

deadly force on American citizens, and through increased data and transparency, as well as important modifications to training and practices, it would help prevent police misconduct in the first place.

This is a very strong bill, and rightly so. I give tremendous credit to Senators BOOKER, HARRIS, and so many others who contributed, as well as the Black Caucus, led by KAREN BASS and Chairman NADLER of the Judiciary. They put together a very strong bill. The reason is simple. The moment does not call for half measures.

Hundreds of thousands of American protesters are not asking us to chip away around the edges. They want bold reform and meaningful changes to assist them in something that all too often delivers unequal justice for too many Black Americans, and that has existed that way for too, too long. Well, that kind of bold reform and meaningful change is what the Justice in Policing Act will deliver—meaningful change. Democrats are going to fight very, very hard to make this proposal a reality.

Now, of course, in the Senate, it is ultimately up to Leader MCCONNELL to decide what proposals, if any, come to the Senate floor. That is his prerogative as majority leader. But for 2 weeks, Leader MCCONNELL has refused to respond to my requests for the Senate to consider a police reform bill before July 4, the end of the current work period. I have heard the Republican leader speak to the frustrations that have swept the Nation. I trust he is aware of the many abuses that have been allowed to persist unchecked in our police departments. Where is Leader MCCONNELL on actually doing something about it?

Of course, there is another crisis at the moment, the COVID pandemic. According to reports in the press, Leader MCCONNELL has told the Republican caucus not to expect another relief bill until late July at the earliest. This is happening even as some States begin loosening restrictions on business and travel. But even as that happens, our economy is hampered by severe Depression-level unemployment. While the number of new cases is falling on the east coast, the number of cases remains steady in much of the country and is increasing in a good number of States.

We are coming to a whole lot of cliffs. States are preparing their budgets in advance of the new fiscal year in July. If they don't get help soon, they may be forced to make severe cuts to public service, and thousands, hundreds of thousands, and even millions will be laid off—hard-working State and local officials whom our communities depend on.

There are other cliffs as well. The 3-month moratorium on eviction expires. Unemployment expires July 31. There are so many cliffs here, and make no mistake about it, COVID is related to racial justice as well. In the HEROES

bill, for instance, hazard workers and frontline workers get extra pay—hazard pay. More than 40 percent of them are minorities. These are the people on our frontlines. Rental assistance for people who might be evicted, a large percentage of minority folks cannot afford to own a home or rent, so we must act on that as well.

So the kind of racial justice we are talking about, the kind of inequality that exists—some of it—a good chunk of it would be relieved if we passed the HEROES Act, COVID 4 bill. Both of these are important to do. Racial justice, civil rights, a global pandemic, and economic disaster—these are not merely issues of the month but of this moment in American history. It is truly a time of historic challenge, and Leader MCCONNELL and the Republican Senate are missing in action. There is no commitment to consider police reform and no urgency to provide our country relief, despite the upcoming cliffs that are going to be soon upon us.

Now there is a full 4 weeks remaining before July 4. I say to Leader MCCONNELL: commit to a police reform bill on the Senate floor. Work with us on another emergency package that can come to the floor as well before July 4. We have waited too long already.

For weeks, we Democrats have had to relentlessly pressure our Republican colleagues to even hold the most routine oversight hearings. The Republican majority on the Homeland Security Committee, in particular, has wasted time these past few weeks trying to smear the family of the President's political opponent instead. Here we have a major crisis—a major crisis on the health front, on the economic front, on the racial justice front, and what are so many of our Republican friends doing? Raising back already discredited conspiracy theories to go after the President's political opponent at a time when Americans are calling for unity and coming together and doing something about our problems. It is a shame.

The Homeland Security Committee will finally, today, conduct a hearing with the FEMA Administrator for the first time in so long. This crisis has been raging for months. More than 8 weeks ago, we passed a \$3 trillion bill. Why is it taking so long to have any oversight at all? Finally, members of the committee will have the opportunity to press administration officials as to why, in the early days of the pandemic, the distribution of PPE and other critical medical supplies was marked by so much confusion, secrecy, incompetence, and delays. In fact, Senators WARREN, BLUMENTHAL, and I formally requested an investigation into Project Airbridge, the name of the Trump administration's opaque medical supply chain management project, which, by most reports, was a failure. Why aren't we looking into why that went wrong, what went wrong, and how we can correct it?

The harsh fact of the matter is this: We have lost too many Americans,

frontline workers, and hospital emergency personnel to this horrible COVID-19 disease. We will never know how many we lost because we weren't better prepared with the necessary protective equipment. The Trump administration's failure should be thoroughly investigated so it does not make the same mistake again if there is a resurgence of the disease.

Meanwhile, America is still waiting for the President to even acknowledge the issues of police violence and racial justice that are driving protests across the country, including across the street from the White House.

The President appears too preoccupied trying to emulate Richard Nixon, of all Presidents, and he doesn't offer even a scintilla of leadership. The President seems too preoccupied with his political precariousness to even try to bring the country together.

As former Defense Secretary Mattis wrote, "Donald Trump is the first president in my lifetime who does not try to unite the American people—does not even pretend to try. Instead, he tries to divide us. We are witnessing the consequences of three years of this deliberate effort. We are witnessing the consequences of three years without mature leadership. We can unite without him . . ."

And do that, we must, as Americans. Those words were not written by some liberal Democrat whom they will call names, cast aspersions on, never discussing the argument. It was written by one of our great military leaders, former Defense Secretary General Mattis.

Every day provides fresh evidence that this country will have to unite in spite of the President, not because of him.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

PROTESTS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, several times now I have praised the peaceful demonstrations protesting racial injustice and the killings of Black Americans. I am grateful that after several harrowing days of looting and riots, law enforcement restored order and helped these peaceful protests be heard.

Notwithstanding the far-left calls to disband the police altogether, I believe most Americans are ready to consider how the memories of Black Americans like George Floyd and Breonna Taylor can move us to continue combating residual racism.

Today, I need to discuss a different pressing problem that concerns Americans' constitutional rights. It is becoming clear to many Americans, including many who appreciate and applaud the recent protests, that our national life during this pandemic has slid toward a double standard.

For weeks, State and local leaders put normal American life totally on ice and asked citizens to prioritize fighting the virus. For weeks, the mainstream media heaped scorn on any small citizen protest, outdoor gathering, or even the suggestion that other important values might require a reappraisal of certain restrictions.

Well, the American people did their part. They made necessary sacrifices that clearly helped the country, and they are ready to continue doing their part as our reopening carefully proceeds. But now, many Americans feel they have just seen those fastidious regulations and that puritanical zeal disappear in an instant because a new cause has emerged that powerful people agree with.

A month ago, small protest demonstrations were widely condemned as reckless and selfish. Now, massive rallies that fill entire cities are not just praised but, in fact, are called especially brave because of the exact same health risk that brought condemnation when the cause was different.

People just spent the spring watching their small businesses dissolve or canceling weddings or missing religious observances for the longest spells in their lives or missing the last days of a loved one's life and then missing the funeral. Never were the American people told about any exemption for things they felt strongly about.

I have no criticism for the millions of Americans who peacefully demonstrated in recent days. Their cause is beyond righteous. It is the inconsistency from leaders that has been baffling. The same Governor of Michigan who argued that letting people carefully shop for vegetable seeds—vegetable seeds—would be too dangerous during the pandemic, now poses for photographs with groups of protesters. Here in the District of Columbia, the mayor celebrates massive street protests. She actually joins them herself. But on her command, churches and houses of worship remain shut. I believe even the largest church buildings in the District are still subject to the 10-person limit for things the mayor deems inessential.

The rights of free speech, free assembly, and the free exercise of religion are all First Amendment rights. They have the same constitutional pedigree. Apparently, while protests are now permissible, prayer is still too dangerous. Politicians are now picking and choosing within the First Amendment itself.

Last week, one county in California's Bay area seriously attempted to issue guidance that allowed protests of 100 people but still—still capped all other social gatherings at 12 people and banned outdoor religious gatherings altogether—banned outdoor religious gatherings altogether. Figure that one out.

These governments are acting like the coronavirus discriminates based on the content of people's speech, but, alas, it is only the leaders themselves

who are doing that. It is now impossible to avoid the conclusion that local and State leaders are using their power to encourage constitutionally protected conduct which they personally appreciate while continuing to ban constitutionally protected conduct which they personally feel is less important.

In New York City, Mayor de Blasio makes no effort to hide this subjectivity. At one point, he recounted our Nation's history with racism, compared that to "a devout religious person who wants to go back to religious services" and concluded, "Sorry, that is not the same question."

Well, the American people's constitutional liberties do not turn—do not turn on a mayor's intuition. Politicians do not get to play red light, green light within the First Amendment. The Bill of Rights is not some a-la-carte menu that leaders may sample as they please. It is hard to see any rational set of rules by which mass protests should continue to be applauded, but small, careful religious services should continue to be banned.

These prominent Democrats are free to let social protests outrank religion in their own consciences if they choose, but they do not get to impose their ranking on everyone else. This is precisely the point of freedom of conscience. That is precisely the point of the First Amendment.

Weeks ago, citizens sued the mayor of Louisville, KY, when he tried to ban drive-in Easter services while imposing no restrictions on the parking lots of secular businesses. A brilliant district judge had to remind him and the whole country that in America, faith can never be shoved into second class. It seems at least a few local leaders still need to learn that lesson. I hope they learn it soon.

The American people's response to the coronavirus was courageous and patriotic.

On the advice of experts, our Nation sacrificed a great deal to protect our medical system. Politicians must not repay that sacrifice with constitutionally dubious double standards.

GREAT AMERICAN OUTDOORS ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, on an entirely different matter, yesterday our colleagues voted overwhelmingly to advance the Great American Outdoors Act. Thanks to the guiding leadership of colleagues like Senators DAINES and GARDNER, we have a rare opportunity to take a huge step forward with some of our Nation's most cherished treasures.

Every year, America's national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, battlefields, and public lands draw hundreds of millions of visits from across the country and around the world—hunters and anglers, backpackers and climbers, bird watchers and road trippers, school groups and scientists. Across hundreds of millions of acres, there is room for recreation and conservation alike.

Where our Nation makes its natural wonders possible, local communities thrive. According to the National Park Service, park visitors contribute to more than \$40 billion in economic output in adjacent towns. From local hotels and restaurants to the outdoor recreation industry itself, they supported nearly 330,000 jobs.

So it would be difficult to overstate the importance of our public lands in the lives of the American people. When the Senate passes legislation to secure permanent funding for keeping them safe and accessible, we will be ushering in a bright future for American recreation and conservation.

At the same time—and just as importantly—we will be addressing the areas where decades of funding levels for routine maintenance have not kept pace, leaving some of our parks and public lands inaccessible and potentially unsafe.

This is where the rubber meets the road. This is where all of our love for the great American outdoors needs to be backed up with some sober accounting.

In Senator GARDNER's backyard, in the U.S. Forest Service's Rocky Mountain region, last year's totals put the costs of backlog maintenance projects at nearly half a billion dollars. From upkeep of roads, bridges, and dams to updates of wastewater and drinking water systems, we are talking about projects with real consequences for recreation, conservation, and local economies.

In Kentucky, we know all too well what happens when urgent maintenance is neglected. At Mammoth Cave National Park, for example, untreated sewer leaks in past years have restricted access to portions of the largest cave system in the world and even threatened some of its native species.

Today, more than \$90 million in maintenance is still outstanding at that particular park. We are still waiting on funding to rehabilitate cave trails that haven't seen major investment since the 1930s.

At the Forest Service's London district office, Kentucky rangers are still waiting for funding for critical security and accessibility updates.

Like any prized asset, public lands need regular maintenance. We shouldn't let key infrastructure languish for decades and then fight uphill to make up for lost time.

This is a familiar problem that is felt in different ways in every corner of our Nation, so the solution will need to be just as sweeping. Fortunately, as last night's lopsided vote demonstrates, our colleagues have assembled a deeply bipartisan set of solutions that our country deserves.

I am proud the work led by our colleagues from Montana and Colorado have received the endorsement of hundreds of national and local advocates for American recreation and conservation. I urge all Senators to join the experts and support the bill.