

from having to suffer and perhaps not survive this second pandemic that will be caused by opportunistic litigation.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. LOEFFLER). The clerk will call the roll. The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

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 Brian D. Montgomery, of Texas, to be Deputy Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

CORONAVIRUS

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, I rise today to speak about the unprecedented crisis our Nation is facing. In a matter of just a few months, COVID-19 has completely changed our daily lives. This virus has forced us to close schools, shut down restaurants, cancel major events, and temporarily shutter businesses across our economy.

The sacrifices have been necessary for the sake of public health, to help "flatten the curve" so our medical facilities don't become overwhelmed, but they have also been disruptive, frustrating, and in some cases, scary.

Despite the emotional and economic toll this crisis has taken, we have seen countless acts of compassion, generosity, and selflessness all across the country. Americans have stepped up to help each other to fight this new threat.

I want to make sure the American people know that since the very beginning of this crisis, Nebraskans have been on the frontlines.

When 13 Americans were evacuated from a cruise ship in Japan in late February, they were taken to the National Quarantine Unit at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha. As the Nation's only Federal quarantine unit, they were also trusted to care for Americans recovering from Ebola in 2014.

Beyond treating those exposed to or infected with coronavirus, UNMC is also working to test new treatments for this virus. In late February, the Na-

tional Institutes of Health announced that the country's first clinical trial for coronavirus therapy had begun at UNMC.

Our world-class medical center has been active from the very beginning of this crisis.

The Nebraska National Guard—our citizen soldiers—has also played an important role in our response. They have been deployed as distributors at food banks, as healthcare workers assisting with testing, and as drivers bringing ventilators to where they are most needed.

One of the first State Department evacuation flights out of China brought 57 Americans to Nebraska, where they were quarantined at Camp Ashland, a Nebraska National Guard training site.

It is easy to forget that these first evacuations happened just back in February. Since that time, we have relied on our amazing healthcare workers and first responders. These heroes have been working around the clock to keep all of us safe. They get up every day to fight this virus in hospitals and in clinics across this country. I can't imagine how hard it must be for them to see the effects of this new sickness day in and day out. Yet I know we are in good hands.

We have also relied on our food heroes, many from my home State, where one in four jobs is tied to production agriculture. If you raise cattle or grow soybeans, you can't stay inside and work from your couch. If you package beef or pork, you can't work from a laptop. Americans should be incredibly grateful for our essential workers throughout the food supply chain. They are working so that we can continue to put healthy, safe food on our tables.

Nebraskans and all Americans are making daily sacrifices to slow the spread of this virus. We have drastically reduced our contact with others, knowing that short-term sacrifice will lead to long-term public health. But despite our best efforts, over 8,000 Nebraskans have contracted the virus, and 96 have died since COVID-19 arrived in the United States. These people were loved by their families and by their communities. I grieve for their loved ones. These tragic losses underscore the seriousness of this virus. They demonstrate to all of us that we need to keep up the fight.

The changes we have made in our national life, while necessary, have been difficult. They have come at the cost of the economic security of many people in the heartland of this Nation. We are seeing record numbers of unemployment claims, and many people who have never faced unemployment before now find themselves out of work. More Nebraskans are now dealing with food insecurity due to unemployment and the effects of COVID-19.

I have been inspired by the work nonprofits across my State are doing to address this.

The local chapter of the Salvation Army in Hastings has started a mobile

food unit, which they drive from neighborhood to neighborhood, and they serve hot meals.

The Central Nebraska Community Action Partnership has begun to box up food and leave it on people's doorsteps. This has allowed them to reduce person-to-person contact while helping those who are in need.

The Food Bank of Lincoln, which serves Southeast Nebraska by acting as a distribution center for food pantries in 16 counties, has seen a huge surge in demand. They have been able to keep up with this demand in large part thanks to the innovation of a partnership of Lincoln business, philanthropy, and government leaders, who together formed the Lincoln COVID-19 Response Fund.

These are major problems, and there is no easy fix. Even so, it is our job in Congress to respond to this national crisis and do what we can to provide relief. That is why I was proud to support the CARES Act, the relief package this body passed unanimously at the end of March.

A big part of this legislation was the Paycheck Protection Program, which was designed to help America's small businesses keep their employees on payroll by offering forgivable loans.

Upon the creation of this program to provide relief, Nebraskans hit the ground running. By mid-April, the Paycheck Protection Program had provided nearly 25,000 loans worth just under \$3 billion to Nebraska's small businesses. This funding was enough to cover more than three-fourths of Nebraska's eligible payrolls—the highest percentage in the Nation.

I think it is important to note that none of this would have been possible without Nebraska's community banks and our credit unions. While some national banks hesitated, Nebraska's local institutions stepped up to provide these loans and make sure small businesses in their communities received assistance.

To our community banks and credit unions, Nebraskans applying for these loans are not just statistics halfway around the country. The people hurting are their friends, their families, and their neighbors. The people who need their help live just down the street.

One of these banks is Union Bank & Trust in Lincoln. This family-owned bank is not in the top 200 banks by assets nationally, but after the first 72 hours of the Paycheck Protection Program, they ranked second in the Nation for the number of loans approved. Like many other lending institutions, Union Bank & Trust accomplished this while adjusting to working from home for the first time. Their remarkable efforts and those of another Nebraska institution, Pinnacle Bank, were covered in a recent Washington Post story for leading the way nationally with this program.

It is good to see the Paycheck Protection Program working well in my State. I am pleased that Congress came