

Our task in the weeks ahead will be to keep seeking thoughtful solutions that are not just for the very short term but will help pivot toward a phased reopening and recovery. We will need to ask not only how we endure each week but also how we foster recovery on the other side.

Early February feels like it was about 2 years ago, but the truth is, it was just 12 weeks ago. American workers and families were in one of the most prosperous economic moments in our history. Wages were growing. Unemployment was near a 50-year low. Formerly discouraged Americans were being drawn off the sidelines. The country was buzzing—literally buzzing—from coast to coast. The American people built that. It is our job to help them build it again.

As we carefully consider what may come in the weeks ahead, we will need smart and targeted policies to help jump-start our economic engine, not unrelated ideological wish-list items that would gum it up even further. The country will need pro-growth, pro-certainty policies—pro-growth, pro-certainty policies.

The last thing we need is for the political left to view this national crisis as an exploitable opportunity to achieve other goals they have wanted for a very long time. That is how, for example, former Vice President Biden has repeatedly described the pandemic. Here is what he had to say: “an incredible opportunity . . . to fundamentally transform the country”—“an incredible opportunity . . . to fundamentally transform the country.”

This cannot be about ideological transformation. It needs to be what will actually work for the American people.

Here is just one example of a commonsense policy Republicans will insist on. Even as the entire country is rallying behind healthcare workers and small businesses, trial lawyers are already looking for ways to line their pockets by suing the very people we are bending over backward to help.

As one recent Washington Post column put it, “[f]ear of COVID-19 lawsuits is not [some] mere Republican reflex”—a Washington Post column: “[f]ear of COVID-19 lawsuits is not [some] mere Republican reflex.”

It went on to list all sorts of lawsuits that are already pouring in. This kind of hostile climate would create yet another major headwind we cannot afford. Republicans will be insisting on strong legal protections for the frontlines. We will not let our historic recovery efforts be diverted so that taxpayers foot the bill for the biggest trial lawyer bonanza in our history.

Our discussions in the weeks ahead do not need to be partisan or contentious. There is nothing partisan about the coronavirus, and there is nothing partisan about the inspiring example being set by citizens across our country.

In my home State of Kentucky, we are proud of a father-daughter duo in

Breathitt County. They both came down with the virus. They both beat it and then turned right around and started donating plasma to the race for new medicines.

We are proud of the family resource coordinators of Fayette County Public Schools who are collecting donated household supplies to add to weekly food deliveries for thousands of students and families.

These stories only scratch the surface in the Bluegrass, and I know every one of my colleagues has stories of their own to tell. We are all in this together. We have stepped up to meet the challenge. Let’s continue to stand together for our country.

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.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of William R. Evanina, of Pennsylvania, to be Director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center. (New Position)

Mr. MCCONNELL. 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. SCHUMER. Madam 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 Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, the Republican leader has called the Senate back into session during a time when there are significant risks to the health of the Members of this Chamber and the staff who make this place function.

This is a time of national emergency. We should be working to provide our country with the relief and support it so direly needs. But this is only the second day of business since Leader MCCONNELL called the Senate back into session, and there will be no votes on the floor—not one vote. And so far, there is no plan—no plan at all—to consider COVID-related legislation on the floor in the near future.

If we are going to be here in session, with an elevated health risk, why doesn’t Leader MCCONNELL have us work on issues that are directly related to COVID-19?

Last night, we confirmed a non-controversial nominee to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The next nominee on the floor is for a counter-intelligence post—no doubt important but unrelated to COVID—whose nomination has been delayed by a hold by a Republican Senator. So when the Republican leader reasons that we must process nominees on the floor this week because of a previous Democratic obstruction, he should check his notes and his facts first.

We could be using our time here to address a number of urgent priorities, whether it is rescuing our ailing health system, increasing testing capacity, assisting small businesses, renters, and homeowners. Providing vigorous oversight of legislation we have already passed would have been a better use of the Senate’s time.

Instead of coming together to work on these pressing matters, we are talking about nominations and rightwing judges, including a former protege of the Republican leader who was rated unqualified by the American Bar Association, a man who argued against the constitutionality of our healthcare law in the midst of a public health crisis—someone who probably 80 percent or 90 percent of Americans would reject if they knew his views. But he is a protege of the leader. We are rushing him through. We are not paying attention to COVID.

The Senate Intelligence Committee is holding a virtual hearing on the nomination of Representative RATCLIFFE to serve as the next Director of National Intelligence. This is an extremely important post that demands a candidate with deep experience, credibility on both sides of the aisle, and, above all, the ability to speak truth to power.

Representative RATCLIFFE meets none of these criteria. He is a deeply partisan cheerleader for the President, a yes-man in every sense of the phrase—someone who doesn’t speak truth to power to the President of the United States. He tells the President what he wants to hear.

Doesn’t this sound familiar? Right now, we are living with the consequences of a President who doesn’t want to hear the truth about the coronavirus, who doesn’t want to believe it is as bad as it truly is, who wants to cling to quack medicines that will not work, and who runs away from the fact that his administration bears responsibility for the inadequacy of our national response—a President who still doesn’t have a testing plan when we desperately need tests to get this country open again.

The President doesn’t like hearing the truth. It is that simple. That has hurt us dearly when it has come to the coronavirus. This crisis is partly the