



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 117th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 167

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, APRIL 26, 2021

No. 71

Senate

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Jason Scott Miller, of Maryland, to be Deputy Director for Management, Office of Management and Budget.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The deputy majority leader.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, at his first official news conference 1 month ago, President Biden said:

I got elected to solve problems and the most urgent problem was COVID-19 and the economic disruption facing millions and millions of Americans.

If we were to measure President Biden using only those standards, the first hundred days of the Biden-Harris administration have been a historic success. But this new administration has done far more in its first hundred days than just tackle the pandemic; it helped small families and small businesses that are hurting financially because of the coronavirus.

President Biden is reestablishing America's role as a leader in the world and repairing alliances that were damaged dangerously under his predecessor. Equally important, Joe Biden is restoring credibility and dignity to the Office of the President itself.

As President Biden prepares to deliver his first joint address to Congress on Wednesday, it is worth considering how far we have come in 100 days.

President Biden inherited a nation torn apart by political division, an out-of-control pandemic, and an economy that was in a deep, deep hole. Hundreds of thousands of American small businesses had been closed when he took office. The pandemic caused most of this.

Millions of Americans had lost jobs. We lost 140,000 jobs in December alone.

President Biden promised aggressive government action to stop the spread of the coronavirus and to stabilize the economy, and he and the Democrats in Congress are making good on those promises.

Let's remember where we came from. When Joe Biden took office, the United States was averaging 195,000 new COVID infections every day, and 3,000 Americans were dying every day. Today, we have come down from 195,000 daily infections to 57,000 and from 3,000 COVID deaths every day to 700—still too many, but dramatic progress was made under this new President.

Remember where we came from. When Biden took office, the United States of America had one of the highest COVID infection rates in the world. Two numbers tell the story of the first year of COVID-19 infection under the previous President. The United States of America has about 5 percent of the world's population, but we had, when Biden took office, 20 percent—20 percent—of the COVID-19 infections in the world and 20 percent of the deaths. Now there is hope. This President listened to the medical experts—he didn't come up with his own theories of the case—and he expanded vaccine distribution.

The day Joe Biden took office, on that day, January 20 of this year, to that day, the United States had administered 1.6 million COVID vaccine shots total in the Nation, 1.6 million. We are now seeing 3 million vaccinations administered every day.

President Biden promised to deliver 100 million COVID-19 doses in his first hundred days. He didn't do that; he delivered 200 million doses. Forty percent of all Americans, the majority of U.S. adults, have had at least one dose of the vaccine. Every American over the age of 16 is eligible now for the coronavirus vaccination free of charge.

Greatly expanding COVID vaccinations and testing are at the heart of

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, the center of our joy, give our lawmakers a passionate dependence on Your guidance. May they trust You so completely that they will patiently wait for the unfolding of Your prevailing providence. As they acknowledge that You direct their steps, strengthen them to confidently follow where You lead. May they strive to walk by faith, believing that their times are in Your hands. Lord, give them pure motives and a commitment to be faithful to You. Pursue them with Your blessings all the days of their lives as they seek to do what is right and fair.

We pray in Your righteous 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.

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S2185

the American Rescue Plan that President Biden proposed and this Congress passed last month, sadly without one single Senate vote from our Republican colleagues; nor were there any House Republican votes in favor of it.

The American Rescue Plan, exclusively passed with Democratic votes, also included \$1,400 emergency stimulus checks to a majority of Americans, assistance for schools, small businesses, and State and local governments. Enhanced unemployment benefits, which were scheduled to stop last March, will continue until September. This is an economic lifeline for millions of Americans who lost their jobs during the pandemic.

The American Rescue Plan expanded the child tax credit and makes it fully refundable so that families who need it most can benefit from it now. America's child poverty rate today is one of the highest in the developed world. This action taken in President Biden's American Rescue Plan could cut child poverty in America by 40 percent.

We have been waiting for more than 40 years for the benefits of a tax cut for the rich to trickle down and solve these problems, to help working families, and to end poverty. It didn't work. Income inequality in America grew under the Republican plan, and now it is greater than it was at the start of the Great Depression. But in less than 40 days, the American Rescue Plan is already working. Here are the indications:

Last month, the number of families behind in rent fell by 2 million.

The share of adults who say they don't have enough to eat fell from 1 in 7 to 1 in 11.

The U.S. economy added 916,000 jobs.

In December, economic projections from the Federal Reserve had a forecast of the U.S. economy growing by 4.2 percent in 2021. After we passed the American Rescue Plan, that estimate jumped to a healthy, strong 6½ percent.

Last month, consumer confidence in America hit its highest level since the pandemic shut down the economy a year ago.

President Biden is also restoring America's role as a global leader. He used his first speech to a global audience at the Munich Security Conference in February to announce: "America is back, [and] the transatlantic alliance is back." And "diplomacy is back at the heart of U.S. foreign policy."

President Biden is consulting with our allies, not insulting them, and he is countering authoritarian strongmen instead of cozying up to them. Earlier this month, the Biden administration announced new sanctions against Russia and expelled Kremlin diplomats over Russian interference in the 2020 election. The SolarWinds cyber-espionage campaign that targeted important U.S. Federal Agencies and Fortune 500 companies and other hostile acts certainly merited that action by

the United States against Russia. Once again, America has a President willing to defend this Nation against attacks by a hostile government.

President Biden is also reasserting American leadership in the fight against climate change. On his first full day in office, he began the process to rejoin the Paris Agreement. Remember when President Trump withdrew from the Paris Agreement, making the United States the only Nation in the world that hadn't signed up for this effort? On Earth Day last week, President Biden hosted a virtual summit of leaders from 40 nations and announced that the United States will cut its carbon emissions by half by 2035. Under Joe Biden, America is ready to lead the global effort to avoid climate catastrophe and create good, new green jobs and industries of the future. Don't we owe that to our kids and grandchildren?

President Biden is returning normalcy and dignity to the Office of the President. At a townhall meeting in Wisconsin in February, the President told the Nation:

The next four years, I want to make sure all the news is about the American people.

He has replaced ego with empathy, chaos with competence, and division with decency and unity.

White House briefings are filled with information, not insults. The @POTUS Twitter account no longer fires off tweets in the middle of the night that are unsettling to Americans and even our allies.

One of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle complained. He recently bemoaned President Biden's Twitter feed when he said "unimaginably conventional." He meant that as a criticism. Most American people find it a relief.

Polls show that the majority of Americans approve of President Biden's leadership on the coronavirus and the economy. A new poll by the Kennedy School at Harvard finds that among young people between the ages of 18 and 29, 56 percent—a solid majority—say they are hopeful about America's future. That is the highest for any President in the 21-year history of the poll.

The challenges that President Biden and Vice President Harris inherited were historic. They won't be solved in a hundred days, maybe not in a hundred weeks. But in his first hundred days as President, Joe Biden has kept his promises and has begun to restore the most precious commodity of all—America's sense of hope and common purpose. Those qualities built this Nation, and they will build our future.

(Ms. HIRONO assumed the Chair.)

AMERICAN JOBS PLAN

Madam President, last week, a few of my Republican colleagues introduced their counterproposal to President Biden's American Jobs Plan. The senior Senator from Mississippi called the proposal a "good-faith effort." He wishes to engage with Democrats on an

issue that touches every community in America on a subject we all know—infrastructure.

I think I speak for the entire Democratic caucus in welcoming this effort from our friends across the aisle. As I mentioned earlier, when it came to the American Rescue Plan for vaccines and vaccinations and cash support for families and help for small businesses and schools, not a single Republican would join us. It is time for us to come together and work on a bipartisan basis. Maybe this is a start.

After all, infrastructure is what should unite us. Whether you live in Laurel, MS, or the Lake View section of Chicago, our roads, bridges, and our fiber-optic networks keep us connected and keep us moving.

As we emerge from this pandemic, it is clear that Americans are ready to get to work building a stronger country, a healthier country, and a more prosperous country. Sadly, though, the proposal from my Republican friends really fails to meet the once-in-a-generation opportunity test to transform America and make America a winner in the 21st century.

At a time when millions of Americans lack access to reliable, efficient transportation and millions more lack access to reliable high-speed internet, we can't settle for just repaving old roads or filling potholes. We need to invest in this Nation's future and put people back to work building a sustainable economic foundation for our children and grandchildren to grow and thrive. We need an infrastructure plan that is a blueprint for the world of tomorrow, not just a patchwork quilt focused on yesterday.

The way I see it, we are on the cusp of a world where America owns the clean energy economy and exports our union-made electric trucks and cars across the globe. Where workers can get to work easily by bus, train, or bike and working parents don't have to worry about finding a safe and affordable place to leave their kids when they are working. A world where, rather than reading about the Mesozoic Era in an outdated textbook, a child can throw on a virtual reality headset in the home or classroom and watch in awe as a T. rex swings its massive tail over their head. A world in which America makes and sells the new technologies of the sustainable economy to the world rather than buying them.

That is a future powered by the infrastructure of tomorrow. Under the American Jobs Plan, it is a future made in America. But we need to start building it today because, if we don't, I guarantee you somebody else will.

My friends, take a look across the ocean. Do we really believe that China, for example, is skipping on investing in its future? Absolutely not. They are already using technologies like artificial intelligence to ease traffic congestion in cities. They are installing facial recognition systems on their streets to keep tabs on jaywalkers and, sadly, tabs on ethnic minorities like Uighurs.