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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, March 23, 2020, at 11:30 a.m.

Senate

SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2020

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.

Eternal Father, answer us speedily when we don't know which way to turn. Guide us with Your light when we cannot see the way.

Do not hide Your face from our lawmakers as they seek to do Your will, for in the time of trouble, You continue to hide us in Your pavilion. Lord, teach our Senators how to live in a way that will honor You.

We magnify Your Name for the way You have preserved our Nation through the seasons of its existence. You have made us glad, for You are our light and salvation.

We pray in Your glorious 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. ROUNDS). The Senator from Iowa.

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

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

SENATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am leading negotiations on tax and healthcare issues as part of the third phase of economic relief to help workers, families, and small businesses. We have been working through tough issues, and we must do it in short order.

The American people need Congress to put partisan politics aside and provide them relief as quickly as possible to get the economy turned around, and we must demand this of ourselves as well.

Our multifaceted approach includes recovery checks to Americans, enhanced unemployment insurance, and much needed resources for our healthcare system. This is just one piece of the Senate's comprehensive package; in other words, there are a lot of other Senators who are working in separate arenas to accomplish in that area what I am trying to accomplish through the Finance Committee.

I hope that Democrats and my colleagues in the House of Representatives will work with us to pass our relief package as quickly as possible. This requires all hands on deck.

From what I just said, you might draw the conclusion that fighting this virus pandemic is going to be just a role for the Congress of the United States, as important as that role is, but also, as you read how people are responding, we have to thank a lot of private large and small businesses that we read about that are stepping into this abyss that we call the pandemic.

While we are wringing our hands—and we all ought to be wringing our

hands—you read about manufacturing plants of different varieties all over the country converting production to badly needed hospital supplies and testing supplies. You not only read that in the United States of America but you also read about President Macron of France saying that we are in a war-like environment—all joining together to produce these badly needed hospital supplies and testing supplies. You read about the German Chancellor calling unemployed people out to help with harvest because workers who normally come in can't cross borders there.

So we here in Washington might think the only reaction to the pandemic we are in is only something we can do in Congress, as important as that is, but it is also very important that we recognize that there are a lot of people out there in our private sector doing what entrepreneurs normally do—coming to the rescue—and they need to be thanked and recognized as well.

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. SCHUMER. 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 Democratic leader is recognized.

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



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SENATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, negotiations on the third phase of the coronavirus legislation went late into the night last night and will continue through the day today.

I have spoken to Speaker PELOSI and Secretary Mnuchin several times, as well as President Trump, to keep them apprised as we continue the work through a number of issues. In fact, I just had a very good, very detailed phone call with Secretary Mnuchin—or “Steve and Chuck,” as he prefers to call it. We discussed many of the outstanding issues, and we are making very good progress. I have every expectation that this progress will continue throughout the day. Democratic negotiators will meet with their Republican counterparts throughout the day to continue hammering out the details.

The Senate is here, we are working, and we are all eager to come to a bipartisan agreement as soon as humanly possible.

There are still a number of priorities that Democrats continue to fight for in the package that is now being assembled.

As I have made clear, Democrats have two primary goals, broadly defined, in this next phase of coronavirus legislation. One is to address the impending public health crisis head-on with a massive infusion of resources to our hospitals, our medical facilities, and our other public health infrastructure. The second priority is to put workers first. In fact, our proposal, which we laid out as early as Monday, is entitled “Workers First.”

Democrats want to do as much as possible to prepare our healthcare system, and we want to give Americans who are most immediately affected by the economic slowdown ample relief so they can weather the storm over the long haul. So, on healthcare, Democrats are fighting for a Marshall Plan for our public health infrastructure.

We need hundreds of billions of dollars for ventilators, testing equipment, gloves, masks, ICU beds, and PPE, or personal protective equipment, for our frontline medical workers.

I spoke to the head of the nurses union in New York yesterday. They are short of masks. These brave nurses are going to work, doing their job, but they don't have the right equipment that they need.

Money must go to our hospitals and our nursing homes, our community health centers, and our State and local governments. This can neither wait for a future bill nor a supplemental package. We need it right now, not 2 weeks from now.

A senior doctor at Maimonides hospital in Brooklyn, NY, wrote to me yesterday. Here is what the doctor said:

I'm writing to you in a move of desperation. Currently, we have severe shortages in the basic necessities needed to fight the disease and protect health care workers. Disposable masks and gowns are in such short

supply, we re-use them until they fall apart. We don't have adequate supplies of supportive medicines. Beds, ventilators, nurses and critical care doctors are also needed. We need a national response to this disease.

I urge my colleagues to hear the urgency and strain in this brave doctor's voice, the desperation in his warning. If we don't provide these resources right now, what is already a dire situation will—not could—become catastrophic. It will affect hospitals everywhere: big-city hospitals, medium-sized suburban hospitals, and small rural hospitals. Many of them will go under in a short period of time.

So we need a Marshall Plan for our public health infrastructure, and it must be in this legislation, in the opinion of the Democratic caucus.

As we have made clear from the beginning, we must also put workers first. That means a dramatic expansion and reform of unemployment insurance. We need unemployment insurance on steroids. Some are calling it “employment insurance.” It must be easier to access. It must cover many more Americans during this crisis, including Americans who have nontraditional employment.

It must provide more generous benefits. Workers who are laid off should receive a paycheck equal to what they were receiving while employed. Workers must be protected, whether they work for businesses small, medium, or large.

The plan we have would allow them to get unemployment insurance quickly. They would be furloughed. So they would stay as employees—even though they weren't working—of their employer, so that when, God-willing, this crisis ends, they can go back to their employer and the businesses that are now closed and decimated can start running again.

We propose that this be not just a one-shot deal but a paycheck every work period, and it should go for as long as the crisis lasts. We want to fund it for at least 4 months, maybe 6. If the crisis ends more quickly, of course, we might be able to terminate it, but we need to give the workers of America the assurance that they will have paychecks. The same amount of resources that they had before this crisis they should have now, and it will occur ongoing until we beat this horrible disease.

There are other things we must do for American families as well. We should greatly expand paid sick leave and family leave. We need to expand food assistance. The kids who go to school get their best meals, many of them, at the school lunch or school breakfast. They need to be fed. Others who lose work, they need food help right away.

I believe our students are under strain. Many of their colleges are gone. Those who have just gotten out of school have difficult employment possibilities. We should cancel student loan payments during the course of the crisis, both principal and interest.

I spoke to the President about this yesterday. He said he was sympathetic. He said at the podium yesterday that interest payments he would cancel, but I think we need to do more.

We also must rescue small and medium-sized businesses with a generous loan program, so long as they protect their workers. They have other expenses. We will take care of their workers under the expanded unemployment program and on the small business program, but they have other expenses. We don't want them going under when these are good, ongoing businesses that did nothing wrong. They have to come back. So small business really needs help.

And, if we are going to bail out any industry, particularly the big companies, we have to include strict conditions that put workers first: no layoffs, no salary cuts for workers or salary increases for corporate executives, guarantees that workers be rehired at their previous wages once the crisis abates, and no stock buybacks.

I have heard the President mention that he is against stock buybacks in the past. So when I called him yesterday, I said: Make it clear. It is not in the bill that has been put before us, but Democrats will insist that it be in any proposal once we come together in a bipartisan way, as we are doing now.

Democrats have several other priorities, as well, and we are working through each of them with our Republican colleagues even as we speak. As I said, I had a wonderful—well, I had a very good—conversation. I will not go too far, but I had a very good conversation with Secretary Mnuchin, and we are making good progress on many of the issues that we Democrats feel are important.

One other need, by the way—because we do have other needs—is that I want to emphasize that one of the issues that is quickly emerging is that State and local governments are running out of cash and may soon be broke. Governors, mayors, county executives, county officials, town officials—Democratic and Republican alike—are clamoring for help. We must provide it. They are on the frontlines.

So, in conclusion, I have no illusions about the difficulty of putting together legislation this momentous in this short a period of time, but all parties are working in good faith and as fast as possible to see that we accomplish the task at hand.

Of course, far greater than our challenges here in Congress are the challenges that now confront the American people. Working families are at home without a paycheck, with no knowledge of when the next one might arrive. Small businesses are watching the labor of their lives teeter on the brink of collapse.

I spoke to a small business owner. He had spent 8 years getting his business to be successful. It just had begun to be that way, and now his doors are closed and his employees are furloughed. We have to help people like that.

Our healthcare workers, men and women who perform extraordinarily difficult jobs even in ordinary times, are now asked to bear additional burdens. But know this, healthcare workers: You are our heroes. America stands with you, and Democrats are fighting to help every one of the emergency workers during this crisis.

So, to our healthcare workers and to every American out there finding their way through these challenging times: Stay strong. We are working to provide you the relief to see you through the crisis. We will get it done—Democrats, Republicans—together. Once the scourge of this virus has passed, we will come back stronger and even more resilient.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt told a generation facing its own national crisis:

This great Nation will endure as it [always] has endured. It will revive and it will prosper . . . [because there] is no unsolvable problem if we face it wisely and courageously.

With wisdom and with courage, we will endeavor to finish the job here in Congress—whatever it takes.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

SENATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, Senators' bipartisan discussions continued all day yesterday and through the night. Both sides' negotiators, with the administration, are continuing to work toward a bipartisan agreement on major legislation to support American workers and families, protect small businesses, help to stabilize our economy, and put more resources on the frontlines of our healthcare battle against the coronavirus.

As of now, an agreement has yet to be finalized, but our committee chairs, their Democratic counterparts, and President Trump's representatives are making important progress.

Yesterday, I took action on the floor to keep the process moving along with the urgency that it demands. By rule, it set up our first procedural vote for tomorrow, and then, on Monday, the Senate will vote on passage.

It has only been 2 days since Senate Republicans introduced the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act to give shape and structure to these urgent discussions. We put forward four objectives:

First, put emergency cash in the hands of individuals and families as quickly as possible.

Second, deliver the major relief that American small businesses need at this unprecedented time, and deliver it fast.

Three, help bring some stability to our economy and prevent as many layoffs as possible.

Four, continue to rush resources to the frontline healthcare workers and providers who are actually treating patients.

And perhaps most important of all, we looked specifically for policies that could do all of the above as quickly as humanly possible.

Small businesses all across the country have made it clear: If they are going to keep their lights on and keep their employees on payroll, they need help, and they need it now.

Americans who have already been laid off due to this crisis have made it clear they need help and they need it now. Key national industries which are hemorrhaging business through no fault of their own but due to the government's own public health guidance have made it clear: In order to retain their workers, they need help, and they need it now.

In particular, every single American who has opened a newspaper or turned on the television in the last week has heard from our brave nurses, doctors, first responders, and public health experts: If our Nation is going to punch back and beat this virus, the people on the medical frontlines need our help, and they need it now.

Senate Republicans put out our starting proposal as fast as we could. Then I created a structure for bipartisan discussions to begin as fast as they could. No legislation will move through the Senate that does not contain ideas from both parties. That is the way this body is designed. So these bipartisan talks have been essential, and they are ongoing, but what we need to do now is move forward.

Now, 2 days ago the press reported that a senior Member of the House Democratic leadership told his colleagues: "This is a tremendous opportunity to restructure things to fit our vision"—a senior Member of the House Democratic leadership.

Well, let me suggest that that is exactly—exactly—the wrong approach right now. That is the kind of thinking that could bog down these urgent discussions. That is the kind of mindset that the American people cannot afford for their elected representatives to adopt. I hope it does not describe the view of our own Senate Democratic colleagues as we try to close out these talks.

More Americans are being laid off every day. More small businesses are being forced to shed payroll every day. Our nurses and doctors are running lower on key supplies every day. This is not a political opportunity. This is not a political opportunity. This is a national emergency. It is time to come together, finalize the results of our bipartisan discussions, and then close this out.

Earlier this week, I had the Senate move quickly to pass the more modest bill that came over from the Democratic House of Representatives. I didn't believe it was perfect—far from it. But Senate Republicans did not

delay it needlessly. We did not try to originate our own version and burn several more days trying to fit them together. Instead, we treated that bill with the bipartisanship and urgency this crisis requires. Since then, the situation has only grown more dire, so I hope that our Senate Democratic colleagues and the Democratic House will bring equal bipartisanship and equal urgency to this legislation as well.

In closing, I think all of us could take a lesson from our constituents. As we finish negotiating and finalize this bold legislation, we should look to the American people. Everywhere you look these past days, individuals, families, and organizations are stepping up to the plate and finding creative ways to serve those in need.

One of my fellow Kentuckians is a woman named Erin Hinson. Erin lives in Louisville. She is someone whom doctors have told to be particularly careful these past few days, so her opportunities to pitch in were somewhat limited, but she was determined to do her part. Here is what she said: "I may never have the capacity to develop a vaccine or a magic pill to get rid of COVID-19 . . . but I can master a spreadsheet!"

Erin created a website—Louisvillecovid19match.com. There is one signup sheet for neighbors who are older or at heightened risk and another signup sheet for neighbors who are young and healthy. And Erin is performing a kind of matchmaking service. If someone needs a prescription pickup or some groceries delivered or even a friendly phone call, she helps make the connection.

With a little help from local media, Erin is already tracking more than 400 volunteers—400 volunteers—from every Louisville ZIP Code. It is the perfect manifestation of Kentucky's State motto: "United we stand, divided we fall." United we stand—even if we have to stand 6 feet apart for a few weeks—and divided we fall. Brave and generous and creative Americans all across our Nation get it. They just need Congress to get it too.

I am impressed and heartened by the speed and bipartisan spirit that has characterized the past day's discussions, but we need to keep it up. We absolutely cannot let up now. We need to finish these negotiations and move forward.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

MIDDLE CLASS HEALTH BENEFITS
TAX REPEAL ACT OF 2019—Motion
to Proceed—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 748, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 748) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to repeal the excise tax on high cost employer-sponsored health coverage.

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 (Mr. ROMNEY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, each of us receives a report almost on an hourly basis from our home States. At the end of the day, my State of Illinois sends a report on the latest situation involving this COVID-19 virus. There were 163 new infections announced yesterday—that is the biggest 1-day jump we have had—and 1 additional death.

Governor Pritzker has issued a stay-at-home order for the State of Illinois today beginning Saturday, today, at 5 p.m. until April 7. The city of Chicago is closing its parks and libraries, as well, starting today.

The Veterans' Administration has reported one confirmed veteran's case with the virus in the Chicago area. That person is now under home quarantine.

We had an exceptional situation at Midway Airport where two FAA tower employees tested positive for the virus several days ago, and we, of course, have to have an abundance of care and caution for the remaining employees there. The FAA, together with the city of Chicago, has been involved with screening the other employees and also determining whether the workplace has been cleaned properly before anyone goes back to work. The net result of it has been that Southwest Airlines announced suspending its flights in the Midway Airport because of this tower situation. When I spoke to the head of the Federal Aviation Administration, he told me there was a similar challenge at another major airport.

I am afraid we haven't heard the last of it. It is an indication of what happens when someone tests positive in a work atmosphere that is a critical part of our economy and the safety of our Nation. Our hope is—fingers crossed—that this tower may resume its activities the early part of next week, but we want to make sure that when we do, all the employees are going to be safe in their workplace.

We are also laboring in Illinois, as many States are, with the problem of

not having adequate testing. We just don't know the extent of the infection. I mentioned the numbers that were reported yesterday, but that is based on the very small sample of tests that are being taken. We still have not received the test kits, and those that we have, some of them cannot be used because they don't have the necessary reagent or chemical that is part of the collection process. It turns out we are dependent on a foreign source for that chemical. In ordinary times, it was never a problem, but in extraordinary times, it is.

I joined with Senator ALEXANDER, Senator BLUNT, and Senator MURRAY asking the National Academy of Sciences, in the midst of this crisis, to step back, get to altitude, and look down on the dependence of the United States on foreign-made medicines, medical equipment, and medical devices, and determine whether we need to reassess that dependence.

In the ordinary course of business, there is no problem with things traveling back and forth between the United States and foreign countries, but in this situation, where there is a public health crisis that has interrupted ordinary trade patterns, or in the future, if we anticipate a similar challenge because of terrorism, we have to think ahead.

I hope the National Academy of Sciences will give us their analysis of this situation as it currently exists and some guidance on how to look to these issues in the future. It is critical that we do.

We also know that we have problems relating to our hospitals. One of the things we have urged Senator MCCONNELL to consider—and Senator SCHUMER used the term “Marshall Plan” for our hospitals—I think it is absolutely essential.

Yesterday, I had a conference call with 30 or 40—maybe more—hospital administrators in the State of Illinois. I wanted to share some of the thoughts they gave me yesterday in the course of that conversation. This is through the Illinois Hospital Association. They said: What we need is a direct and immediate infusion of funds. We need access to critical supplies. We need a surge capacity.

There are 300,000 hospital workers in Illinois. At this point, they need protective equipment that is lacking in so many areas. It turns out that our Federal stockpile—whatever it is worth—was either not large enough or cannot be distributed fast enough to meet the needs of these hospitals.

One of the hospital administrators—I am not going to name the individual hospital, but one of the hospital administrators of a major hospital in Chicago said: We are worried about a shortage of ventilators. I heard that over and over again.

They also want to let us know that these hospitals are taking huge financial hits today. We know about the restaurant industry because we see the

closed restaurants, and we can imagine all the workers not reporting to work and trying to make things work for their families under the circumstances, but we don't appreciate the fact that because of this COVID-19, many of our hospitals have seen a significant reduction in their revenue streams.

One of the hospital administrators said: Our outpatient clinic work is down to a minimum, and elective surgeries are being put off for obvious reasons. That is 50 percent of our revenue at the hospital, and so we have revenue issues going into this.

They urged me to, through Medicare and Medicaid, increase reimbursements, and based on preliminary bipartisan discussions yesterday, I believe that is being considered. Both Medicaid and Medicare would increase the DRGs, for example, which is the reimbursement mechanism for those treating COVID-19 patients.

They are concerned—and they told me this over and over again—that at a moment when we need our hospitals more than ever, many of the hospitals are facing closure because they just don't have the funds necessary to keep the doors open. The ordinary sources of revenue and profit have been pushed back and reduced. There are a variety of proposals that came to us in terms of making these Federal funds available, but they urged me over and over again to do this as quickly as possible and not to establish some long, involved bureaucratic process for applying for these funds.

We also talked about the money flowing directly to the hospitals rather than through State governments or through some Federal agencies. I know this is risky business when it comes to accounting, but at a time of a national economic and public health crisis, I personally agree with them. I think we have no choice.

I went through the hospitals, and they talked about their liquidity and cash problems. They said we need to treat this like a FEMA emergency. There are responses that use hospitals in those emergencies, that cut through the redtape and get the money to the places needed as quickly as possible. We have to do exactly the same thing.

They talked about the number of infections growing exponentially, and they also talked to me about one rural hospital that literally said they were within days of closing. I can tell you, in that area of the State—a rural part of the State of Illinois—it means patients facing any medical challenges will have long distances to travel to find a place to be treated. We can't let that happen if it is at all possible to save these hospitals.

They understand the overseas supplies are coming in. Many of them are desperately needed. They asked if there is any way to expedite that by the use of cargo air that may not be utilized in the ordinary course of business. We are looking into that because of our economic situation.

I could give more information, but I won't. It is pretty obvious. The first line of defense for us in this public health crisis will be our hospitals. We are hoping that patients, through telemedicine, can be at least counseled and diagnosed and we can avoid people coming to emergency rooms unless it really is necessary.

I understand the impulse we all have. If someone we love feels sick and appears to have the symptoms, we want them tested immediately and treated immediately. We have to take care and heed the advice even when it is hard. Telehealth is a way for us to have a better diagnosis of those in long distances and perhaps counsel them that an immediate trip to the emergency room is not necessary. I hope we can reach that point.

We are also concerned about extension of facilities. Currently, the major hospitals in my State are looking to the expansion through tents—the kinds of emergency shelters that might be available so that people can be separated from one another.

Yesterday, I spoke to the Secretary of the Army, Mr. MCCARTHY, about the availability of Department of Defense expertise. The Department of Defense can step into a situation and very quickly convert hotels into hospital-type arrangements. They can take closed hospitals and put them up and running in very quick order. I think that expertise is desperately needed.

I encouraged the Secretary of the Army and Secretary of the Defense to make that expertise available. We are connecting them right now, between our State and the experts at the Department of Defense. These are men and women who do this. They are prepared to do it at a moment's notice if our military men and women are in peril. I would say at this point, America is in danger because of this, and we should turn to their responses and help as quickly as possible.

I want to say one thing about a statement made earlier today by both Senator SCHUMER and Senator MCCONNELL. We have before us an opportunity—and I hope we seize it—to show we can continue the bipartisanship that leads us to this moment.

The first two bills that addressed this COVID-19 or coronavirus virus threat to America were handled in an extraordinary way—perhaps to the surprise of many Americans. They were done on a bipartisan basis and on a timely basis.

We have only had the Republican proposal for a little over 24 hours. Yet I can tell you that as soon as it was received, active negotiations were undertaken at all levels. I sat through many of them yesterday. They were done in good faith. There are differences, clearly, in policy. We are really writing these bills as we travel down this path—this dangerous path. It is important that we do it in a timely way but also exercise good judgment.

My concern now is that we get this done and done this weekend because if

we can finish this bill in a satisfactory way to both Republicans and Democrats and report it to the House when they return next week, they will be able to take it up and move on it quickly.

There are so many Americans who are desperately waiting for word from Washington as to what their future will be—first in terms of medical care but second in terms of keeping their families together in difficult times. I am not opposed, nor have I heard anyone opposed to providing financial assistance to individuals and families who really need it. We want to do that. I know the Presiding Officer has been a leader on this issue as well. But we also were hoping that we can include in this some guarantee that it won't be one-and-done, that it isn't just a matter of providing this one check, stepping back, and waiting for the consequences. We know many people are facing long-term challenges and need an immediate and long-term commitment from us to make sure their families can stay together during this difficult time. I believe we can and should.

Let me close by saying this is an exceptional time. We are isolated in one respect but closer in another. I think we all have come together in ways unanticipated. I have been on two—FaceTime and Zoom—apps this morning with members of my family, and we are doing this now almost on a daily basis. I feel more connected now in one respect than usually is the case. It is because we all care for one another. It goes beyond families; I believe that sentiment is shared across America. We have to keep it alive despite our political differences, despite all the things that separate us. There is so much more that brings us together and so much more that unites this country. We have to depend on that strength now more than ever.

This is a challenge the likes of which we have never seen in our modern history. We can rise to this challenge, as we have so often in the past. I know we can do it in a unified way, bringing this Nation together.

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. 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.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I want to clarify a statement I made earlier. I said that, because of problems at the control tower at Midway, Southwest Airlines had suspended its flights. It turns out it has substantially curtailed its flights, but it has not suspended all of its flights.

I want to put that on the record because, in this moment of great national challenge, we should all take care that

our remarks are accurate. The earlier press report has been amended by the newspapers, and I wanted to make my statement on the floor clear.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, thank you for presiding today, and to all who are here at this moment of extreme challenge for our country and for the world, we must rise to the occasion and unite to fight a common enemy, COVID-19, also known as the coronavirus.

What we are witnessing is Americans from all backgrounds and all walks of life doing that around the country—coming together and uniting, not physically close, but spiritually close to one another as we work our way through this crisis.

In my State of Maryland, people are doing exactly that. Our healthcare workers on the frontlines—whether they be nurses, whether they be people working in clinics, in the hospitals, whether they be doctors, they are all pulling together to get the job done.

Elected officials from the Federal, State, and local governments are working together, as are nonprofits and businesses.

Three nights ago, I held a telephone townhall meeting on COVID-19, and more than 5,000 Marylanders joined that call. They called in to share their hopes, their concerns, and their determination.

Yesterday, in Maryland, we lost the second life to COVID-19, and our medical services are being stretched thin. But people are coming together to get the job done, and as we address the healthcare challenges, we must also deal with the financial and economic pain that is arising from that and spreading quickly.

Most of all, Marylanders, like other Americans, told us they want clear guidance from public health officials and a united and effective response to both the healthcare crisis and the economic fallout.

Since Marylanders are united and Americans are united, we, too, in Congress must unite to do our job. And to date—to date—we have risen to meet the moment. The question is, What comes next?

Over a few weeks ago, we did unite to pass emergency legislation to provide \$8.3 billion to provide funding to our public health systems and to direct more dollars toward developing a vaccine and therapeutics.

Last week we passed a measure to ensure that tests for the coronavirus are free. It makes no sense to have any American discouraged from getting a

test because they can't pay for it. That hurts them; that hurts the entire community. That was an important provision, as was the emergency food assistance for people in need.

In States that have closed schools, we have lots of students who are now home. Many of those students get one of their best meals at school during lunch, so that emergency food assistance has been absolutely vital. In Maryland, we have about 350 schools that are now being used for families to pick up food for their kids and for others in the community.

We help provide more resources to State insurance systems, which are being stressed more and more as we speak, and we need to do a lot more on that front.

We passed emergency sick leave measures because we do not want to have anybody feeling that they have to go to work in order to get the paycheck to pay the bills if they are feeling sick. That is bad for them, and obviously it is bad for their coworkers who would risk getting the virus. So we took an important measure there, although there, as well, there were big gaps in the paid sick leave provisions, which we must close as we work on round 3 of this legislation.

So that brings me to what we are going to face now in the coming 12 to 24 hours, which is coming up with an economic package—a package that deals with the economic fallout, and I want to address what I think should be our priorities there.

But before I do that, I do want to take a moment to talk about the healthcare situation that we are witnessing right now because, of course, to the extent that we can stop the spread of the virus, to the extent we stop the contagion from the virus, that is also the fastest way to try to get our economy back on track. What we are seeing is so many businesses going under and being threatened because of precautions people are taking—understandable precautions—to make sure that we don't spread the virus.

So in that fight on the healthcare front, I want to salute—I want to salute—and thank all those healthcare workers who are on the frontlines: the nurses, the hospital and clinic staffs, the doctors who are doing heroic work and putting their lives and their health at risk to help others and save the lives of others.

We here in this Chamber must do everything in our power to support them in that important work—to support them as they support others. That begins with making sure they have all the equipment they need to protect themselves, but that is not happening. That is not happening as we gather here.

There are severe shortages in the supply of masks, shortages in supplies of simple but essential items, like gloves and gowns.

It took far too long, but the President finally invoked his authority

under the Defense Production Act, which helps spur domestic production of some of these supplies. But even as we gather now, it is not clear whether that is really up and running as it should be. In fact, it is suggested from reports that we are falling short.

At the same time, we know others in the world are experiencing these shortages. They are also being hit hard by the coronavirus. So here in the United States, we cannot continue to expect to get these necessary supplies from overseas when they are going to need them and keep them in their own countries, and that is why it is essential that we ramp up efforts yesterday to make sure that we have these supply chains here at home.

Testing of the coronavirus—it is clear that the coronavirus got an 8- to 10-week head start in this country, and we were woefully unprepared, especially with respect to tests to try to identify the spread of the virus and where it was and how fast it was moving. We were also unprepared on our testing infrastructure.

While we are now ramping up, we are still far behind. There are still far too many bottlenecks in the system. At Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, they are doing their own testing, but their testing has been limited by shortages in reagents. That was true a week ago; it continues to be true today. And the University of Maryland Medical System, another major research hospital system in our State, has not yet begun to do their testing because of continued shortages of reagents. That is absolutely unacceptable.

We are also hearing of shortages in swabs—simple swabs—simply to take the test. We need to ramp up the testing supply. We also need to knock down the barriers to getting tests. We need to adopt the South Korean model, and many of us have been calling for this for a long time. We see States and Governors moving forward with this, but the Federal Government needs to take a much more active role in establishing that infrastructure.

Ventilators—we have more and more sick patients, and if the trajectories continue, it is clear we will face a shortage in ventilators. We have to ramp this up much faster than we are doing right now because, otherwise, we are going to have a lifesaving treatment intervention that will not be available for those who need it.

Mr. President, we are witnessing shortages in hospital beds overall and shortages of beds in ICUs. We need the Army Corps of Engineers to be working and building out this necessary emergency infrastructure.

As we take these emergency measures, we also need to continue to do the urgent work of developing therapeutics and a vaccine.

I visited the National Institutes of Health about 3 or 4 weeks ago. It is a national treasure. We are proud to have it located in the State of Mary-

land along with the FDA. At NIH, I met with scientists who are on the frontlines of developing the vaccine. They are working 24/7.

I think this moment is appropriate to salute all the men and women who work at NIH. I hope I never see another budget proposal coming down that cuts the vital medical research that is conducted there and around the country.

They are working on a vaccine, and they are working on therapeutics. They are in the process of conducting clinical trials on both. As we have heard reported, they are conducting clinical trials on some off-label drugs. These are drugs that have been developed to try to fight against other diseases. They may not have worked against other diseases. They may work as a therapeutic in this case of the coronavirus, but as Dr. Fauci has warned us, nobody will know until we do a clinical trial and nobody's hope should be unrealistically raised until the evidence is in.

On the vaccine front, we have been told by the scientists—by Dr. Fauci and others in his lab—that it will take a minimum of 12 to 18 months to develop a vaccine, and that is much faster than the usual timetable to develop a vaccine. People are working overtime to get this done. Clinical trials have already begun on a vaccine, as well, but 12 to 18 months, while fast for developing a new vaccine, is a long time given the immediate crisis that we face now.

So what do we do now on the healthcare front? First, no more mixed messages—let's let the healthcare authorities speak and provide the guidance that the American people need at this time.

For far too long, the President of the United States downplayed the crisis, even calling it a hoax at one point. We know it is not a hoax. We know the death toll and the number of sick continues to rise, and we must pull together in a fact-based way to address it. We have to listen to people like Dr. Fauci and others who have called for dramatic social distancing measures.

One of those measures we must take is teleworking wherever we can do it. We have seen offices here in the Senate and the House rapidly move toward teleworking and make changes in their offices to facilitate teleworking. Just a few days ago, the President finally said to the country that employers should facilitate telework—a little late, but it was the right message. Unfortunately, there has been a lot of foot dragging in the executive branch itself when it comes to teleworking. I and a number of our colleagues have asked the President to issue an Executive order on teleworking. The President has not done that yet.

The head of the Office of Personnel Management resigned a few days ago. This is the person who is in charge of all the Federal Government personnel from an operational standpoint and who resigned in the middle of this crisis. We don't know why. Finally, OMB,

or the Office of Management and Budget, issued a directive to agencies saying to maximize telework. But I represent a lot of Federal employees, and I am hearing from lots of them that their agencies apparently haven't gotten the message. The President needs to issue that Executive order, and he needs to do it today. Too many Federal employees are being put at risk because agencies have not taken the time to expand telework opportunities. We need to lead by example, not from behind.

Many Governors are leading by example and States are doing that, as are local officials. They are directing the necessary social distancing measures. In my State of Maryland, Governor Hogan has closed schools to prevent the spread of the virus. Restaurants are closed, bars are closed, gyms are closed, and many other gathering places are closed. There are all of those social distancing steps being taken—whether by government directive or voluntarily, by our constituents heeding the calls to take these precautionary measures. All of those necessary steps have resulted in a huge and escalating economic fallout.

Thousands of workers have already been furloughed or laid off around the country. Small businesses are being crushed. No customers in the door, no sales, and no income mean you can't pay your employees. It means you can't pay your bills. Whether they are mortgages on your restaurant or mortgages on your home, those bills are still due and coming.

So what do we do? What do we do as we approach round 3 here in the U.S. Senate and House, having successfully worked on a bipartisan basis to address rounds 1 and 2? First of all, as for unemployment insurance, because of rapidly escalating layoffs around the country, claims are rising, and we need to rise to the occasion. We need a far more robust system, and, certainly, during this emergency period, we should provide 100 percent wage replacement to workers who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own as a result of this crisis.

We also need to address the totally antiquated aspects of our unemployment insurance system. Some of that will have to wait until after the crisis, but on an emergency basis, we need to address the needs of people who are working as self-employed individual contractors.

Let's say you are an event planner, and all of your events got canceled. You are not currently in the unemployment system in most States, probably, but you are no longer getting any income. We need to make sure the unemployment system in this emergency addresses those workers and we need to work on a long-term fix. There is the gig economy. We all know the gig economy is a larger and larger share of our economy. A lot of those workers are not covered. If you are a worker who is in the taxi business or working for one of the other transportation agencies,

you are not able to pick up folks at the airport anymore because people aren't coming to the airport, and you are not covered by other unemployment systems.

So if it is Uber or others, we need to address those workers and make sure they have wage replacement during this terrible shutdown of parts of the economy. We need to focus on that. Senator WYDEN has introduced a bill—I am proud to cosponsor it with him—that addresses many of these issues, but we need to tackle it as part of the bill that we are dealing with right now, because these people are losing their jobs right now.

Second is no foreclosures or evictions during this period of time. You lose your job. You got no money. We are working on wage replacement, but we haven't done this yet. In the meantime, bills are coming due. Someone is demanding a mortgage payment. Someone is demanding a rent payment. We need to freeze collections of these payments and defer payments until after the emergency.

This is easier said than done, because when we say to a landlord that they can't collect the rent, we also need to say to the bank who loaned money to the owner of the building that they have to exercise forbearance on that loan.

That is why a group of us and I organized a letter recently that went to the heads of the financial regulatory agencies—the Fed, the OCC, the FDIC—asking them to use the full extent of their powers to address this issue in a way that deals with the entire economic food chain, from the lenders at the top of the chain to the borrowers at the bottom of the chain, because they are the ones in a position to do it.

I just got a letter back last night from the FDIC. I hope to hear from the others quickly, but we don't have time to wait. We should address that issue to the maximum extent in our powers in round 3, which we are working on right now.

Third, small businesses and medium-sized businesses are crushed—no customers in the door, no revenue, bills mounting, trying to make payroll. Of course, many of them have already had to lay off some of their employees because their bills are coming due, and they have to try to figure out how to simply stay afloat.

A lot of people have said: Well, let's give these small businesses emergency loans. Well, if you think about it, if you are a small mom-and-pop operation, another loan at this point, when there are no customers coming in the door, is simply going to saddle you with more and more debt at the end of this emergency. So extending a loan is, in some ways, for these small businesses throwing them an anchor, because they are never going to be able to recover. They are only going to have more and more debts to pay off at the end of the day when they are trying to restart their businesses and get people back in the door.

I have a wonderful local example. Her name is Julie Verratti. She is the co-owner of the brewery and restaurant in Maryland called Denizens. It is a family business. She wrote to me a number of days ago, because she is undergoing exactly these kinds of stresses and pressures. She writes:

Small businesses need a bailout right now without delay. The number one thing we need is cash retention and cash infusion.

Here are specific actions that will help make that happen:

1. [An] immediate moratorium on all commercial debt payments (loans and credit cards) mortgages, and rents. If you have to choose, focus on SBA loans because small businesses are the only ones that go the SBA backed route.

She also says:

Immediate moratorium on all evictions and foreclosures.

We have to work on that front. I talked about that. But we also have to attack this from all angles. That is why this small business relief is so essential, and it must take the form of grants, so long as the businesses use that money for prescribed purposes: maintaining payroll—whatever payroll may be left—and paying their ongoing debts and obligations. Loans, as Julie says, will not fix this for small businesses. It must be in the form of grants—again, so long as the recipient complies with the terms of that grant.

Small businesses like mom-and-pop organizations that already had to lay off employees should not be penalized. They should be eligible for the grants to pay their mortgages to keep themselves afloat.

Many midsized businesses are in this position as well. We need to address that because they are in many cases laying off employees in large numbers.

Just for a local example, people who live in this area may be familiar with Silver Diner. Unlike Dunkin' Donuts, which works on a franchise model, the Silver Diner owns its different Silver Diners throughout the region. They have 1,800 employees. Their employees, in most cases, have had to be furloughed or laid off because of no money in the door. But the Silver Diner is too big an operation to meet the strict requirements of the Small Business Administration. So, in this emergency situation, we need to provide flexibility that allows us to help some of these middle-sized businesses that are undergoing incredible stress because we want to make sure we help their workers and help them retain as many workers as they can, but also to make sure they can pay their bills when no customers are coming in the door. They need to pay the bills so that, when this is over, they can open up operations and rehire those employees.

That is why Senators MURPHY, MERKLEY, and I introduced a proposal yesterday to address these stresses on small and medium-sized businesses, not with emergency loans that they are not going to be able to afford to repay later, but with emergency grants so long as those grants are used for the

purposes indicated. That would put these small and midsized businesses in a position to rehire their employees once this economic storm passes through.

There are, of course, other major industries that have been hard hit, and we should consider what kind of relief is appropriate for them, like the airlines. We have to be very careful that we don't repeat some of the things that went wrong in the past when it came to helping big businesses. Yes, we would like to help their workers through this storm, but we need to make sure that any funds that go to the airlines, for example, are not used for more stock buybacks that simply help their stockholders and executives and CEOs.

The airlines have engaged in a huge amount of stock buybacks in the last year, including after the \$2 trillion tax cut that was provided. Instead of using a lot of that revenue to invest in their workers and plant equipment, a lot of it went out the door in the form of stock buybacks, and it would be unacceptable for any relief monies to go for that kind of purpose or to go for any kind of bonuses.

In fact, if the taxpayers are going to be making some investments to keep some of these big industries afloat, we should look at what we did in some of the earlier cases later in the game with respect to preferred stock so that taxpayers get fully repaid and we also have a stake in the future success of that investment.

One other big area that has not gotten much attention in discussions here on Capitol Hill until the last few days has been the huge needs being faced by State and local governments—States like my State of Maryland, cities like Baltimore City, and other cities and towns in Maryland. They are on the frontlines in many respects, and they are facing huge pressures, which is why we received a letter, an emergency plea from the National Governors Association, just the other day.

This is a bipartisan point from Governors Larry Hogan and Andrew Cuomo, and they point out, No. 1, that Medicaid is a major source of Federal help that they use to provide for the medical needs of people in their States, and they are asking for an increase in FMAP. We provided some increase in FMAP in one of the earlier bills we passed, but they desperately need more as the health impact of the virus continues to spread.

As you can imagine, transit systems, whether paid for by States or local jurisdictions, are essentially seeing all their revenues dry up as people understandably don't get on those crowded systems. So no revenue means that they are in a world of hurt. We need to provide emergency help.

The National League of Cities has also sent us a letter talking about similar kinds of needs, and we need to address those needs in this bill, round 3, and not, as some are suggesting, postpone that to some future date. We

don't know when that would be because the emergency is now, and the need is now.

Finally, this healthcare crisis has exposed some huge fissures in our society in the kind of safety net that we provide. I am not going to go into the entire list because it is too exhaustive to go through, but I want to highlight a couple of things.

We had, in the first instance, the question of whether people are going to have to pay for the coronavirus tests. We all recognize that it is a public health imperative. It would be a mistake to have people have to pay for tests because, if you can't afford it and therefore don't get it, then it not only hurts you, but it hurts other people.

There has been a lot of discussion about the vaccine. When we develop a vaccine—and we hope we will—that also needs to be available to all Americans without cost. That is something we need to address.

Senator SCOTT from Florida and I have pointed out that a lot of the drugs that are developed by pharmaceutical companies are drugs that benefited from the research at the National Institutes of Health. And who pays for the research at the National Institutes of Health—at NIH? Well, the taxpayer, to the tune of about \$40 billion a year.

So it makes no sense at all for the taxpayers, who made this big investment in research and development of a drug, to then be price-gouged by the pharmaceutical companies that take the benefits of that good work and then add a big, big pricetag. Our proposal would make sure that where you have that kind of public investment in research and development, you essentially have a process to make sure that there is a reasonable price. Ultimately, when it comes to a public health vaccine, as is being developed now, we need to make sure that it is available to everybody and that nobody cannot afford that.

Second, as our schools have been shut in many States, we are seeing the results of the digital divide—just one piece of that—because there are a lot of students who don't have access to the internet, and, therefore, they are not going to be able to engage in distance learning if this crisis continues and schools decide to try to expand distance learning. Why? Because they are not connected to the internet or they don't have a computer at home, so many of us have introduced proposals on this. I have introduced a bill to close the digital homework gap. We are asking the FCC to use emergency authorities to direct funds to buy devices—simple devices—that a student who is not connected to the internet could use to get some reception to be able to do their homework. We should do that right now, but then, of course, we have the longer term challenge of building out that broadband infrastructure to deal with the digital divide.

Then there are things we should do to make sure we are better prepared.

There is a long list of those, but one of them is pretty simple. Senator ANGUS KING and I have sent a letter to the folks who are finalizing and putting this bill together to require that the office at the White House that had previously existed under the Obama administration—the office that was set up specifically to be an early warning system for a pandemic response like the one we are witnessing—that that be a permanent office within the White House and that no future President would be able to dismantle that office. We are learning now, the hard way, what happens when you don't have that early warning system and strategic response at the highest levels of the U.S. Government.

So those are some of the things we should be doing. As we gather here, America's best minds—our top scientists around the world—are looking to answer questions about the virus and help develop a vaccine. Brave healthcare workers are treating the sick and preparing for many more patients. The people who produce and deliver our food and other essentials, who keep our water, power, and internet on are all at work, whether in their work spaces or teleworking. First responders are on duty, and our military continues to defend the Nation.

Marylanders and Americans are doing their part—staying at home, social distancing, finding ways to be together while apart, and, perhaps most challenging for kids, staying busy and not going completely stir-crazy. Teachers and students are embracing distance learning. Families are marking birthdays and other special occasions with e-cards and video chats. Those at the lowest risk are doing what they can to protect the most vulnerable among us.

The fundamental decency of all these Americans is shining through. I draw strength and faith from their actions, and I know that, together—if not physically together—working together, we will succeed. We will succeed if we come together here in the House and the Senate like Americans are working together around the country. If we can do that at this moment, as we approach round 3 of our actions, then I am absolutely confident that the country will have the resources and direction it needs. Let us be as united and determined as the American people.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

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 (Mr. KENNEDY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, we are here on a Saturday, which is not typical for the U.S. Senate, but these are not typical times. More than a month before cases popped up in every State

across the country, some of the first coronavirus patients who were evacuated from China arrived in San Antonio, TX. They were quarantined at Lackland Air Force Base and treated by the dedicated health professionals there.

At that point, things looked a lot different. Outside of those evacuees, no Texans were known to have acquired the coronavirus, and, for the most part, the virus didn't impact people's daily lives. They would see updates on the news about the growing number of cases in China, read about the people being evacuated from cruise ships and other countries, but there was no evidence the disease was spreading through our communities. Schools were filled with children, restaurants with customers, and arenas with sports fans.

But, as we know now, it didn't take long before the situation took a quick turn. Once new cases began popping up, it was clear that our communities were exposed. Over the last few weeks, the virus has spread across the country, and our health officials and community leaders have taken every precaution to keep their people safe. They have canceled in-person classes, emptied office buildings, called off large events, and encouraged folks to stay home and avoid close contact with others.

On Thursday, in Texas, Governor Abbott issued an executive order adopting the standards set out by the President and the Centers for Disease Control to further slow the spread across the entire State. Among other measures, this executive order closed schools and required all restaurants, bars, and food courts to put a stop to dine-in options. They have to move to drive-through, carry-out, or delivery service only.

Now, I believe these precautions are in the best interest of the public health. Certainly, we hope they don't have to last long, but they are necessary now, and I want to thank the Governor for taking these steps in the interest of public safety.

As cities across the State and across the country have taken similar precautions, we have seen the economic consequences that these difficult decisions have brought about. Our local restaurants, hardware stores, and gyms don't have the money to keep paying their employees' wages and expenses without anything coming in the front door.

Through no fault of their own, many of these businesses suddenly find themselves without customers to serve, but the bills are still coming in. Expenses continue to pile up—things like rent, utilities, and other things you can't avoid, even if you are not paying payroll.

Then, there are the employees wondering how long they are going to have to be off the job and how long it will be before they are able to apply for unemployment compensation or otherwise pay for their expenses.

This is different from any crisis since I have been in the Senate. I got here

shortly after 9/11. We know what that was like. It was about a trillion-dollar hit to our economy. Obviously, it was a national security incident. Three thousand Americans were killed here in the United States, and that started the war on terror, which we have been fighting ever since.

In 2008, we had the great economic meltdown on Wall Street because of all of these exotic mortgage products that the banking and the mortgage industry had created. We remember what happened there. Unfortunately, it became necessary for us to take extraordinary measures to help the very same industry that caused the problem back in 2008. As distasteful as that was, I believe it was in the best interest of the country and our ability to recover from that disaster.

This is different. Nobody in this country caused this problem. We are all equal victims of this virus. So I think, as we look at how we should respond to this epidemic—or pandemic, as now it has been called because it is global in nature—we need to look at how we can target the help to the people who need it the most in order to bridge this gap between the lack of a paycheck and unavailability of unemployment insurance, and how do businesses, small and large, burn through their cash or reserves but still stay alive so that they can rehire the same people they have laid off once this crisis passes.

What I am hoping happens is that, after this crisis passes, we learn some important lessons, things about the supply chain for our medication, supply chain for medical equipment and the like, and what we need to do to protect ourselves and the rest of the globe against pandemics like this, because there has been, in my lifetime, nothing quite like this in terms of the fear it has engendered and the reaction of both the markets and the economy—as well as the public health concerns.

So we need to learn important lessons from that. In the interim, we need to do everything we can to lend a helping hand to those who need our help. The Senate has already passed two bills as part of what we all know will be a long recovery process. The first focused primarily on our public health system by sending vital funding to healthcare providers, investing in the development of vaccines, possible treatments, and more diagnostic tests.

Something I hear from my Governor and our local officials, something they need the most and ask me about the most, is testing, so that, for people who develop symptoms, they can figure out whether this is the seasonal flu, allergies, something else, or is this the COVID-19 virus, because, if it is the COVID-19 virus, they need to be isolated, either at home under the watchful eye of their healthcare professional or, in some cases, if they become seriously ill, if their breathing becomes compromised, they need to go to the hospital. So the first bill focused pri-

marily on the healthcare aspects. The second bill that was passed, signed by the President just a few days ago—I think it was on Thursday—focused more on the small businesses and individual workers who have been impacted.

Of course, as we all know, we are now working on the third installment. We don't know how many installments will be required, how many chapters are in this book that we are in the process of writing, but we know that this is important, and it is important that we act with effectiveness but speed at the same time.

This is the largest of the bills so far. We are talking about amounts of money that stagger my imagination, but I believe this emergency requires bold action to address this pandemic from every angle possible. As I said, once this passes, we need to learn the lessons that this virus is trying to teach us to make sure we never find ourselves in this sort of vulnerable position again. But, in the meantime, we have other work to do.

As the leader has previously outlined, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act—the acronym is CARES Act—will take action on four major priorities:

We will see, for people who, through no fault of their own, don't have any money coming in, direct financial aid—something many of us never would have contemplated under non-emergency circumstances. We will see, of course, relief for the small businesses I mentioned, people like the restaurants, hotels, and others. They have no customers because their business is shut—again, not through any fault of their own but because, by order of their Governor or local government official, for public health purposes they are shut down. So we need to find some way to throw a lifeline to those small businesses.

Then, I believe, for those large employers that hire tens or maybe hundreds of thousands and probably millions of Americans, we need to find a way to help them obtain loans that they will pay back, with interest, but that will bridge this period of time while they are burning cash and wondering: Will I still be around? Will I still be viable as a business once this crisis passes?

What we need to have happen is, once we defeat this virus, we need to make sure that America goes back to work and our economy, which was incredibly strong until this virus hit, is restored.

I am hopeful that some of the projections that we have seen by people like JPMorgan and others, which, unfortunately, show a dramatically negative impact of the virus during the first and second quarter, the second quarter probably being the worst—we need to make sure that this is a V-shaped recovery. In other words, when we hit bottom, we need to make sure our economy bounces back, and that means these businesses need to remain intact,

and they need to be prepared to rehire their employees if they had laid them off. And we need to make sure that our economy is restored by a rapid recovery.

That is why I think this bill is so important.

Of course, the fourth is more support for our healthcare professionals. On the first point, direct aid, we know many workers have lost their jobs or had their hours seriously cut down. As we all know, that is especially true for the service and hospitality industries, which have been the hardest hit.

Think about your local waiter, somebody working for tips, somebody working for an hourly wage—bartenders, hairdressers, housekeepers—the ones who, only a few weeks ago, had jobs and steady paychecks and are now without any income with which to sustain themselves or their families. They are wondering how they are going to pay the rent before the first of the month, cover their electric bill, buy groceries to feed their family, and keeps things afloat until life returns to normal.

We are working to get that money into the hands of Texans and Americans who need help now, as fast and as efficiently and as effectively as possible—no paperwork to fill out, just direct aid from Washington to middle-class Americans. Again, it is something I never would have contemplated in a nonemergency situation, but I think, under this situation, we need to act quickly and we need to act effectively to get money into the hands of those who, through no fault of their own, don't have any money coming in.

This can help cover expenses while their income is short, perhaps provide a little extra stability, and inject a little extra money into our economy when it is desperately needed.

On small businesses other than the ones I have mentioned, I have heard from a number of them who are worried they will not be able to weather the storm without significant and immediate financial assistance in some form. Well, this legislation would provide new small business interruption loans through their local financial institutions—the banks, their credit unions. These businesses can turn to those banks and credit unions and whoever their preferred lender might be for a federally backed, Small Business Administration loan. Qualifying businesses can use this money to cover their rent, core expenses, and payroll.

In fact, that is what we want them to do. We want them to continue to keep their employees on the payroll if they can so that, as soon as people start showing up again to patronize their business, we can see the economy take off as these people are restored to their former jobs. We are hoping to minimize the disruption that this virus will have for our Main Street businesses and do as much as possible to avoid layoffs.

But we also need financial assistance—I would call it economic sta-

bilization—for some of the largest employers in the country, including our airlines, that our economy depends upon. Now, I said “loans” because this money will be repaid. As to those people who claim that somehow we are bailing out large American corporations, that is not what we are proposing here. We are not giving companies a free pass for their own bad decisions.

Again, nobody here in America contributed to this condition in which we find ourselves. That was the virus that emanated in Wuhan Province in China. But if we are going to have any chance of rebounding in the long term, we have to ensure that these businesses can survive. No American business, from your local sandwich shop to a major airline, asked for or expected this turmoil, and they need our support now.

The final pillar of this bill will hit at the cause of this crisis: the virus itself. Supporting our healthcare professionals and first responders and ensuring that they have the resources and equipment they need is priority No. 1. We also need to continue investing in the development of a vaccine—although we know that will take months—in the interim, and possible treatments, including some of the drugs that are already on the market that are now being tested by the Food and Drug Administration to see whether this new application for combating the COVID-19 virus is effective and safe for people to take, and, of course, more testing and diagnostics. That is one of the things that distinguish America from the rest of the world on not only how resilient we are but how quickly we innovate our way out of problems.

As the Presiding Officer knows, we were just at a meeting where Senator ALEXANDER, the chairman of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, said that soon he anticipated a new, FDA-approved testing kit for the coronavirus that will be widely available. People who now can't get access to a test will be able to use the test based on advice from their medical provider and gain the confidence of knowing “Hey, I am negative. I don't have anything to worry about personally, and what I need to do is to continue to do what the Centers for Disease Control told us all we need to do, which is to maintain good personal hygiene and social distancing”—a new phrase that we have all become acquainted with. As long as you are negative and you do those things, then you are likely going to be healthy and not be affected directly by this virus.

That is one of the things that are happening in real time now—development of the new tests. The proliferation of this inexpensive and quick testing will allow for people who are positive to be identified so they can be treated either at home or in a healthcare facility.

The truth is, most of us—if you are otherwise healthy, if you get the

coronavirus, you may experience some minor symptoms. One of the biggest concerns is people who got the virus and are asymptomatic or presymptomatic and whether they are infecting other people. But for most of us, you will be fine after you recover, but you need to be isolated so you don't infect others. And some people—particularly the elderly and people with comorbidities, underlying illnesses, or medical conditions, who are the most vulnerable—will have to be hospitalized, to be sure.

This is one of those all-hands-on-deck moments unlike I have ever experienced before in my service in the Senate. I appreciate the response from the administration and the President on down. I appreciate the cooperation among our colleagues who have worked to prepare not only the initial proposal but who are working now on a bipartisan basis to come up with a package we can vote on quickly. I hope negotiations with our Democratic colleagues will move smoothly and meet the majority leader's target of having a package we can vote on on Monday.

Will this be the last bill we pass relative to this crisis? I doubt it, but we don't know for sure because that, I think, is what is driving so much of the volatility in the markets and the uncertainty and fear that some people feel—it is the unknown. As we work our way through this, we will be able to adapt additional legislation, if required, to meet with the needs at that time. As I said, this has been a moving target.

I appreciate the cooperation we have seen so far. I think, as we all realize, there are some things that transcend politics. Every time we have had a national crisis—this one included—I think it has always called the better angels of our nature and resulted in our ability to work together to produce our best efforts to help address the crisis, to solve the problem, and to help the American people.

Each day we waste debating this bill further by talking about other ideological goals that people want to accomplish and take advantage of this emergency to try to pass things that are unrelated to dealing with the virus—every day we waste with those sorts of things is a day that healthcare providers, small businesses, and constituents are spending without the help they need and deserve.

The time to act is now. There is no question that this pandemic will have a lasting impact on our country. I believe one of the things we need to do is figure out how we can prevent this sort of thing from happening ever again. But I believe a major investment by our government will now allow us to weather the storm together and to come out with the best possible result on the other side.

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

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

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to provide an update on the bold, bipartisan action Congress is taking to respond to the pandemic we have with the coronavirus.

First, we are all deeply saddened by the loss of life due to the outbreak in this country and globally. I know, Mr. President, it has affected your State in terms of disease as well as death; in my State, disease, not yet death, and we are hoping to prevent that. All of us remain very concerned about the great loss of life and the suffering that is happening as a result of this.

These are extraordinary times. We are fighting a world war to defeat a virus. We want to do it to save lives but also to keep people safe.

This war has two fronts. Mr. President, I know you discussed these on television the other evening. I listened carefully about the impact on your State. As you said, we are fighting on the front of public health as well as the health of our economy.

The coronavirus right now is controlling our economy. It has taken a dominant role. To stop this disease, the Nation has largely shut down.

These temporary restrictions on our daily activities are necessary in an effort to limit new cases and the spread of the disease. Yet the economic fallout is devastating millions of hard-working American families. Once we defeat the virus, we will rebuild. Our economy will bounce back. We are a strong and resilient Nation, and we always bounce back, and we will again.

First, we need to make it through this medical crisis. This is going to require big and bold and bipartisan action. The American people need help. I would reassure the American people that Congress is responding. This is a national rescue operation, as I see it, and help is on the way.

President Trump and Congress are coming together in a bipartisan way to ease the pain of the American people. It is going to take time. It is going to happen. We are sending immediate relief, and we have done that. We are sending financial support—plus medical support—to people all across America.

The bill being considered on the floor right now is called the CARES Act. It stands for Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act. It will bolster our economy, and it will help working families. This bill allows us to deliver direct cash payments to most Americans to see people through this economic downturn. People who work in small businesses and people who own small businesses will receive federally guaranteed loans to help them stay viable and keep their businesses viable

so that they can keep their employees on the payroll until we get to a point where they are—from a disease standpoint—able to reopen the businesses. We want them to be viable when the day comes that businesses can reopen all across America.

The CARES Act is major legislation that will stabilize our economy and protect American jobs. It also includes critical new support for our healthcare workers and for patients.

I have introduced bipartisan CARES Act language, along with Senator MICHAEL BENNET of Colorado, with regard to healthcare. The goal is to provide immediate relief for rural hospitals, for small community hospitals, and for small physician practices. During this crisis, rural hospitals and small healthcare providers are on the frontlines, providing urgent care. They continue to work around-the-clock, keeping communities in Wyoming and across the country safe.

These providers are stretched like never before. I have talked with several of them in Wyoming over the past 24 hours. I talked to one this morning whose coronavirus test has come back. It is negative, and he is back in the fight today in the hospital.

Our bill provides rural hospitals with aid in the form of Federal grants based on insurance payments. This will help make up for lost revenue due to the forced cancellation of elective surgeries. Of course, these are surgeries that have already been scheduled and planned for patients needing surgeries. Yet, in terms of providing and making sure we have the resources needed at those hospitals—the beds available and personal protective equipment—elective surgeries have been canceled. Small physician practices, hospitals, and rural communities aren't able to tolerate that sort of loss of flow, just as any business is not able to tolerate that sort of cashflow loss.

Small physician practices will receive low-interest loans based on the payroll of that practice in terms of what we are doing with this bill that MICHAEL BENNET and I—in a bipartisan way—have introduced. Rural healthcare workers need immediate, short-term financial relief to help them through this crisis time.

The CARES Act also includes a number of important public health provisions. Our bill eases the shortage of drugs and critical equipment, including ventilators and medical masks. It expands testing and ensures testing is free for patients, and it speeds the development of new coronavirus vaccines and treatments since none have existed before the disease was made known worldwide as a new virus, which it is.

The CARES Act that we are at looking today on the floor of the Senate also protects patients through the expanded use of health savings accounts for telehealth. It expands telehealth access for Medicare patients. It increases Medicare payments to hospitals treating coronavirus patients.

The CARES Act will help employers and workers weather the storm that we are facing because of coronavirus. Once the storm passes, you know, as do I, that the American economy will continue to recover.

The CARES Act is the third coronavirus emergency bill considered in the Senate. The first two have already been passed into law, signed by the President. Earlier this month, Congress passed two major relief packages: the first, an \$8 billion emergency funding bill for our healthcare system; the second, a \$100 billion bill to provide additional relief to affected families, to small businesses, and to workers.

These three relief measures are only the beginning. More legislation will be coming to address this unprecedented economic and public healthcare crisis. Once we defeat the virus, the economy will recover; America will be back. The American people are strong. We are resilient. We are determined to get through this, and we will. We are all Americans. We are all in it together.

Be assured that Congress will stop at nothing to ensure that America and Americans survive and revive and thrive. This storm will pass. The people of this great Nation will emerge stronger than ever. Americans will defeat the coronavirus together.

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 (Mr. TILLIS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the en bloc consideration of Executive Calendar Nos. 596 through 599; that the nominations be confirmed en bloc; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, all en bloc.

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

The nominations considered and confirmed en bloc are as follows:

IN THE COAST GUARD

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Coast Guard Reserve to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203(a):

To be rear admiral (lower half)

Capt. Miriam L. Lafferty

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Coast Guard Reserve to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203(a):

To be rear admiral

James M. Kelly

The following named officer for appointment to a position of importance and responsibility in the United States Coast Guard, and to the grade indicated under title 14, U.S.C., section 305:

To be vice admiral

Vice Adm. Scott A. Buschman

The following named officer for appointment to a position of importance and responsibility in the United States Coast Guard, and to the grade indicated under title 14, U.S.C., section 305:

To be vice admiral

Rear Adm. Steven D. Poulin

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 595.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Sarah C. Arbes, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Arbes nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-4347. A communication from the Secretary of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Foreign Futures Options Transactions" (RIN3038-AE86) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 18, 2020; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4348. A communication from the Director, Office of Government Ethics, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule en-

titled "Supplemental Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Department of Agriculture" (RIN3209-AA48) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 18, 2020; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4349. A communication from the Alternate Federal Register Liaison Officer, Office of the Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "National Guard Bureau Privacy Program" (RIN0790-AK73) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 18, 2020; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-4350. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Legislation, Office of Electricity, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Critical Electric Infrastructure Information; New Administrative Procedures" (RIN1901-AB44) (10 CFR Part 1004) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 19, 2020; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-4351. A communication from the Director of Congressional Affairs, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Final Rule: Approval of American Society of Mechanical Engineers' Code Cases" (RIN3150-AJ93) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 20, 2020; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4352. A communication from the Chairman, Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "March 2020 Report to the Congress: Medicare Payment Policy"; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4353. A communication from the Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the cost of response and recovery efforts for FEMA-3392-EM in the State of Louisiana having exceeded the \$5,000,000 limit for a single emergency declaration; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4354. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "New England Industry-Funded Monitoring Omnibus Amendment" (RIN0648-BG91) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 18, 2020; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4355. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Pacific Island Fisheries; 2017 Hawaii Kona Crab Annual Catch Limit and Accountability Measure" (RIN0648-XF706) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 18, 2020; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4356. A communication from the Assistant Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Interim Final Rule to Reduce the 2018 Sub-Annual Catch Limit for the Atlantic Herring Management Areas" (RIN0648-XG340) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 18, 2020; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4357. A communication from the Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law,

the report of a rule entitled "Interim Final Rule Extension to Address Overfishing of Atlantic Shortfin Mako Shark" (RIN0648-BH49) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 18, 2020; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4358. A communication from the Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Final Rule to Revise Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Shark Fishery Closure Regulations" (RIN0648-BG97) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 18, 2020; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4359. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Final Rule for Amendment 43 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region" (RIN0648-BH39) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 18, 2020; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4360. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Atlantic Highly Migratory Species; 2018 Atlantic Shark Commercial Fishing Season" (RIN0648-XF486) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 18, 2020; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. PAUL:

S. 3557. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to terminate required minimum distributions under tax-favored retirement plans; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. PAUL:

S. 3558. A bill to require the Securities and Exchange Commission to prevent the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority from enforcing a certain rule of that Authority; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. BENNET (for himself, Mr. BARASSO, Ms. SMITH, Mr. GARDNER, Mr. JONES, and Mrs. HYDE-SMITH):

S. 3559. A bill to provide emergency financial assistance to rural health care facilities and providers impacted by the COVID-19 emergency; to the Committee on Finance.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 3535

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the names of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. LANKFORD), the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED), and the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) were added as cosponsors of S. 3535, a bill to extend the due date for the return and payment of Federal income taxes to July 15, 2020, for taxable year 2019.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 1562. Mr. HAWLEY submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him

to the bill S. 3548, to provide emergency assistance and health care response for individuals, families, and businesses affected by the 2020 coronavirus pandemic; which was referred to the Committee on Finance.

SA 1563. Mr. PERDUE (for himself and Mr. TILLIS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3548, supra; which was referred to the Committee on Finance.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 1562. Mr. HAWLEY submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3548, to provide emergency assistance and health care response for individuals, families, and businesses affected by the 2020 coronavirus pandemic; which was referred to the Committee on Finance; as follows:

In section 2101, strike subsection (a) and insert the following:

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter B of chapter 65 of subtitle F of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by inserting after section 6427 the following new section:

“SEC. 6428. 2020 RECOVERY REBATES FOR INDIVIDUALS.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—In the case of an eligible individual, there shall be allowed as a credit against the tax imposed by subtitle A for the first taxable year beginning in 2020 an amount equal to \$1,200 (\$2,400 in the case of a joint return).

“(b) CHILD BENEFIT.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—In the case of a taxpayer described in paragraph (2), the amount determined under subsection (a) shall be increased by the product of \$500 multiplied by the number of qualifying children (within the meaning of section 24(c)) of the taxpayer.

“(2) TAXPAYER DESCRIBED.—A taxpayer is described in this paragraph if the taxpayer—

“(A) is a resident of the United States of America, and

“(B) has a valid Social Security number or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number.

“(c) TREATMENT OF CREDIT.—The credit allowed by subsection (a) shall be treated as allowed by subpart C of part IV of subchapter A of chapter 1.

“(d) LIMITATION BASED ON ADJUSTED GROSS INCOME.—The amount of the credit allowed by subsection (a) (determined without regard to this subsection and subsection (f)) shall be reduced (but not below zero) by 5 percent of so much of the taxpayer's adjusted gross income as exceeds \$75,000 (\$150,000 in the case of a joint return).

“(e) ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUAL.—The term ‘eligible individual’ means any individual other than—

“(1) any nonresident alien individual,

“(2) any individual with respect to whom a deduction under section 151 is allowable to another taxpayer for a taxable year beginning in the calendar year in which the individual's taxable year begins, and

“(3) an estate or trust.

“(f) COORDINATION WITH ADVANCE REFUNDS OF CREDIT.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The amount of credit which would (but for this paragraph) be allowable under this section shall be reduced (but not below zero) by the aggregate refunds and credits made or allowed to the taxpayer under subsection (g). Any failure to so reduce the credit shall be treated as arising out of a mathematical or clerical error and assessed according to section 6213(b)(1).

“(2) JOINT RETURNS.—In the case of a refund or credit made or allowed under subsection (g) with respect to a joint return,

half of such refund or credit shall be treated as having been made or allowed to each individual filing such return.

“(g) ADVANCE REFUNDS AND CREDITS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (5), each individual who was an eligible individual for such individual's first taxable year beginning in 2018 shall be treated as having made a payment against the tax imposed by chapter 1 for such first taxable year in an amount equal to the advance refund amount for such taxable year.

“(2) ADVANCE REFUND AMOUNT.—For purposes of paragraph (1), the advance refund amount is the amount that would have been allowed as a credit under this section for such first taxable year if this section (other than subsection (f) and this subsection) had applied to such taxable year.

“(3) TIMING OF PAYMENTS.—The Secretary shall, subject to the provisions of this title, refund or credit any overpayment attributable to this section as rapidly as possible. No refund or credit shall be made or allowed under this subsection after December 31, 2020.

“(4) NO INTEREST.—No interest shall be allowed on any overpayment attributable to this section.

“(5) ALTERNATE TAXABLE YEAR.—In the case of an individual who, at the time of any determination made pursuant to paragraph (3), has not filed a tax return for the year described in paragraph (1), the Secretary may apply such paragraph by substituting ‘2019’ for ‘2018’.

“(h) IDENTIFICATION NUMBER REQUIREMENT.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—No credit shall be allowed under subsection (a) to an eligible individual who does not include on the return of tax for the taxable year—

“(A) such individual's valid identification number,

“(B) in the case of a joint return, the valid identification number of such individual's spouse, and

“(C) in the case of any qualifying child taken into account under subsection (b)(1)(B), the valid identification number of such qualifying child.

“(2) VALID IDENTIFICATION NUMBER.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of paragraph (1), the term ‘valid identification number’ means a social security number (as such term is defined in section 24(h)(7)).

“(B) ADOPTION TAXPAYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER.—For purposes of paragraph (1)(C), in the case of a qualifying child who is adopted, the term ‘valid identification number’ shall include the adoption taxpayer identification number of such child.

“(i) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary shall prescribe such regulations or other guidance as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this section.”.

SA 1563. Mr. PERDUE (for himself and Mr. TILLIS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3548, to provide emergency assistance and health care response for individuals, families, and businesses affected by the 2020 coronavirus pandemic; which was referred to the Committee on Finance; as follows:

Strike section 2202 and insert the following:

SEC. 2202. TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF PAYROLL TAXES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law—

(1) with respect to any taxable year which begins in the payroll tax suspension period, the rate of tax under section 1401(a) of the

Internal Revenue Code of 1986 shall be 0 percent,

(2) with respect to remuneration received for pay periods ending during the payroll tax suspension period, the rate of tax under 3101(a) of such Code shall be 0 percent (including for purposes of determining the applicable percentage under sections 3201(a) and 3211(a)(1) of such Code), and

(3) with respect to remuneration paid for pay periods ending during the payroll tax suspension period, the rate of tax under section 3111(a) of such Code shall be 0 percent (including for purposes of determining the applicable percentage under section 3221(a) of such Code).

(b) PAYROLL TAX SUSPENSION PERIOD.—The term ‘payroll tax suspension period’ means so much of calendar year 2020 as follows the date of the enactment of this Act.

(c) EMPLOYER NOTIFICATION.—The Secretary of the Treasury shall notify employers of the payroll tax suspension period in any manner the Secretary deems appropriate.

(d) TRANSFERS OF FUNDS.—

(1) TRANSFERS TO FEDERAL OLD-AGE AND SURVIVORS INSURANCE TRUST FUND.—There are hereby appropriated to the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Trust Fund and the Federal Disability Insurance Trust Fund established under section 201 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401) amounts equal to the reduction in revenues to the Treasury by reason of the application of subsection (a). Amounts appropriated by the preceding sentence shall be transferred from the general fund at such times and in such manner as to replicate to the extent possible the transfers which would have occurred to such Trust Fund had such amendments not been enacted.

(2) TRANSFERS TO SOCIAL SECURITY EQUIVALENT BENEFIT ACCOUNT.—There are hereby appropriated to the Social Security Equivalent Benefit Account established under section 15A(a) of the Railroad Retirement Act of 1974 (45 U.S.C. 231n-1(a)) amounts equal to the reduction in revenues to the Treasury by reason of the application of subsection (a). Amounts appropriated by the preceding sentence shall be transferred from the general fund at such times and in such manner as to replicate to the extent possible the transfers which would have occurred to such Account had such amendments not been enacted.

(3) COORDINATION WITH OTHER FEDERAL LAWS.—For purposes of applying any provision of Federal law other than the provisions of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, the rate of tax in effect under section 3101(a) of such Code shall be determined without regard to the reduction in such rate under this section.

ORDERS FOR SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 2020

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 2 p.m., Sunday, March 22; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day and morning business be closed; further, following leader remarks, the Senate resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 748; finally, I ask unanimous consent that the cloture vote on the motion to proceed to H.R. 748 be a 30-minute vote.

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, so for the information of our colleagues, the cloture vote on the motion to proceed to H.R. 748 will occur at 3 p.m. tomorrow and will be held open for 30 minutes.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 2 P.M.
TOMORROW

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate at 3:41 p.m., adjourned until Sunday, March 22, 2020, at 2 p.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate March 21, 2020:

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

SARAH C. ARBES, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES.

IN THE COAST GUARD

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203(A):

To be rear admiral (lower half)

CAPT. MIRIAM L. LAFFERTY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD RESERVE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203(A):

To be rear admiral

JAMES M. KELLY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD, AND TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 14, U.S.C., SECTION 305:

To be vice admiral

VICE ADM. SCOTT A. BUSCHMAN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD, AND TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 14, U.S.C., SECTION 305:

To be vice admiral

REAR ADM. STEVEN D. POULIN