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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, April 10, 2020, at 9 a.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2020

The Senate met at 10:04 and 13 seconds a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable ROY BLUNT, a Senator from the State of Missouri.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 9, 2020.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable ROY BLUNT, a Senator from the State of Missouri, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BLUNT thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent to be recognized, notwithstanding the order for a pro forma session today.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, our Nation continues to battle the coronavirus pandemic. More than 400,000 Americans have tested positive. Nearly 15,000 have lost their lives. Nurses, doctors, and EMTs are fighting this disease literally day and night, and important public health measures are creating an economic catastrophe.

This morning, we learned that 6.6 million more Americans filed for unemployment in just the last week. That means more than 16 million Americans have lost their jobs in only the last 3 weeks, a tragedy that is hard to even comprehend. As one journalist put it, we are facing a healthcare crisis with an economic crisis strapped to its back. That is why, 2 weeks ago, the Senate passed the largest rescue package in American history. The bipartisan CARES Act funneled more than \$2 trillion into bold programs to help households, fund hospitals and healthcare providers, and keep paychecks coming.

Before we adjourned, I said the Senate would stay nimble and prepare to react quickly as the legislation came online, so that why we are here today. Much of the CARES Act is still being implemented, but one key program—one key program—is already up and running. It is the Paycheck Protection Program from Chairman RUBIO, Chairman COLLINS, Senator CARDIN, and Senator SHAHEEN. It gives small businesses emergency capital so that workers can keep getting paychecks instead of pink slips. Just a few days after the program opened for business, \$100 billion in loans have already been committed.

That is 30 percent of the total funding spoken for in just the first few days. I say that is very good news. It means this job-saving program is attractive to small business. Employers can access it. But it also means we need more funding, and we need it fast.

Soon, I will ask unanimous consent to increase the funding for the Paycheck Protection Program to a new total of \$600 billion. I am not talking about changing any policy language that both sides have already negotiated together several weeks ago. I am literally talking about deleting the number 350 and writing 600 in its place. Let me say that again: We are not talking about making any policy changes; we are literally changing the number 350 to 600. That is all we are suggesting here today. That, by definition, is a clean bill.

I want to add more money to the only part of our bipartisan bill that is currently at risk of running out of money, so I was surprised to see this simple proposal met uneasily by the Democratic leadership. The distinguished Democratic leader and the Speaker of the House sought to use this crucial program to open broader negotiations on other topics, including parts of the CARES Act where literally—listen to this, Mr. President—literally no money has gone out the door yet—no money has gone out the door yet. The Democratic leadership has suggested they may hold Americans' paychecks hostage unless we passed another sweeping bill that spends a half trillion dollars, doubling down on a number of parts of the

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



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