

situation we have learned in ordinary times, and these are not ordinary times.

We are watching a pace of job loss at this very moment that is unprecedented, even in some of the deepest economic downturns that modern man has ever confronted. There is not a single person who serves in the Senate, works in this building, or, I would argue, in our entire society who does not know someone who in the last 4 or 5 days has been told that they no longer have a job. Think about that for a moment. People who 10 days ago had a job in an economy that by all traditional standards was doing very well and now have been told that they do not have a job. The people they used to work for may no longer exist, and there is no certainty about outcomes even when this ends. It is impossible to exaggerate that.

What we are learning through this crisis is what we all have said we know but are now realizing how much it is true, and that is, how many of the jobs in this country are the result of a small business and not of the companies whose stories are featured in a magazine or a newspaper article. It is the ones we drive by every single day—the laundromat, the dry cleaners, the coin cleaners, the bakeries, the coffee shops, and everything in between—hundreds of thousands of jobs in every community that depend on their very existence, and they are disappearing right before our eyes. It is not because they did anything wrong but because government has had to tell them, for the reasons of public health that I agree with, not only that we cannot go there but that their workers can't go there, and in many jurisdictions, they cannot even show up. So the urgency to address this, I believe, needs no convincing.

We have, as a starting point, developed a plan that I think will help, that will do what we can, and I want to briefly describe it. The plan is basically this: We need to get money into the hands of small business across this country as quickly as possible so they can keep the workers they have on payroll for as long as possible. We aim for at least 4, 5, or 6 weeks. This is important because if you have already been told you can't leave your home, and you have already been told you can't go anywhere, and then to also be told: And by the way, you have no job, and there is no guarantee that there is a job for you to go back to when this all ends, the trauma is extraordinary. That is what millions of people are facing by the second.

These are not job losses that are happening by the week or by the month; they are by the second. Right now, somewhere in America, someone is being told: We are closing, and you have no job. And tomorrow will be the last time you will get a paycheck for the foreseeable future.

So our plan, ideally, would involve the following: Small businesses will be

able to go to a bank in their community. Ideally, in a perfect world, it would be the bank they normally use, the bank they bank with. Then they will very quickly—and I am not talking about in a matter of weeks; I am talking about in a matter of hours and days—receive an infusion of cash, equivalent to about roughly four times their monthly expenses on payroll and on rent and things of that nature. And then a year from now, those businesses, if they can show that they used that money to keep everyone on staff and hired that was working for them before this all started and paid them what they were paying them, that money will be forgiven. It will not be a loan.

The important point to make about this is—I am not talking about an SBA loan. I am not talking about going to a government building somewhere or a tent in a disaster zone and filling out a bunch of paperwork. I am talking about going to a financial institution, preferably the one that you normally use, filling out a few quick documents to prove that you are a business, and receiving a cash infusion directly into your account that you can use to meet payroll for the next 3, 4, 5, or 6 weeks, and we have a plan that does it.

Now, on this matter, we are blessed to have partners in this endeavor like Senator CARDIN and others on the Small Business Committee who are not only some of the hardest working and easiest people to work with on these matters, but whom we have been working with on these matters, along with our House counterparts, for a couple of weeks. Except for a couple of weeks ago, we could never have envisioned how widespread and how serious this dilemma would become.

We don't have an agreement at this very moment, but I do believe that on the general concepts—I speak for no one but myself, but it is my impression that on the general outlines of what we are trying to achieve, there is substantial agreement.

So we have some work to do. I will be in the Senate and here in Washington, DC, around the clock until we get this done because, as I said at the outset, millions upon millions of families and their immediate and long-term futures are being determined by what we do or fail to do. Rarely, if ever, do we truly confront issues in the Senate of that importance.

I will close with this: It is hard to remove politics from politics. It is hard to ask politicians not to be political. It is tempting to use even situations such as these for the snide remark and the potshot, and I imagine you can never fully remove it. I would only say this: If we don't address these issues that are before us and do so rapidly, those potshots will appear trivial in comparison. If we don't address the challenges that are before this country now, no one can tell you what the future looks like because no one alive today has ever been there, ever.

Anyone who believes that what I am saying is an exaggeration, what was

life like in America a week ago today? What does it look like now? If this pace continues, what will it look like 5 days from now or 10 days from now? We don't know, but it will be traumatic and potentially catastrophic, so we must act. We will have plenty of other issues and plenty of days and weeks and months ahead to bicker about the political issue of the day and to take shots at our opponents.

Now is no time for games. We are facing the abyss. We are facing circumstances for which there is no playbook, for which there is no precedent, and for which there is no way to predict what happens to a society when you tell millions of people they can't work, they cannot leave their homes, and we cannot tell you how you will make a living now or for the immediate future.

This is no time for games. This is a time for those of us who are here to be here and to work through this as quickly as possible, or we will all pay the price, and we will all face those consequences. They are so grave, so unspeakable, and so unimaginable that I cannot believe that we will not be able to do so and act quickly, swiftly, and effectively. I look forward to making strong progress.

Our people need some hope. Our people need to believe that their institutions in a moment of crisis can still work. We have a chance to do our part to instill at least that little bit of confidence at a time of extraordinary uncertainty.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, before he leaves the floor, I want to particularly thank the senior Senator from Florida for the extraordinary contribution he is making as we move toward completion of this rescue package.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 12:02 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, without amendment:

S. 3503. An act to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to treat certain programs of education converted to distance learning by reason of emergencies and health-related situations in the same manner as programs of education pursued at educational institutions, and for other purposes.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

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

EC-4346. A communication from the President of the United States transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the designation as emergency requirements all funding so designated by the Congress in the