

health. Last weekend, the family of a New York City emergency room doctor released some devastating news. Dr. Lorna Breen had been in the trenches battling this virus for weeks. She was working long hours, as many of our healthcare providers are, and told her family about the devastation that she was seeing every day.

She contracted COVID-19 and took a week and a half off to recover, but then she went back to work, eager to help where she could. Shortly after, Dr. Breen's family intervened and brought her home to Charlottesville, VA, to rest and to spend a little time with her family and for R&R.

Sadly, tragically, the struggles Dr. Breen was facing felt untenable. After overcoming COVID-19, she ultimately took her own life by suicide.

Dr. Breen was a hero who devoted her entire life to caring for others, to putting others before herself. While her tragic death cannot be reversed, it should serve as a warning signal about the broader impact of this virus.

In a recent poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation, nearly half of Americans reported that coronavirus is having a negative impact on their mental health—one-half. That is up from one-third in March. The number of texts to the Federal Disaster Distress Helpline skyrocketed in April—more than a 1,000-percent increase.

As we continue to discuss what future coronavirus legislation could look like, we cannot ignore the mental health impact. Nationwide, we rely on the community mental health centers and community behavioral health organizations to support those battling mental health and substance abuse disorders. As the need for these services has increased, resources have actually decreased. More than 90 percent of the community behavioral health organizations nationwide have been forced to reduce their operations—reduce their operations at a time of increased need and demand—and more than 60 percent of behavioral health organizations project they can't survive financially for more than 3 months under the current COVID-19 conditions.

Congress tried to do something to help. We provided \$175 billion for the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund to support healthcare providers on the frontlines of this crisis. As this funding is being distributed, mental health providers cannot be forgotten.

Along with 24 of our colleagues, Senator STABENOW and I have sent a letter to Secretary Azar and Administrator Verma, urging them to quickly allocate this funding and ensure that these mental health organizations are included. Not only do they provide vital care and support for individuals struggling with mental health issues; they also are key to fighting addiction and substance abuse.

Those struggling to overcome addiction are often living in a fragile state, fighting each day to stay the course,

but the current circumstances have made those daily battles much more difficult. They are isolated from their friends and loved ones, and they are dealing with the anxiety caused by the virus and possibly—probably—facing financial struggles.

The new stressors brought on by this virus are compounded by reduced capacity for treatment. In-person support meetings are canceled, treatment clinics and counselors are curtailing appointments, and the barriers to overcoming addiction loom even larger. For those individuals, treatment cannot simply be delayed.

Our country has made serious inroads in our battle against the opioid epidemic. In 2018, overdose deaths were down 4 percent from the previous year, the first decrease in nearly three decades. We can't let the coronavirus derail the progress we have fought so hard to make.

The CARES Act—I am glad to say—does expand access to telehealth. I think many Americans are experiencing the benefits of telehealth, and I predict at some point this will change a lot of the ways that we receive consultation by healthcare providers: not having to drive our car and make appointments, pay for parking, spend a lot of time out of our day. We can simply do it through video conference, conveniently and effectively. But more must be done to support those battling addiction and mental health challenges.

For those who are transitioning from the criminal justice system, the need for additional resources and support is especially dire. Earlier this year, Senator BLUMENTHAL and I introduced the Crisis Stabilization and Community Reentry Act to support those who have been a part of the criminal justice system and to provide stable treatment for those with mental illness.

Most prisoners who are receiving treatment for a mental health or a substance use disorder are released without a plan to keep them on their regimen. This often leads to higher recidivism rates, unsurprisingly, which could be avoided. It also means that law enforcement is, all too often, left to be the first responders for those suffering a mental health crisis, which can escalate those confrontations and put both the officer and the individual in that crisis at risk.

This bill creates grants to connect law enforcement, State and local, and community resources to help individuals who are either engaged in the criminal justice system or have been released from prison and makes it possible for them to access the resources they need to have a successful reentry into civilized society. These grants connect those services to make sure that people suffering from an acute episode can access treatment without the risk of being reincarcerated.

We are facing a battle unlike any we have seen in my lifetime, and the stress and the anxiety that come with

it are taking a tremendous toll on the American people. It is not just the virus and the threat of catching the virus that are taking the toll. We need to look at this holistically and realize, if you are a victim of domestic violence and you are forced to be confined with your abuser and have nowhere else to go and maybe have no money coming in the front door, only to have your abuser abusing alcohol and perhaps becoming even more violent—there are a whole catalog of problems associated with this virus and the virus itself, the risk of infection being just one, and we need to look at this holistically.

As our discussions continue this week on how to support the American people during this unprecedented time, resources for mental health and substance abuse treatment providers cannot fall by the wayside.

(Mr. CRUZ assumed the Chair.)

RECESS

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:18 p.m., recessed until 2:17 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. CAPITO).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, over the past few months, both parties have worked together to provide historic levels of funding to help small businesses retain employees, meet payroll, and stay afloat during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Paycheck Protection Program—the main instrument to help small businesses—received \$349 billion under the CARES Act and another \$310 billion in supplemental legislation.

The public has a right to know how this money is being spent. Oversight, transparency, and accountability are crucial because from the moment the administration began implementing these funds, it became clear that much of it wasn't going to those who needed it most.

Today, we are not taking any other action on the floor dealing with COVID. We thought we would take this opportunity to ask unanimous consent to get something real done that should have bipartisan support on both sides of the aisle. Who can be against transparency? Who can be against accountability? Who cannot want to know where close to \$700 billion of the taxpayers' money is going? Is it going to the right places?

Unfortunately, today at least 200 publicly traded companies have managed to secure PPP loans, and most of those are not very small, including some companies whose owners are large contributors to President Trump. Truly small businesses, however—the

hundreds of thousands of mom-and-pop shops with less than 20 employees, the proverbial restaurant owner or the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker—have been mostly shut out because they didn't have a standing relationship with a big bank.

There have been great disparities when it comes to minority-owned businesses. According to the Center for Responsible Lending, over 90 percent of African-American-owned and Latino-owned businesses were likely shut out of PPP funding. Women-owned businesses have also been neglected. We have tried to fix some of these problems in COVID 3.5, working closely with the Senators from Maryland and New Hampshire and the Senator from Florida, but much more needs to be done. We need data to help further inform who is being left out so we can continue to make the necessary fixes to see that all small businesses are helped.

My friends Senators CARDIN and SHAHEEN have a bill they worked on to do just that. I want to thank them. They will talk more about this bill in a moment, but I want to make one point here. This is a very simple piece of legislation. It requires the kind of transparency expected from any Federal program of this size and importance: regular public reporting of how and where taxpayer dollars are spent.

This is something my Republican colleagues have always believed in. I hope that my Republican colleagues will not object to this legislation when I ask unanimous consent in a few minutes, after Senators CARDIN and SHAHEEN have spoken. I hope they will not object just because it comes from this side of the aisle. It is a good idea. There is no reason to object to this very unobjectionable idea and get this body focused on COVID, not on extraneous matters, which we seem to be doing now, when COVID is the most important issue we face.

We are doing quite literally nothing else on the floor of the Senate today. There is no other business before us, no votes whatsoever. We are here to force some action, force some progress, and force some focus on COVID-related legislation. I prefer to do this in a completely bipartisan way. But from the get-go, Democrats have had to force the issue on many COVID response programs. The leader lays down a bill, it has no Democratic input, and then, of course, we have to work toward that goal, and we have. The fact that the first bill passed 96 to 0 is a tribute to this body that we can come together when there is real need.

We should be doing it the same way today. We should be working together in support of our healthcare system, for testing so desperately needed, unemployment insurance, and crucial improvements to small business lending, all of which Democrats said we needed—our Republican friends first resisted and then came along, led by the Republican leader—and all of which passed with unanimous support.

The same thing should happen today. We should pass this. We should UC it and get the oversight this program so desperately needs.

I yield the floor to Senator CARDIN.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, let me thank Leader SCHUMER for initiating this discussion. I am very pleased Senator SHAHEEN is also on the floor. The two of us worked on the Democratic side, with Senator RUBIO and Senator COLLINS on the Republican side. We are very proud of the tools we made available to small business. These are important tools to keep small businesses alive during COVID-19.

The Paycheck Protection Program got money out quickly and helped small businesses stay afloat. We have provided \$660 billion under the Paycheck Protection Program. The economic disaster loan program, the loan and grant program—we have now provided \$70 billion for that program. But here is the issue. We had to adjust both of those programs without even knowing all the specifics on how the first amount of money was distributed. We are hearing that we are going to be running out of money again soon and that Congress is going to be asked to make additional changes in these programs, and we still don't know the specifics on how this money was distributed.

We are all frustrated here. I really appreciate the leadership. I know my chairman is on the floor. He has been demanding this information and has been unable to get it. We are going to be asked to act again without having the specific information.

Senator SCHUMER is absolutely right. We know in the first round that those who had preferred relationships with banking institutions got priority. That we know. But we don't know how much. We don't know how many loans the big banks have issued and what size they have issued, what their compensation has been, and how those loan decisions were made. We need to know that because we are relying on the private banking institutions to make the 7(a) loans in all communities.

We expanded this program to nonprofits. That was a good thing. But we don't know how many of the nonprofits have received help under this program—the specific dollar amounts, the specific loans, the specific locations.

Here is the challenge. I got a call yesterday where they wanted to expand eligibility under this program. We know there are some difficulties in the programs themselves that need attention. There is now a desire to expand eligibility. They are also being asked what comes next.

Restaurants are still ordered to be closed in my State. They are going to need additional help. How do we go about crafting what we need to do if we don't know what has been done already?

We have been asking for this information over and over again. We haven't been able to get it. It is our responsibility to oversight these programs.

Now I am quoting from my chairman. He said—and I agree with him—it is our responsibility to oversight. But if we don't have the information, how can we oversight? I am concerned about underbanked and underserved communities getting their fair share of this help, and yet we don't have the specifics on the number of minority small businesses, the number of women-owned small businesses, the number of veteran-owned small businesses. We don't know about rural small businesses and how well they have done.

We need to have that information in order to make the next judgments in this Congress. And yes, we do need transparency because we have even heard from this administration that there may very well have been small businesses that didn't qualify for this loan that have gotten help or had their own ability to handle this crisis but yet still asked the government for these funds or may have violated the size standards that are in this legislation.

We need to have that transparency for oversight. It is our responsibility. That is why we do need to act as a Senate. The legislation that we are going to bring forward is very common sense. It just tells the Small Business Administration to make available the information on the PPP loans, on the EIDL loans and grants, so that we can analyze this, know how these loans have been made and make the proper oversight and adjustment that we may need to make in these programs in order to make sure small businesses get through COVID-19.

I urge my colleagues, let's get this done and continue to work in a bipartisan way to make sure small businesses in this country are protected.

I see Senator SHAHEEN is on the floor. I will yield the floor so Senator SHAHEEN can be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, I am pleased to be able to join my colleague Senator CARDIN, who is the ranking member on the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee, as well as Minority Leader SCHUMER. I am pleased that the chairman of the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee, Senator RUBIO, is also here because Senator CARDIN, Senator RUBIO, Senator COLLINS, and I all worked on the Paycheck Protection Program and the small business provisions that are in the CARES package that we passed over 5 weeks ago. I am proud of our efforts to negotiate in a bipartisan way to help small businesses get through this crisis.

Not only did we pass, in that first CARES package, \$350 billion to help small business, but just a couple of weeks ago, Congress also came together to pass an additional \$370 billion

for the Paycheck Protection Program and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program.

Our intent in passing that legislation was to deliver relief to small businesses that are truly hurting. Small businesses are the lifeblood of this economy nationally, really, and certainly in New Hampshire, where 99 percent of our businesses are considered small businesses. They employ over 50 percent of the New Hampshire workforce.

In New Hampshire, 20,000 small businesses and nonprofits have received over \$2.5 billion in low-interest, forgivable loans under the Paycheck Protection Program. There have been challenges. We have heard some of those stories from small businesses that weren't able to access this assistance because some larger businesses got into the queue ahead of them—some of those large, publicly traded companies that had a relationship with their lender, and so they were able to get in early. We need information if we are going to correct the things that haven't been working about this program. That is why the legislation that Senator CARDIN, Senator SCHUMER, and I are introducing, I think, would be so helpful.

The Trump administration and Congress need to be held accountable for implementation of these programs. In order to do that, we have to have oversight, as Senator CARDIN said. Transparency is fundamental. We need to ensure that assistance is going to the small businesses and nonprofits that need it most.

Senator CARDIN listed off a number of those companies: the women-owned companies, minority-owned companies. We also need to think about those businesses that have fewer than 10 employees—those mom-and-pop shops that really need help, that may not have as long a relationship with their lender or may not have any relationship with a lender.

All we are asking for today is a measure that would provide the bare minimum that this administration should provide to ensure that these programs are functioning as Congress intended.

This is commonsense legislation. All it would do is require the Small Business Administration to provide daily reporting on PPP and EIDL loans, to provide more detailed weekly reports on these programs, and to make this information publicly available, while at the same time protecting borrower and participant privacy.

We have heard the horror stories about problems with this program. There have also been a lot of success stories. But the public isn't going to know both sides of that unless there is reporting and transparency so that people know what is working and what is not working.

The bill would also ensure that PPP and EIDL funds are reaching underserved and underbanked borrowers. It would establish an early warning sys-

tem for the SBA and for Congress so we can figure out how to respond to things that aren't working and when we are expecting an additional funding shortfall.

These proposals shouldn't be controversial. These are all things that I have heard people on both sides of the aisle talking about supporting. What they will do is allow Congress to perform our basic oversight responsibilities and foster public confidence in the integrity of these programs. And perhaps, most important, these improvements will help make sure that the limited resources that are available are getting to the small businesses that need them the most.

I yield the floor.

Mr. SCHUMER. I want to thank my colleagues not only for their eloquent remarks but their hard work. We know that Senator RUBIO has a 2:30 appointment so Senator BLUMENTHAL has graciously agreed to speak after we ask our unanimous consent request.

As if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of a bill that is at the desk that would require the Administrator of the Small Business Administration to report on COVID-19 recovery small business programs; I further ask that the bill be considered read three times and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. RUBIO. Reserving the right to object, let me first begin by saying that this is the first time I had a chance to speak on the floor about the Paycheck Protection Program since it passed. I want to say this unequivocally. Despite everything you read out there, in my mind, I don't think there is any question that by far this has been the most successful part of the CARES Act.

To put it in perspective, this was something we worked on in a bipartisan way. In less than a week, it was crafted, and then the agencies had less than 6 days to put together the rules.

Until Friday, April 4, no bank in America had ever made a PPP loan; no one had ever applied for one; and the SBA had never approved one. It was a massive program. We looked at the results. They are stunning—the results that we have seen.

Does the program have problems? Sure. I think any time that you create something that spends \$500 billion, \$600 billion that reaches over 50 percent of the U.S. economy and put it together so quickly, there are going to be unintended consequences. I will come back to that point in a moment. I think the biggest problem this program has had from the very beginning, which created some of these tensions that we read about in the press, is that it was underfunded from the very beginning. I mean, the demand was greater than the

supply, even potentially right now after the second round.

We have heard the reports about publicly traded companies. We all know how we feel about that, and I am glad that is being addressed now. I also want to put it in perspective. They have taken 0.35 percent of the funds that were approved—not 35 percent, not 3.5 percent, 0.35 percent of the money that has been lent.

It is not like they took half the money, which is what the perception is that has been created in the coverage. Meanwhile, that means the rest of it went to somebody who is not publicly traded. That is an extraordinary achievement, nonetheless, and I am glad that is being looked at.

On transparency, they are all valid points. Myself—Friday, Saturday—I was really upset that we weren't getting those numbers. The reason why I want the numbers is, A, we want to make sure this program that we put our names on and worked hard on—all of us have—is reaching its intended audience and, B, the points that were made here as well, to the extent that changes have to be in any future funding, we want to make sure that future funding is targeted in the right way. The problem is—I was as upset as anybody.

I hope that the agencies are watching these proceedings now and understanding why it is so important that our Members have accurate details and regular information about how this program is rolling out.

What we do know, when they finally released numbers on Saturday, is that in round 2, the average loan went from \$206,000 in round 1 to \$76,000 or so in round 2. That is a stunning drop. It tells you it is reaching smaller business.

We know that 72 percent of loans made in round 2 were under \$50,000, and 85 percent were under \$100,000. We do know that 4,400 of the 5,200 lenders in the program—or 5,400 lenders in the program have less than \$1 billion in assets. We know it is reaching the regional banks, the smaller banks, the credit unions.

The reason why doing what is being proposed now will be problematic is twofold. The first is, some of the demographic data that is being asked is not on the application. It is not even clear that they would be able to produce that for us unless they stopped the process, created a new application, and then began the process as well.

We will know the answer to that question in the forgiveness phase. I do believe in the forgiveness phase it is very valid to ask that information on demographics be included in the forgiveness application that people are going to have to file.

I think the best path forward is, in my view, not to pass something like this today, although something like this may be necessary if we can't get these numbers. But let's find out, first and foremost, what data points do they

have. What data points does the SBA have at their disposal and see if we can get them to do what they should be doing already, which is producing it on a regular—maybe not on a daily basis. What I don't want to see is an already overburdened agency that is small to begin with and struggling to get all these programs running having to pull people off getting people money to fill out this information.

We have to understand that in the end, it is not the Administrator or the Treasury Secretary who will have to write these things up and collect it. It is going to be people who, in many cases, are working from home, living in this region under all the restrictions that are there.

I think this agency is already struggling to manage this massive program, and to add an additional requirement without thinking it through would have an unintended consequence of potentially slowing the program down.

It is my view that we are going to find out all of this information, and we are going to know it in a timely fashion so we can do something about it. I do not believe that passing this today is the right approach, given the fact that we first need to know what data they have at their disposal before we can ask them to produce it. Otherwise, I fear they are going to stop or they are going to slow down, and real businesses, small businesses, and not-for-profits will be delayed. I will object to this request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. I want to thank my colleague from Florida. I believe he is sincere and has the best of intentions to want to make this program work.

I want to make two quick points. The first point is, the more data we have and the sooner we have it, the better we can make the program. It will not slow it down. It will improve it and make it better—the sooner the better.

Second, about demographic information, I understand the problem, but there are a lot of ways to skin that cat. If we looked at ZIP Codes, we might very easily be able to tell demographic information.

I thank my colleague. I regret that we cannot move this legislation—the only COVID legislation that will be talked about on the floor thus far, even though we were asked by the majority leader to come back during the crisis, and I hope we can move forward quickly in the future to get the kind of information we need.

With that I yield the floor. I yield to the Senator from Connecticut.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I thank my colleagues Senator CARDIN, Senator SHAHEEN, and Senator SCHUMER for their leadership on this issue of seeking better transparency and oversight with regard to a program that involves now almost a trillion tax-

payer dollars. I also join Senator SCHUMER in the sentiment that our colleague from Florida has been both sincere and bipartisan in his efforts on this program.

The fact is that this program, the Paycheck Protection Program, cries out for stronger oversight as does the entire CARES package. We will now be spending an authorized \$3 trillion—the Federal budget and then half again—with little or no oversight. Yet we know that this program meets a need among small businesses that is absolutely critical. I have traveled my State via video conference and have had telephone calls and communications of all kinds with small businesses around Connecticut, and I have seen and heard firsthand how they are hanging by a thread—struggling to keep their doors open and stay alive. This program gives them a lifeline.

It has, in fact, provided many powerful success stories, as my colleague Senator SHAHEEN said, but it has also produced some horror stories about big customers of big banks who have received favored treatment to the detriment of the smaller businesses that were supposed to have been the beneficiaries of this program. We need to make sure that these funds go to the small businesses, which really need it, and we should make sure that this program is adequately and effectively administered. We need to make sure there is transparency and disclosure about who is receiving these loans that can be converted and forgiven so that they can become grants and so that the real needs of those businesses can be met and their employees can continue to be employed. Those kinds of imperatives we must assure.

We know that the ripple effect of the closures of these businesses is tragic and traumatic. That is why we need to continue this program, but we need to do so with the oversight that assures that its purposes are met. For the businesses that have told me, for example, that they need more flexibility, those needs need to be met. Numbers of them have indicated they would like to extend the time provided to them to hire back their employees past the time in which the State is likely to allow them to open. They also need more funding for fixed costs. Basically, they need some flexibility because every business is different, and the oversight in this bill will help to alert the SBA and Congress to those needs.

Finally, the oversight needed here is simply one example of the accountability that should be imposed on the entire CARES Act. Real accountability demands a watchdog, not a lap dog, in order to stop the waste, fraud, and favoritism that seems all too common in this administration. That is why I have been working with my colleagues—most prominently, Senator WARREN—in the strengthening of the oversight of programs created by the CARES Act during this pandemic. We need to make sure there is effective enforcement and

a hammer, which will be essential to deter wrongdoing, preserve resources, and conserve credibility.

Strong scrutiny is required to make sure that aid reaches the right hands. I know that all of us believe, for example, that conflicts of interest should be barred; that retaliation against whistleblowers should be prevented; and that the firing of the inspector general without just cause should be stopped, which means keeping an eye on these programs—not just a wandering eye but one of focused, strict scrutiny that will assure transparency and make sure this program serves the needs it was intended to.

The only people who feel threatened by that kind of oversight are the ones who are trying to game the system or hide something. The rest of us, which means the workers, their families, and small businesses, demand oversight. This bill is a good way to begin. It is a start, not a finish, to the task of the oversight ahead of us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, when it comes to the virus pandemic that faces the world, the World Health Organization is not serving its member nations the way it should. The World Health Organization's mission is to promote worldwide health, to reduce the burdens of disease and poverty, and to provide access to healthcare, especially for the world's most vulnerable populations. The World Health Organization states as its guiding principle that all people should enjoy the highest standard of health regardless of race, religion, economics, social condition, or political belief. It serves primarily as a coordinating body to share information and best practices by connecting experts in different countries.

The virus that emerged in Wuhan, China, which has caused the disease now known as COVID-19, has had a devastating impact on the health of people worldwide as well as the global economy. Nations, including the United States, have been scrambling to deal with the impact of the virus since the beginning of the year. Without a doubt, worldwide efforts to combat COVID-19 would have been greatly benefited from independent, unbiased, and informative data from the world's leader in health, the World Health Organization. Unfortunately, information coming from this organization since the beginning of the year has left much to be desired in its often providing information that we know now to be inaccurate or at least incomplete. The American people and the citizens of every country—all of whom rely on direct and truthful information—deserve better from Dr. Tedros and his team who lead the World Health Organization.

China, which is where the current crisis began, has not done its part either in its seeking of or in providing that very crucial information that, had

it come out sooner, would have saved many lives. As an example of China's not cooperating, a doctor in Wuhan, China, by the name of Dr. Li Wenliang, raised concerns about the growing pandemic in early January. Dr. Li tried to blow the whistle on the spread of one of the world's deadliest diseases. Do you know what he got for doing that? He was punished by the Communist Chinese Government for "spreading rumors."

Tragically, Dr. Li passed away in early February due to this virus, COVID-19. After the death of Dr. Li, he actually became a rallying point for Chinese citizens who were very upset about their government's coverup of this virus. Only then, after he died and after the public outcry, did the Chinese Government apologize to his family and posthumously drop Dr. Li's reprimand. Throughout this time, the World Health Organization demonstrated no interest in the accurate and verifiable information on the true dangers of this virus.

We now know that, in late December 2019, Taiwanese officials sounded the alarm directly to the World Health Organization about the human-to-human transmission of the virus. Prior to that, it was only thought there was an animal-to-human transmission, but Taiwanese officials blew the whistle. The Taiwan Centers for Disease Control sent an email to the World Health Organization—an email that has now been forwarded to my office and has been widely reported. It warned of "at least seven atypical pneumonia cases in Wuhan, China." Additionally, this email communication noted that those individuals had been isolated for treatment, which we now know is said to be the standard operating procedure for preventing human-to-human transmission, but still, at that time, it was considered to be animal to human.

Taken together, this information should have been very much a red flag to the World Health Organization's leadership that the virus was capable of having human-to-human transmission. Unfortunately, the World Health Organization chose to ignore these warnings and, thus, failed to pass on this critical information to other countries. Instead, what did the World Health Organization do? It was complicit in the Chinese Government's coverup. It stated the opposite—that there was not human-to-human transmission. In fact, the World Health Organization even retweeted Chinese propaganda on January 14—that there was "no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission," which is contrary to the information that the World Health Organization got from the Taiwanese.

It ought to be very clear that misleading the public like this is simply egregious. By sidelining Taiwan's participation, which has one of the lowest known COVID-19 infection rates per capita, despite its proximity to Mainland China, the World Health Organiza-

tion stymied information about a more effective response to the pandemic. It was during these critical days back in January when the spread of the virus could have been greatly slowed or even contained and could have saved a lot of lives.

The World Health Organization's mandate is to coordinate responses and facilitate information sharing to all of its members on a health emergency—members which include probably almost every country on this globe. This gross mishandling of the organization's most important mandate has cost countless lives around the world.

While China covered up the extent of the virus's spread, the World Health Organization continued to praise China for its so-called proactive response and transparency. General Secretary Xi waited a crucial 6 days, until January 20, before announcing the findings by China's National Health Commission about the danger of the widespread human-to-human coronavirus contagion. Now, just think for a while of the time lost between Taiwan's warning to the World Health Organization in late December 2019 and General Secretary Xi's admitting on January 20 of its human-to-human transmission. That time lost could have saved the whole world thousands of lives because they could have been on top of the situation as to how bad it was, which was much more than anybody knew at that particular time.

General Secretary Xi's government also delayed an access request for the World Health Organization's experts to visit affected regions at the end of January by almost 2 weeks—another 2 weeks lost. He has also continually fed disinformation to foreign citizens via several misleading tweets by his foreign ministry and multiple unfounded claims that have been posted on state-run media websites.

Despite this and also other evidence that China actively silenced whistleblowers and doctors domestically and that the Communist Party's officials were aware of the spread well before reporting it, the World Health Organization's officials continued to praise China's response and transparency. The World Health Organization lauded China for releasing the virus's genome in mid-January while it neglected to mention that it took China at least 14 days to do this even as the virus continued to spread across Europe and reach America.

Dr. Tedros said in early February that there was no need for measures that unnecessarily interfered with international travel and trade in trying to halt the spread of that coronavirus. Now, early February was a few days after President Trump stopped travel from China except for American citizens who were coming home. Yet, during that period of time, Dr. Tedros thought it was unnecessary to interfere with international travel.

Time and again, the World Health Organization endorsed and also repeated

Chinese Government talking points, and it did it all to the rest of the world's detriment. We now know that there was a continued flow of misinformation that came from the Chinese Government since the onset of the pandemic with there being little to no pushback from the World Health Organization as to whether that information was accurate.

In mid-February, officials from the World Health Organization—yet again, uncritically—parroted Chinese Government propaganda by stating that there were signs that confirmed and suspected cases of COVID-19 had declined in China. The U.S. intelligence community has, in fact, asserted that China misrepresented both the number of cases and its death toll from the virus, concealing the real extent of the outbreak in its country, and that China intentionally hid or even destroyed evidence of the virus' outbreak.

In a dossier that was leaked to the Australian Daily Telegraph, it is alleged that China began censoring information as early as December 31, 2019—precisely when Taiwan, in its caring about the whole world as it knew what might be going on, was sounding that alarm to the World Health Organization.

Previously, Chinese leaders came under incredible scrutiny by the World Health Organization back in 2003 for the SARS outbreak. China was not transparent with SARS, just like they weren't transparent until too late in regard to this virus pandemic that we are fighting today. Back then, the Chinese Government made sure that information regarding the outbreak was not made public. At that point, the World Health Organization did what they are responsible for doing: They publicly reprimanded China back in 2003 on the SARS outbreak. Chinese leaders then quickly fell in line with the rest of the world in sharing its data with the World Health Organization member countries. If the World Health Organization had been doing its job on this pandemic, then maybe China would have been quicker admitting that its spread was human-to-human and how bad it was even in their own country.

However, we are seeing a very different approach now to the organization's handling of China's information suppression campaign, with the World Health Organization often praising China for its information sharing, but make no mistake, China has been nothing but deceptive in its handling of COVID-19.

We must remember that China has a long history of not being transparent with respect to the outbreaks of viruses, and there is little to no evidence suggesting we should start believing China now—meaning, of course, the Chinese Communist leaders. Nobody in this world is going to hold the Chinese people responsible for this.

Global leaders are now coming to realize that China is responsible for this pandemic, with global sentiment

against the Chinese Communist Party at its highest since the 1999 Tiananmen Square crackdown.

It is important that world leaders, including President Trump, keep pressure on China to finally be transparent with its data so we can join together in combating this deadly disease. We have a report from the Department of Homeland Security that says that China “intentionally concealed the severity” of the pandemic from the world. To make matters worse, the report further states that while China continues to downplay the pandemic, it began to increase imports and decrease exports of medical supplies. This report from the Department of Homeland Security suggests that China was beginning to hoard these medical supplies from the rest of the world. So they knew how bad this was in their own country. Secretary Pompeo recently stated that there is a significant amount of evidence that this virus came from the laboratory in Wuhan, China, contrary to what Chinese Communist Party propagandists have been pushing throughout the world.

On April 9, I wrote to the World Health Organization seeking answers to several questions regarding the organization’s handling of COVID-19. I wanted to know what the World Health Organization knew and when they knew it. I asked that my questions be answered no later than May 1. Much to my dismay, the World Health Organization has refused to answer my questions about its handling of the virus. It would seem that the organization is much more focused on covering for China than it is in answering questions that every single American has a right to know.

Not only does the United States have the right to know this information for the benefit of the world, because transparency brings accountability, but because we give about \$400 million a year to support the World Health Organization. I believe we are the largest contributor to it, and I believe China gives about 10 percent of what the U.S. taxpayers put in. I want to state that I will continue to push the World Health Organization for answers. There are probably a lot more questions that ought to be asked in addition to the questions in my letter.

Ultimately, the primary responsibility for this pandemic lies with the Chinese Communist Government authorities who actively concealed the outbreak since the fall of 2019 and suppressed the spread of accurate information about the virus, but the World Health Organization also bears responsibility for aiding and abetting the Chinese Communist Party’s coverup. That is why I support a full congressional investigation into how the World Health Organization has bowed to Chinese pressure with the COVID-19 outbreak. The leaders of the World Health Organization need to be held accountable for their role in promoting misinformation and helping China cover up this

global pandemic. Americans deserve to know what the World Health Organization leaders knew and when they knew it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I come to the floor today as the Senate returns to help the country recover from coronavirus. This global pandemic is hopefully a once-in-a-lifetime, once-in-a-century shock, but it has been an earthquake that continues to shake the world to its core. Tragically, we have lost tens of thousands of Americans to the disease, and our hearts and prayers go out to each of those impacted and all of their loved ones.

More than 30 million Americans have lost their jobs in the last 6 weeks due to the virus and the State lockdowns that have been put in place as a result of the virus. People want and need to get back to work as soon as possible. It is vital we reopen America smartly and safely and we do it as soon as we can.

Many States are starting to open. Wyoming did this past Friday. We must all be prepared and alert for any likely aftershocks that will occur from the virus.

The economy could not reopen had it not been for the major medical progress we have been experiencing. Our heroic nurses, doctors, and others on the frontlines have saved many lives. Testing in the United States has been dramatically expanded, and we are producing promising treatments. The American people deserve a lot of credit for their tremendous sacrifices to contain the spread of the virus. Everyone in my home State of Wyoming is suffering from the economic fallout, as are Americans all across the country. The best way to help these people is to push the start button on the economy.

The Senate is in session and will consider taking targeted temporary and bipartisan relief measures. We are now assessing the relief money that has already been spent. We know what has worked—the Paycheck Protection Program funds that go to mom-and-pop organizations that are part of the CARES Act has saved 30 million jobs. Small business is the backbone of our economy, the engine of job creation. In Wyoming, the program has been very successful and very popular. Before the pandemic, the United States had record job growth and record low unemployment. Our economy will bounce back, there is no question in my mind.

As we look to the future, in terms of recovery legislation, what we need to do is to prevent a second epidemic. I am very concerned that the second epidemic will be that of frivolous coronavirus lawsuits. Any future legislation must focus on the virus and must include reasonable liability protections for the hard-hit healthcare workers and for American employers.

Opportunistic lawyers are already advertising, and they are targeting the healthcare workers and small businesses that we have assisted during the crisis. Ironically, the relief money could end up lining the pockets of greedy trial lawyers.

As businesses bravely begin to reopen, class action lawsuits are being planned nationwide. Ambulance chasers are running recruitment ads right now that read “receive a free coronavirus lawsuit review.” They go on to say: Call if you or a loved one has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and you believe another party’s negligence caused the exposure.

Nursing homes appear to be the prime target. One lawyer who described himself as a “coronavirus exposure lawyer” encouraged action for nursing home negligence. That is why nurses, doctors, and hospitals are counting on Congress to pass commonsense liability reform.

Yet Speaker PELOSI and Senator SCHUMER say they oppose this critical liability protection. Instead, Democrats are demanding more aid for States and local governments. They want American taxpayers to bail out States with long histories of financial mismanagement. That is already on top of the \$150 billion that the States have just received within the last 2 weeks. NANCY PELOSI now wants a lot, lot more.

We put the full force of the American Government in this fight against the coronavirus. We cannot afford to allow an avalanche of abusive lawsuits to crush our awakening economy. Republicans will insist on a legal shield for essential workers and for businesses before spending another dime. It is our job to do everything that we can to get people back to work and back to work safely.

The physical and economic health of our country is at stake today. We are continuing to deliver financial support plus medical help to all people across the country. One thing is clear: trial lawyers should not profit from our Nation’s pain. Together, America will come back and Americans will come back and it will be stronger and better than ever.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, we are here in the U.S. Senate on this Tuesday. We had a vote yesterday evening, the first that we have had in some 6 weeks here. As I walked over to the Chamber just now from the Hart Building, at 4 o’clock on a Tuesday afternoon, the only individuals whom I saw were the extraordinary men and

women of the Capitol Police here in the building.

Suffice it to say, these are strange, unusual, challenging, and difficult times as we face the COVID-19 pandemic and as we address the challenges that our constituents, our friends, and our families are dealing with at home, whether it be the impact of the virus itself on our health and our health facilities or whether it be the impact—truly, the economic devastation—that we are seeing in all corners of the Nation.

So the opportunity to be together as a body to address these challenges is important. It is challenging for us as we adapt to this time and this situation of wearing protective masks, of being separated from one another, of teleworking as we are. We are adapting. We are facing that challenge. We rightly must be doing this because, as the Nation deals with these matters related to the COVID-19, there are other matters that are taking place every day—issues that need to be addressed, problems that must be tackled, and matters of governance that we must be engaged in.

NATIONAL DAY OF AWARENESS FOR MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

Madam President, I woke up this morning and looked at my little news caps with which to focus on the day, this Tuesday, and they noted that today is Teacher Appreciation Day. We thank all of our teachers. Our teachers are certainly in an unusual situation now, as all of our students are. It is also Cinco de Mayo. It is also Giving Tuesday. For many, it feels like Groundhog Day every day because of, again, this strange time in which we are living. For so many, it just seems that every day is more and more of the same.

Today, May 5, is also a day that we have recognized for several years now as being the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. It is a matter that I would like to speak briefly to this afternoon. I recognize the devastation that so many families have seen when it comes to those they love who have gone missing or who have been found murdered, and I recognize the dark reality that many, we know, are still missing.

Unfortunately, for far too long, there has been silence on this issue. There has been a failure to act in the face of what we know and sometimes in the not knowing of what we are dealing with because we haven't asked the questions, which is equally problematic. It tears at my heart to hear the stories of those whom I have come in contact with in Alaska—a woman's story, a family's story—in that their words have been discounted. They have been dismissed because the woman who went missing or the woman who was murdered was a Native American woman.

We have to change that. We cannot accept that. We cannot let the statis-

tics that have really just been allowed to accumulate for too long to remain as statistics. Every single one of these women was her own person, each story her own life story, each a member of her community. In addition to their being someone's lost daughters, wives, mothers, sisters, we should mourn the promise that these missing and murdered women meant to our communities—their being the next generations of mentors, role models, and changemakers.

When women are murdered or abducted, when women are trafficked—when individuals are left missing, discarded, or discounted—there is an injustice that is being done, and we cannot let that continue. By raising awareness of the epidemic, by giving these women their faces, their names, and by telling their stories, we are shining a light on a problem, and we are giving hope.

I acknowledge the work of a former colleague of mine here in the Senate, Senator Heidi Heitkamp, who came to this floor often as a strong, strong advocate for those Native women who have been dismissed and discounted. She shared pictures, gave names, and went beyond the statistics. She reminded me—encouraged me—that this is an effort that, together, we must address.

Unfortunately, we all have the stories—the stories that sicken you and just literally break your heart. The one that, perhaps, touches me most immediately and directly is the life of Ashley Johnson Barr. She was a beautiful 10-year-old girl who was taken from the children's playground in her hometown of Kotzebue, AK, which is a Native village on the northwest coast. She was brutally raped and murdered. Again, she was taken from the kids' playground to just outside her town. Her death and the tragedy around the circumstances of how she left the world are still open. It is still raw and has left a permanent scar on Alaskan communities.

What happened to Ashley is a reminder that, in my State, unfortunately, there is a darkness that is still, to this day, very, very hard to talk about, but we must. We have to talk about it. We have to act on it. We cannot turn a blind eye simply because it is difficult to talk about. We have to because we are seeing the stories that represent these statistics in unprecedented proportions. Let me give you some numbers to just put that into perspective.

Alaska Native women are 2½ times more likely to be victims of domestic violence. In Tribal villages and Native communities, domestic violence rates are up to 10 times higher than in the rest of the Nation. In 2015, it was estimated that 40 percent of sex-trafficking victims were Native Americans. Almost 40 percent of those who have been trafficked have been Native Americans. The rate of sexual violence victimization among Alaska's Native

women is at least seven times greater than of non-Native females.

Again, I will just say these are unprecedented proportions. So, when we designate a day as a day of awareness—an awareness of those who have gone missing and who have been murdered as being indigenous women and girls—it has to be about more than awareness. It has to be about action. This is where Senator CORTEZ MASTO and I have picked up on this work. She and I have worked together on several pieces of legislation that have helped to pave the way for greater collaboration and data collection between Federal agencies—our law enforcement and elected Tribal officials—to not only understand the extent of the issues but to develop methods with which to end these horrible crimes.

There are two bills. The first one is Savanna's Act. It combats the epidemic of murdered and missing Native women and girls by improving the Federal Government's response in addressing the crisis. We do this through the coordination among all levels of law enforcement by increasing data collection and information sharing and by empowering Tribal governments with the resources they need in the cases involving missing or murdered indigenous women and girls wherever they may occur.

The second piece of legislation is called the Not Invisible Act. It is aimed at addressing the crisis of missing, murdered, and trafficked Native women by engaging law enforcement, Tribal leaders, Federal partners, and service providers and by improving the coordination across the Federal agencies. The more we have reviewed this, we have learned that so much of the data is lacking. We have gaps. We just haven't been able to get the data that we need in order to do a better job of coordinating with our agencies.

The good news from all of this is that both of these bills have passed this body, and I thank my colleagues here in the Senate for their support of the measures. We advanced them unanimously on March 11, which was just a little while before we left to deal with the COVID pandemic. I truly want to thank the Senate for helping to prioritize these measures to protect indigenous women.

In addition to these measures that we have passed in the Senate, we have done more on the appropriations side. We have worked through the committees, and for the first time in the appropriations bill that President Trump signed in December, there was funding specifically directed to address the crisis of missing, murdered, and trafficked indigenous women—\$6.5 million included for the BIA to take a really comprehensive look at the issue across BIA and IHS, the Indian Health Service.

It covers everything for the funding of cold casework, background checks, equipment needs, training, and a directive to the IHS with regard to forensic

training. It also includes language that does more for the coordination and data collection amongst Tribal, local, State, and Federal law enforcement. So that is significant. The Executive order that was issued by the Trump administration late last year was very important in this effort.

I personally acknowledge the good work that Tara Sweeney has done, the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. She has pulled together the agency coordination to respond to these cases. She has shown extraordinary heart—real heart—in responding to the calls from Tribes and advocates to address the crisis of missing and murdered Native women. So there has been so much at play that has come together.

What we need now is for the House to act on these legislative measures that we have moved through the Senate so that the President can sign them into law.

I think we recognize that as we are dealing with these matters that are directly related to the day-to-day response to COVID, as we have seen our economies slowed, as we have moved indoors to telework, the work that is required for us to help protect the most vulnerable among us continues. We know that work continues.

As we have worked aggressively across the country and in Alaskan communities to flatten the curve out there as it relates to the coronavirus, we know, unfortunately, that we have seen an uptick in domestic violence. Unfortunately, and truly sadly for so many, the order to shelter in place—“safer at home” is the terminology used in some communities, and safer at home doesn't necessarily mean safe at home for far too many. Shelter in place is not a safe shelter. We are seeing increased calls to police departments during this time, but, interestingly enough, we are not seeing an increase in those who are seeking help or shelter in our women's shelters.

It was just a couple of weeks ago that I had a phone call with representatives from the various women's shelters around my State, with probably a dozen or so women on the line, and I asked specifically: How are we doing in the shelters? What are we seeing? Their numbers are down, and if you look at it from just a numbers perspective, you would say “Good.” But we know that domestic violence doesn't disappear or go away at times like the ones we are facing now; it just goes underground. I think what we are seeing is that concern and fear. As difficult as the situation may be at home, it might be more frightening to go to a shelter where one may be exposed to this invisible threat of the virus.

I wish I could say that, as a consequence of what we are seeing, our shelters are better off, but I fear that those who would seek shelter are not better off. So to make sure we are prepared to address these needs is yet another challenge for us in this body: to come together to address these issues

that we know are with us—not only the levels of domestic violence but the impact that we know is present when it comes to mental and behavioral health, when people are fragile and yet are afraid to seek help because of the exposure to something else. We have work to do in this area, and that is something I intend to focus on in the days and weeks ahead.

I was encouraged to hear my friend, the Senator from Texas, Mr. CORNYN, speaking to just these issues yesterday on the floor. We have much to do. These are challenging times on many different levels.

As we recognize this day of awareness for those who have gone missing—for those women and girls who have been murdered—know that this is more than just raising awareness. It is up to us. We owe it to them, their families, and their loved ones to act as well.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASIDY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IOWA SAFE SCHOOLS ANNUAL GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, Iowa Safe Schools is holding its 15th annual Iowa Governor's Conference on May 11, this time as a virtual conference, given the circumstances. I understand this has been an annual tradition starting in 2006. It is an effort to help end bullying in our schools and to create leadership opportunities for LGBTQ youth students from not just Iowa but from States across the Midwest. I wish all the participants a successful conference. I hope you have a good time.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING NORTH DAKOTA'S DELEGATES TO THE SENATE YOUTH PROGRAM

• Mr. CRAMER. Mr. President, one of the outstanding programs offered in the U.S. Senate recognizes the best of America's high school juniors and sen-

iors. Since 1963, the U.S. Senate Youth Program has selected two students from each State who rank high academically, excel in leadership and volunteerism, and have a passion for public service. They also receive a \$10,000 college scholarship.

These young delegates have come to Washington, DC, every spring for a week of education and tours highlighting all three branches of government. Unfortunately, like so many other programs and events, this year's trip to Washington was cancelled as our Nation faces the coronavirus threat. This is only the second time in the program's nearly 60 years that the delegates have not gathered in Washington for this memorable week.

As one of the eight Senators serving on the Senate Youth Program's Advisory Committee, I want to congratulate all who were selected to be delegates this year and assure them we share their disappointment they could not be with us this month. I also want to recognize North Dakota's two delegates, Megha Bharadwaj and Rachel Goven.

Megha is a junior at St. Mary's Central High School in Bismarck. Her leadership positions include being the State treasurer for the North Dakota Future Business Leaders of America and a board member and publicity director for AchieveWE. Megha has received top honors participating in school, district, and State competitions in Voices of Democracy, debate, speech, and Science Olympiad. In addition, she reports for her school newspaper, sings in the jazz choir, and speaks at community events. She plans to attend law school and enter the world of politics.

Rachel is a senior at Turtle Lake Mercer High School, where she is the vice president of her senior class and involved in Student Council and National Honor Society. She attended North Dakota Girls State and is a North Dakota rural electric cooperative youth leader. Rachel enjoys band and choir, yearbook, cheerleading, and basketball. In her church, she is a youth band member and camp counselor and is a willing volunteer for other community events.

I congratulate both Megha and Rachel for receiving this honor and welcome them to an alumni group of Senate Youth Program delegates who are 5,500 individuals strong. Many of them have gone on to distinguish themselves in every area of public service, including two of my colleagues, Senator SUSAN COLLINS of Maine and Senator CORY GARDNER of Colorado. I fully expect that I will meet up with Megha and Rachel in the future as they continue to excel in academic and professional arenas throughout their lives.●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:20 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that pursuant to section