

free meals to low-income students, even when their schools are closed.

This legislation also includes a range of measures to support healthcare workers, veterans, small businesses, and countless Texans who are struggling financially as a result of this pandemic.

Of course, we know we are all racing against the clock to respond to this virus, and it is important for Congress to act promptly to demonstrate to the American people that we understand the problem and that we are using every tool in our toolbox to respond to this crisis on their behalf.

In any major event—whether it is a natural disaster or a pandemic—we need an all-of-government response. All of us need to be cooperating and working on the same page, moving as efficiently as we possibly can.

As I said, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act builds on the \$8.3 billion emergency spending bill that was signed into law by President Trump earlier this month. It also complements the national emergency declaration made by President Trump last week and Governor Abbott's disaster declaration for the State of Texas. That is why I plan to support this bill when a vote is scheduled.

I know there are other Senators who have said they have good ideas. Many of them are intriguing and I think would make a positive addition to this legislation, but I think in times like this, the thing we need to do is to work together and function expeditiously to get this legislation passed. And because we know there is going to be another installment—a third installment—to respond to the coronavirus, perhaps those other good ideas can be included in that additional legislation, which we will pass before we recess.

I was interested to hear the majority leader say that we will not recess until we take up and pass that third installment. I think his sense of urgency and his sense of determination and focus is well justified, and I congratulate him for that. I think we need to all pull together in a similar spirit of unity.

I thank the Trump administration, especially Treasury Secretary Mnuchin, for working so quickly with Speaker PELOSI to build this package so that we can provide relief for American workers and families as soon as possible.

This is not the first bill to strengthen our response to the coronavirus, and it will not be our last. As I said, there is a bipartisan commitment to passing the third phase to strengthen our economy and support the industries and businesses that have been hit the hardest by this pandemic.

Leader MCCONNELL has made clear his commitment to finding a bold, bipartisan solution to the economic challenges we are facing and will continue to face in the months ahead, and I am proud to support this effort.

While conversations continue regarding the next phase of our coronavirus

response and what that may look like, I believe it is time to pass the Families First Coronavirus Response Act so that we provide this needed relief to the American people as soon as possible.

(Mr. SULLIVAN assumed the Chair.)

RECESS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until 2:15 p.m.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:03 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. CAPITO).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). The Senator from New Jersey.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, first of all, I want to thank the staff here in the Senate. Even in these difficult times, they answer the call of doing the work of the American people, and I want to appreciate their being here so that the Senate can conduct its work. They are essential to being able to do that. So I want to acknowledge that.

I come to the floor today as our country grapples with a global pandemic that, tragically, has claimed the lives of thousands of people around the world, including dozens throughout the United States and three in my home State of New Jersey.

I come to the floor because I hope that people understand the fierce urgency of "now"—the fierce urgency of "now." This is a public health crisis, and we can't wait to act.

The rapid spread of COVID-19, also known as the coronavirus, has disrupted our daily lives. It has destabilized our economy and has imposed an enormous strain on our healthcare system.

I think many failed to grasp the scope of this threat—the lack of a national response just as the virus began to reach America's shores. But I am not here to talk today about where the administration went wrong; I am here to talk about how it can start making things right.

If there is anything we have learned in recent weeks, it is that you have to be proactive. In the past week, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases here in the United States jumped from around 1,000 to well over 4,000. While other countries were testing thousands of people, the United States was testing mere dozens. While other countries were staging makeshift hospitals, we were overloading ours. While other countries implemented aggressive social distancing measures to limit the spread of COVID-19, our government sent mixed signals to the American people about the sacrifices they must make in order to save, maybe, their lives and, if not, the lives of others.

State leaders like my own Governor, Phil Murphy, stepped in to fill the

leadership void. Earlier this week, he, along with the Governors of New York and Connecticut, imposed new restrictions on restaurants, shops, and other public gathering spaces. These are tough, unquestionably, but we need every New Jerseyan, as well as every American, to take Federal and State recommendations about social distancing seriously, avoiding gatherings of more than 10 people, washing your hands frequently, and if you feel sick, staying home and calling your healthcare provider immediately.

We all need to be part of the solution or we can become part of the statistics. We all need to be part of the solution. This is one time in which we all must come together as Americans and be part of the solution so that we are not part of the statistics.

Already families are feeling the impact, whether in lost wages, smaller paychecks, school closures, restaurant curfews, or outright job losses. That is why I am calling on the Senate to act today—today—on legislation that will provide paid leave and unemployment assistance to impacted workers, food assistance to children and seniors, more funding for Medicaid. We cannot leave families alone to weather the storm.

We also need to do more to help restaurants and shops and other businesses struggling with the economic fallout of the coronavirus from mandatory curfews to supply chain shortages, to decreased demand for their services. They need help. At the end of the day, we want them to be able to survive the crisis in order to offer the employment that will be necessary to revive the economy.

But we must remember that this is first and foremost a public health crisis. The wealth of our Nation will ultimately depend on the health of our Nation. Nothing economically will be solved without dealing with the health of the American people, and we cannot ignore the demands that COVID-19 will make on our healthcare sector and, especially, hospitals in the days and weeks to come.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the CDC, has projected that between 160 million and 214 million people could contract COVID-19 in the United States and that between 2.4 million and 21 million of those infected could require hospitalization. As a means of comparison, our hospital system has less than 1 million staffed beds, which would be inadequate even under the CDC's most optimistic projections.

Hospitals must also have the resources and equipment available to treat the expected influx of patients. There is a significant concern that the Nation's supply of mechanical respirators and ventilators is inadequate to meet the exponential need we will likely experience in the coming weeks and months. The latest data indicates that there may be only 62,000 hospital ventilators in the entire nation. Even