemic-related programs that will dole out more than \$1 trillion to our Nation's small businesses, nonprofits, and religious institutions. Moving forward, it will play a prominent role in implementing the American Rescue Plan.

Today, the Senate will vote on President Biden's nominee to take on that important job: Ms. Isabella Guzman.

Ms. Guzman could not be more ready. She comes from a family of small business owners herself. Her dad ran his own veterinary clinic. Not only is Ms. Guzman a veteran of the Small Business Administration, in serving as the Deputy Chief of Staff in the Obama administration, she has just finished a stint as a top official at California's Office of Business and Economic Development, helping support the fifth largest economy in the world.

For many Americans, opening and operating a business of their own is

part of the American dream. I have every confidence that, under Ms. Guzman's leadership, the SBA will help small business owners hold onto their dreams until our economy comes roaring back.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT OF 2021

Mr. President, this morning, I also want to continue the theme of highlighting aspects of the American Rescue Plan that have not received enough attention.

We have heard a lot about the progress we have made on vaccines. I read, this morning, that 109 million Americans have received at least one vaccination, so we are well on the path to getting Americans vaccinated, and checks have gone out the door. I was on a call with people from central Brooklyn—Bed-Stuy and Brownsville—last night, and many had already received their checks. It was very much needed. It was very much welcomed.

As President Biden announced yesterday, on the vaccines, we have had 100 million shots in people's arms and 100 million checks in people's pockets. Let's say that again. That sounds good to me—100 million shots in people's arms and 100 million checks in people's pockets. The Democrats are delivering what we promised.

Now, we have heard a lot about how the American Rescue Plan will help Americans who need it the most. The 20 percent of Americans at the lowest levels of income will receive the highest levels of support. It is about time. We had the mirror image of that when our Republican colleagues ran the Senate, where the top 1 percent did the best and the bottom 20 percent was totally ignored. That is backward. God bless the people who are in the top 1 percent, but they don't need the help. It is the people struggling to feed their families, pay the rent, and help the kids in school who need the help. We are doing it for the first time in a while. Experts predict that child poverty could be cut in half. Meanwhile,

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



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the top 1 percent of Americans will see an income boost of zero percent. As I said, God bless them, but they are doing fine already. They are doing fine already.

And we have heard a lot about how the American Rescue Plan will prime the American economy to come roaring back. Economists are already projecting that economic growth could double as a result of the American Rescue Plan. When over 75–85, I think it is—percent of Americans get some checks, the money goes out. It starts revitalizing our economy. People shop in the stores, eat at the restaurants, even begin to travel and see their relatives, maybe, for the first time if people are vaccinated.

Wow, this is great news. This is great news. I think that America is turning the corner, and I think the attitude of Americans is turning the corner as well. People now see a brighter future for this country and their regions.

Today, though, as I said, there is so much in this bill that, every day, I want to focus on something else that may not be focused upon. Since the Senate is set to vote on the confirmation of the new SBA Administrator, today is a good opportunity to expand on just how the American Rescue Plan will help our Nation's 30 million small businesses.

We all know that small businesses have been some of the hardest hit entities by the pandemic. Early in the crisis, 80 percent of small businesses—four out of five—reported having to close their doors at one point. Just the other day, I heard of a local New York business owner who was forced to close up shop after surviving most of the pandemic. You could hear the pain in his voice. He poured his entire soul into this business. I know. This hits home for me.

My dad was a small business man. He struggled. He had a little exterminating business all through my growing years—from the day I was born until the day I left the house. My brother, sister, and I still have vivid memories of Dad's pacing the floor on Sunday nights at 2 a.m. because he hated going to work on Monday morning—so many challenges, so much thrown at him, and not much he could do about it. He was wondering how he would actually provide for his family. Praise God, he retired at around 70. He is now 97. He has been a happy man for these last 27 years. God is good, as the Presiding Officer knows better than most of us, but he struggled.

So, when I hear about the anguish of small business people, I will never forget. I would work there sometimes—weekends, summers. He sent me out to collect checks from a landlord who had had three or four smaller buildings, and my dad's company had done the exterminating. The guy hadn't paid for 6 months. I traveled, and it took me about an hour to an hour and a half on two buses to get to this man's door. I knocked. He opened the door.

I said, you know: I am CHUCK SCHUMER, the son of Abe Schumer of Century Exterminating. You owe us 6 months. We have been doing a good job of exterminating your house.

Do you know what he said to me?

Your dad is a small business man. He can't afford a lawyer. He can't afford anything to go after me. I am not paying.

This is the anguish that small business people face, so we need to help them. We need to help them.

That is one of the many reasons I am so proud of the American Rescue Plan—because it provides tens of billions of dollars in support for small businesses that have suffered during the pandemic. The American Rescue Plan is nothing short of a lifeline for Main Street businesses from one end of this country to the other: Main Street businesses in rural America, Main Street businesses in suburban America, and Main Street businesses in urban America and in our inner cities. It is a lifeline.

For starters, the American Rescue Plan provides \$30 billion for restaurants and bars through the RESTAURANTS Act—the first bipartisan amendment added to the bill—sponsored by Senators SINEMA and WICKER.

The American Rescue Plan also includes more than \$1 billion in additional support for our Nation's small theaters and venues, adding to a grant program I helped create in December called the Save our Stages Act. These independent art venues, restaurants, and places like that—churches—are the hardest hit because that is where people gather. When they are not gathering, there is no income whether it be the money they pay the small business, the checks they pay at the restaurants or the money they leave on the collection plates, when they are not there, in our religious institutions. So this is a good thing.

I want to say one more thing about Save our Stages. It not only includes more money for Save our Stages; it includes an amendment I authored to allow venue owners to apply for aid through Save our Stages without losing eligibility for traditional small business grants through the PPP. So that is a change that our arts institutions and our independent venues and theaters should know—that they could get both the PPP and Save our Stages.

Now, these venues, the small businesses of many types, the nonprofits, they are the lifeblood of our communities. They were the first to close; they will be the last to open.

I am hopeful that the support we passed in the American Rescue Plan will help our small businesses, our theaters, our music venues, and our restaurants to hold on until we can all gather safely once again.

That is not all. The American Rescue Plan provides \$15 billion in flexible, targeted grants to help small businesses that have had a hard time accessing relief over the last 12 months,

including most nonprofits and churches. Up to 90 percent of minority-owned small businesses will qualify for this funding, closing the racial gap and keeping local economies from deteriorating further.

We invest \$10 billion in State, local, and Tribal small business financing programs.

We expand the employee retention tax credit so that businesses of any size can more easily keep their workers on the payroll because that one doesn't have an employee number limit.

Finally, we bolstered and expanded the popular Paycheck Protection Program to include more nonprofits, including labor and agricultural organizations that unfortunately, in December, our Republican colleagues wouldn't let in.

In a nutshell, the American Rescue Plan provides a colossal boost for our Nation's small businesses and will make sure that all of them, not just those with the right connections, can access relief. It will help millions of Americans keep their jobs, retain their incomes, and support their families during this recovery.

Now, we know many of these businesses are not out of the woods yet. There is still some time until our country can fully open up, until families eat inside their favorite restaurant or colleagues can meet at a bar for happy hour, until we can see one of our favorite performers put on a concert. But we are already seeing signs of hope.

As a Washington Post headline announced recently, "Companies are scaling back layoffs because of [the American Rescue Plan]." Let me say that again, proudly and happily. "Companies are scaling back layoffs because of [the American Rescue Plan]," and the Senate, I assure the American people, is going to keep working to make sure that the support for our businesses remains intact over the next few months.

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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

FILIBUSTER

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today I would like to begin with a few quotations.

The legislative filibuster . . . is the most important distinction between the Senate and the House. Without the 60-vote threshold for legislation, the Senate becomes a majoritarian institution like the House, much more subject to the whims of short-term electoral change. No Senator would like to see that happen. So let's find a way to further protect the 60-vote rule for legislation.