

our relationship with China in every single way. It is inevitable. Starting now, we must take advantage of this knowledge. As we think about an exit strategy from the coronavirus crisis, we have to think about this. As we think about a way forward to bring manufacturing back to the United States, we need to remember this.

#### SECURING AMERICA'S MEDICINE CABINET

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I have spoken several times about the vulnerabilities in our pharmaceutical supply chain and again encourage my colleagues to support the bipartisan Securing America's Medicine Cabinet Act—or SAM-C Act—which I am sponsoring alongside my colleague from New Jersey, Senator MENENDEZ.

Without intervention, the FDA expects the pharmaceutical industry will continue to rely on Chinese companies to make the active pharmaceutical ingredients—or the APIs—that are necessary for so many of our prescription and over-the-counter drugs. The threat it poses to our supply chain is real.

On February 27, 2020, the FDA announced the shortage of one drug that is used to treat patients with coronavirus. They attributed the shortage to difficulties obtaining the API from a site in China. That site has been affected by—guess what—coronavirus.

We do not need to remain vulnerable. We need to realize that we are dealing with someone who has not been transparent. They have hidden information from us. They are causing shortages of drugs and vaccines and antibiotics. It is time for us to learn from these lessons. If we ignore them, we do so at our own peril.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

#### CORONAVIRUS

Mr. JONES. Mr. President, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today in the wake of what is going on.

I appreciate my colleague from Tennessee talking about supply chains. I completely agree with her. It is something that we are going to have to seriously look at as we get through this process. We have become too dependent. I appreciate her efforts in that regard.

I want to talk today—I know we have a lot going on up here. For those who are watching and the American people, you need to understand that while this Gallery may be empty and this floor may be empty, there is a lot going on in the Senate right now. There is a lot happening to try to make sure that we save this economy, that we do those things necessary to try to make sure our businesses, our workers, and our economy from all sectors are saved.

Again, I want to go back to the thing you can do as Americans, and that is to stop the spread of this virus. Do social

distancing. Do those things we have talked about now for several weeks to try to get folks to do their part because we are trying to do our part. We are doing this in an incredibly bipartisan effort. I think you will see a lot of things coming out of the Senate and out of the House, along with the administration, to try to make sure we do those things for Americans.

Over the past few weeks, I have talked with countless business owners and local and State officials. I have heard from a lot of folks who are scared to death, working folks who are now at home. They are not telecommuting because their jobs are not like that. They are alarmed about where we are today and where we are going to be tomorrow and next week and over the coming weeks and even potentially months.

Businesses are having to lay off folks. They are having to furlough workers, sending a surge of folks to the unemployment line. We have seen that in just the last few days, which is something that, as we were moving, we thought we would not see.

Small businesses, like restaurants and Main Street retailers, will go bankrupt if we are not careful. They are going to go bankrupt without customers, as folks stay home and practice the social distancing that we know we have to do and as States start enacting forced closures of schools and events. Those businesses will shutter. Hopefully, it will only be a temporary shutting.

First and foremost, there are steps we can all take to stop the spread of the virus and begin to get the economy on the right track. It is up to us individually. In the meantime, we, as Members of Congress and public officials across this country—from local county officials and city officials to the Governors and State legislators and Members of Congress—we have to do all we can to make sure our businesses, particularly the small businesses, which make up an overwhelming amount of business in the State of Alabama in particular, can continue to meet payroll and keep workers paid so that they can then continue to meet their obligations. That is where my proposal comes in that I talked to a number of colleagues about.

In addition to providing the same kind of direct assistance payments that are being kicked around now—whether it is through checks or in some form or another that people are widely talking about right now—I would also like to see a new fund that is created to quickly get cash into the hands of small businesses so they can make their payroll and not have to lay off workers. I am calling this the small business lifeline fund. It would provide a no-interest bridge loan for up to 3 months, to be paid back over 5 years with no interest. This is a work-in-progress, so there are even proposals to make sure that this loan can be forgiven in certain circumstances. It

could be administered through the Small Business Administration. It would offer loans up to 75 percent of a business's last 3 months of payroll, with no one employee receiving more than \$5,000.

I want to repeat that because it would affect so many people in this country. It would offer loans up to 75 percent of a business's last 3 months of payroll, with no one employee receiving more than \$5,000 per month.

The key to this fund is, it would pass directly through the payroll companies. Payroll companies around this country are used by about 40 percent of American businesses. They mostly cater to the small businesses with fewer than 500 employees. Payroll companies are in the best position to do this because they already have the infrastructure in place. They are a smart choice because they have payroll history. They have the employee data that makes this quick. It makes it efficient. It uses the infrastructure and the pipelines that already exist without having to go back and reinvent or create a new whole set of dynamics that may or may not work. We know the payroll company system in this country works. Again, 40 percent of folks use it.

This process would help to alleviate the strain on our unemployment program. It would be a seamless way to continue to pay workers, while also ensuring that payroll taxes can continue to fund important programs, like Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security.

I want you to think about this. What we are talking about doing is not just a one-time \$1,000 check or two-time \$1,000 check; it is literally funding payroll the way it exists—maybe only 75 percent of it. But people who are used to getting those payroll checks through a payroll processor have their taxes deducted, they have their Social Security deducted, and they have their Medicaid and Medicare expenses deducted. Those things would still come in. It is just that we have created a fund from the Federal Government to do that. Part of what we are fronting comes right back to the Federal Government.

As part of this, we would also like to offer assistance to folks who are self-employed or run microbusinesses. According to IRS data, in 2017, there were some 26 million sole proprietorships in the United States. That is a lot of folks out there working hard, hustling every day to make their businesses—their little piece of the American dream—successful, but they don't have the cash reserves to fall back on in times like these. We could carve this out and make sure they are taken care of in the short run.

This is not the time, in my view, to shortchange the economy. This is not the time to send out just a check here and a check there—especially for those who are the most vulnerable to the cataclysmic shocks we have seen in recent weeks. We have to be bold. We have to