agreed to, and the motions to recon-
sideer be considered made and laid upon
the table with no intervening action or
debate.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without
objection, it is so ordered.
The resolution (S. Res. 641) was
agreed to.
The preamble was agreed to.
(The resolution, with its preamble, is
printed in today’s RECORD under “Sub-
mitted Resolutions.”)

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZA-
TION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR
2021—Continued

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. I yield the
floor.
I suggest the absence of a quorum.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk
is on the floor.
The senior assistant legislative clerk
proceeded to call the roll.
Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, I ask
unanimous consent that the order for the
quorum call be rescinded and to speak
up in morning business.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. Mr. Cot-
ton. Without objection, it is so or-
dered.

JUSTICE IN POLICING ACT

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, Amer-
cans are demanding an end to the per-
sistent racial injustice and violence
that infects our country.
Protestors have gathered outside of
the White House and the Capitol. New
Méxicanos from our biggest city to our
smallest communities are marching for
meaningful change.
I have joined these protests in Eman-
cipation Hall, in the streets of Wash-
ington, DC, and now I am joining them
from the U.S. Senate floor.
The systemic racism being called out
is real, and it is all around us all of the
time. Within law enforcement, we have
seen it in the horrific videos docu-
menting the racist violence that took
the lives of Black men and women at
the hands of police officers and extra-
judicial killers.
As a father raising two sons, my
heart aches for the parents whose sons’
and daughters’ names we now chant
loudly in the streets.
It is unacceptable for any American
to live in fear of violent encounters
when they enter public spaces or retail
stores or just go out for a walk. The
very fact that painful experiences with
law enforcement are ubiquitous among
so many in our Nation should be evi-
dence enough that our current model of
policing is not working. That is why I
am proud to support my colleagues
Senator Booker and Senator Harris to
cosponsor the Justice in Policing Act.
This sweeping legislation reforms the
policing system as Americans across the
country demand an end to police vio-
ence that is disproportionately tar-
getting communities of color. It would
address qualified immunity standards in
Federal law which currently stand
in the way of police officers being held
accountable in court when they violate
constitutional rights.
It would improve transparency in po-
lice departments by creating a national
police misconduct registry, requiring
accurate data reporting on misconduct
and use-of-force incidents and ensuring
problematic officers cannot avoid ac-
countability by simply changing de-
partments.
It would also institute a real na-
tional ban on choke holds and other
deadly, restrictive airway holds. We have
seen this use of lethal force kill
George Floyd and Eric Garner before him
and his rise. In Las Cruces, NM, when a
police officer killed Antonio Valenzuela
with a vascu-
lar neck restraint. While I hope that
justice will be served for Mr. Floyd’s
and Mr. Valenzuela’s families, I know
that these men should never have died
in the first place. This lethal and un-
necessary type of force should not be
allowed anywhere in America.
The Justice in Policing Act would
put an end to the injudicious use of no-
knock warrants and the murder of Bene-
rone Taylor in Louisville, KY.
In order to prevent future extrajudicial killings like the murder
of Ahmaud Arbery earlier this year by
vigilantes in Georgi,
a, the Justice in Policing Act finally
designate lynching as a Federal crime.
The legislation would also make
broad improvements in training for po-
lice officers. That includes implicit
bias training to confront the prejudice
that contributes to profiling and
confrontational treatment of people
color.
We must also make deescalation and
in crisis intervention techniques standard
operating procedures in encounters and
make the use of lethal force the abso-
late last resort.
In my State, we have seen far too
many incidents in which police have
killed people of color with lethal tac-
tics or responded to New Mexicans ex-
periencing mental illness or addiction
with unnecessary force that resulted in
death. Nearly a decade ago, the Depart-
ment of Justice began an investigation
into the Albuquerque Police Depart-
ment after numerous such fatal police
encounters.
In 2014, the Department of Justice re-
leased its report that cited chronic
abuses of civil rights, widespread com-
unity distrust, and a pattern of ex-
cessive force across the department.
For these past 6 years, the Albu-
querque Police Department has been
under a federally enforced consent de-
 cree that has brought much needed
changes in hiring, training, and use-of-
force policies.
This ongoing process of changing just
this one police department’s culture is
far from complete. Court hearings con-
continue, and a federally appointed mon-
itor continues to oversee the yearslong
process of completing all of the re-
forms in the federally mandated, court-
approved settlement agreement.
We have still seen multiple fatal po-
lice shootings each year since reforms
began. That includes one case from just
this March in which the response to a
welfare check on Valente Acosta-
Bustillos, a man with documented be-
havioral health challenges, ended with
officers fatally shooting him after he
wielded a shovel that he had been using
to do yard work.
This is not an isolated incident. The
evidence is everywhere that systemic
reform is needed for law enforcement,
not just in Albuquerque but all across
my State and all across this country.
Since the beginning of 2015, since the
Nación reeled over the death of Mi-
ichael Brown in Ferguson, MO, there
have been more than 5,000—5,000—fatal
police shootings. It pains me to say
that in that time period, New Mexico
has had the highest rate of these shoot-
ings in the entire country on a per cap-
a basis.
While our overall nationwide statis-
tics on deaths in police custody are in-
complete—which is a shame on itself—the data we do have makes it
clear that police in the United States
are killing people at a rate much high-
er than our peer nations.
A review of media-reported, arrest-
related deaths in the Bureau of Justice
Statistics found that more than 1,300
people died in police custody in the 10
months from June 2015 to March 2016.
During that same period, only 13 people
in the United Kingdom died in or after
being in police custody.
While we are a much larger country,
even on a per capita basis, that means
that Americans are being killed at a
rate of approximately six times higher
than in the UK. Moreover, most of
these deaths fall or are deemed “justi-
fied” by law enforcement, but I want to
say in the strongest possible terms: We
can’t keep accepting a system that jus-
tifies this level of deadly violence.
The House of Representatives dem-
onstrated last week that we can take
action to address this system. Answer-
ing the calls of Americans all across
our country, the House voted to pass
the Justice in Policing Act. The Senate
needs to do the same because no one
should be above the law—no one,
including those in law enforcement.
While I believe these last weeks and
months of Americans calling for jus-
tice have changed many hearts and
minds, I am not naive enough to be-
lieve the current administration is ei-
ther willing or capable of bringing the
level of change that Americans are de-
manding.
Unfortunately, in the last 3 1⁄2 years,
President Trump and his Justice De-
partment have either turned a blind
eye, excused, or even openly encour-
aged a more violent police culture.
Starting with Attorney General Jeff
Sessions and certainly continuing
under Attorney General Bill Barr
today, this administration has spent
much more time and Department of
Justice resources aiding the Presi-
dent’s own political battles and imple-
menting even more penalties on
Americans than on holding police de-
partments accountable for guaran-
teeing equal justice under the law.
None of this excuses us in the U.S. Senate from our own responsibility to lead. We have a moral obligation, as Senators, to grapple with how we can bring about necessary Federal changes with better Federal policies. That should include passing the accountability measures, the meaningful improvements to police training, and the bans on excessive lethal force tactics that are in the Justice in Policing Act.

We also need to encourage the changes that are necessarily not going to come at the local government level. Advocates are calling on local governments to reassess their budgets and how much they have prioritized policing and prisons over education and housing. They are also calling on their local leaders to reimagine a world where armed police officers are not the responders dispatched to all crisis situations.

Last week, the mayor of Albuquerque, Tim Keller, announced a proposal to create an entirely new public safety department that would dispatch social workers, housing and homelessness specialists, and violence prevention program experts instead of police officers to homelessness, so-called down-and-out calls, and behavioral health crises.

This is the scale of systemic change that we need to be thinking about and devoting real resources toward implementing in all of our communities. We all need to carefully assess the effectiveness of continuing a status quo in law enforcement that is clearly not keeping all of us safe.

It will not be easy to dismantle the “us versus them” warrior mentality that is so pervasive in far too many of our law enforcement agencies. If you treat the communities that you police like they are war zones, you create a relationship that dehumanizes the very people you are charged to protect, and you fuel more of the very violence and crime that you are supposed to prevent.

Our streets in American communities should never be treated like battlefields. Our local law enforcement officers should not be armed with military-grade equipment or AR-15s or MRAP armored vehicles. They should not be meeting peaceful protesters or demonstrators with teargas, flash grenades, or rubber bullets. Police officers should not be treating any of us—whatever our race and regardless of the reason we are encountering them—as if we are enemy combatants.

This militarized version of policing is simply not the way to keep the peace or create a sense of public safety in our communities. It has created a distrust in law enforcement and perpetuated trauma and inequities in communities across our country.

I believe that we must transform this dangerous warrior mentality into a guardian and neighborhood support mentality that looks to serve all members of our communities. We should remember that police officers are supposed to be officers of the peace.

Now, I want to be careful to emphasize the responsibility for changing this mentality must not fall entirely on the shoulders of our law enforcement officers because we also recognize that our law enforcement officers, too, are being impacted and harmed by this warrior mentality. We, as the United States, as a society, have asked them to treat the symptoms and respond to the deficiencies that all of us have allowed to persist in education, in healthcare, in addiction treatment, and in housing.

On a daily basis, law enforcement officers address the most acute impacts of our not solving those other issues. I would argue that this is because the same wrongheaded “us versus them” warrior mentality that I have been describing has long resided within this very institution and has been baked into our country as a whole.

It is the same warrior mentality that has fueled the Federal Government’s ineffective and racist War on Drugs and War on Crime over the course of the last 50 years. Intentionally or not, these policies helped build what advocates label the “school-to-prison pipeline” and the “New Jim Crow.” “New Jim Crow” may sound harsh, but in my estimation, it is an astonishingly accurate way to describe the unequal society we have created across our entire country.

More than half a century since the marchers in the civil rights movement called for the civil rights of all Americans, where we were all judged by the content of our character rather than the color of our skin, we find ourselves facing the same challenges as 50 years ago, with implicit bias and structural inequities ravaging our communities of color. That is what you get after combining militarized policing with overly harsh sentencing laws, mass incarceration, private prisons, continued institutional racial discrimination, and a welfare-to-work, public education, affordable housing, food assistance, addiction treatment, and healthcare resources.

That is the system we are talking about when we talk about systemic racism. It will take more than nice words and kind wishes in a fleeting period of weeks to dismantle that system that has been built up in the 400 years since the first slaves were brought to our shores and in the last 50 years of rapidly growing mass incarceration. The sooner we recognize this, the sooner we can try to envision and implement effective, comprehensive reforms on the scale necessary to create institutions that look out for all of us.

Over the last months, as we have all confronted the health and economic crises brought on by the COVID–19 pandemic, I have often heard that we need to get back to normal. But that version of normal was not working for all of us.

Rather than hoping to get back to that unequal and unjust normal of before, I would offer this challenge to all of us. We have an opportunity—an opportunity to rebuild our country in the months and years ahead. Let’s rebuild our country to create an America that includes all of us. Let’s rebuild our country in a way that respects the human dignity of Black lives and provides safety and opportunity to all of us. Let’s rebuild America to become a place where we see each other as fellow human beings, equally deserving of life and liberty.

There is still so much more hard work ahead of us. Passing the Justice in Policing Act is just the meaningful step on a long path forward.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, over the past few months, we have all watched the power that the digital community has to make someone’s passing thought go viral and the power that the digital mob has to make controversial voices completely disappear.

Well, who is the “digital mob” exactly, because right now we are hearing a lot about mob rule. Sometimes it is hard to tell who the mob actually is. Is it the millions of users who swarm social media platforms at the very first hint of a controversy, or is it the professional activists who provoke many of these attacks? They seem to know just when to pitch a thought, a word, or an idea. Could it be the platforms themselves that cave to the pressure and police speech when they don’t agree with that speech?

So let’s drill down on this just a little bit. Today I want to focus on the Googles and the Facebooks of the world because, when it comes down to it, they are the ones that are in the driver’s seat. They are the ones that end up calling the shots.

For years, tech companies have waged a very public war against platform users who speak out against the popular narrative, and the executives charged with defending these calls routinely struggle to explain the arbitrary nature of their content-moderation policies.

Every time moderators remove a post for what is called shocking content or cause a moral panic by placing a warning label on satire, Big Tech asks us to just, oh, write it off: It was a mistake. We really didn’t mean to do it. Move on.

But we haven’t moved on because the platforms themselves have provided plenty of evidence to confirm that Big Tech’s employees bring their bias to the workplace. Bear in mind, all of these employees who are developing the search models—the algorithms that are prioritizing your search, that are mining your data, that are policing

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your speech—are bringing their bias and their prejudice to the workplace. These fears were confirmed back in 2017 when the New York Times reported that a Twitter employee intentionally—intentionally—deleted President Trump’s tweets. "I had an ax to grind," the employee said. "I believe this is just your imagination when, actually, it is not.

I don’t think anyone anticipated that digital platforms would become powerful enough to act as judge and jury over their users. Big Tech has become a parasite pieces on social media. They are referred to as "digital mobs." But reform can happen without overextending the heavy hand of Federal regulation over the entire tech industry. As someone who knows what it feels like to be censored, I get it. I also know that more need to be done to address these reforms and why Congress needs to act now. This year. But I also know that the more you rely on threats to motivate good corporate behavior, the more likely you will be to find reasons not to follow through on them.

We must find stronger ways to rein in tech firms seeking to become the new speech police. We know for a fact that Big Tech’s biases are the problem. But when did more government become the solution? We already tried that approach. We called it the fairness doctrine. Guess what. It did not work. Instead of encouraging free and fair discourse, powerful parties use those rigid standards as leverage to control speech.

And, I will tell you, I can think of few things more dangerous than allowing lawmakers and bureaucrats to weaponize the full force of the Federal Government against the private exchange of information. What we do know is this. Big Tech’s era of self-regulation is over. It no longer works. Big Tech is not a group of infant companies. They are referred to as Big Tech because they have grown up. This self-regulation is over. It is time for Congress to take an action. But punitive, one-size-fits-all standards will put these tech companies in a strait-jacket. It would hamper innovation, and, eventually, it would collapse the industry.

Instead, we should set up and give Big Tech guidance that will encourage growth and will encourage innovation, while also making it abundantly clear that Congress will not allow Big Tech’s political bias to determine what information Americans are allowed to access online. We will not allow Big Tech and their political bias to determine how information is prioritized through your search engine. We are not going to allow Big Tech and their political bias to data-mine every email, every text, and every search, and then use that to access your information online.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the previously referenced articles from the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows: [Nov. 2, 2017]

ROGUE TWITTER EMPLOYEE BRIEFLY SHUTS DOWN TRUMP’S ACCOUNT

(By Maggie Astor)

This is the way the world ends: not with a bang but a deleted Twitter account.

At least, so it appeared for 11 minutes Thursday evening, when visitors to President Trump’s personal account, @realDonaldTrump, were informed that there was no such thing.

The error message on some devices was even more dire: "@realDonaldTrump does not exist."

The answer revealed three hours later, was something straight out of "Office Space." After saying in an initial statement that the account had been "inadvertently de-activated due to human error by a Twitter employee," Twitter announced that a rogue customer support worker had done it on his or her last day at the company. Many of Mr. Trump’s supporters were incensed, with some saying the incident showed a disregard for free speech. His opponents, on the other hand, were gleeful. "America: Hire this person," former Representative John Dingell of Michigan tweeted.

Even before Twitter confirmed that the de-activation had been deliberate, some were speculating about it.

In the tech world, the statement raised more questions than it answered. The Twitter employee has never said how many employees have access to Mr. Trump’s account, or described the safeguards it has in place for its highest-profile users. And the incident is already under the microscope in Washington, where Congress is investigating how technology giants might have shaped the outcome of the 2020 presidential election.

Mr. Trump was locked out for just 11 minutes, and then, just as suddenly, he was back. Those watching found themselves unsatisfied—though some could not quite shake a sense of dread.

The president himself got back to business as if nothing had happened, tweeting at 8:05 p.m. "Great Tax Cut!" The lobbyists are storming Capital Hill, but the Republicans will hold strong and do what is
right for America,’’ he told the New York Times. "In the nation, the people of Twitter could only respond to questions about how it addressed the problem in the presentation, which other employees said weren’t unique to Germany or the Group product. In a presentation at an international conference in February, Mr. Zuckerberg said the company had ‘‘learned a lot’’ from its post-Google era.

‘‘We’ve learned a lot since 2016 and are not the same company today,’’ he said in a Facebook post on January 20.

In a letter to the editors of The New York Times, Mr. Zuckerberg said: ‘‘We’ve built a robust integrity team, strengthened our policies and practices to limit harmful content, and used research to understand our platform’s impact on society so we can make it better.’’

Facebook in February announced $2 million in funding for independent research proposals on polarization.

The Common Ground team sought to tackle the polarization problem directly, said people familiar with the team. Data scientists involved with the effort found some interest groups—often hobby-based groups with no explicit ideological alignment—brought people from different backgrounds together constructively. Other groups appeared to incite impulsive to fight, spread falsehoods or demonize a population of outsiders.

In keeping with Facebook’s commitment to neutrality, the teams decided Facebook shouldn’t police people’s opinions, stop conflict on the platform, or prevent people from forming communities. The platform was designed to be a guardrail, rather than a wall. Facebook’s decision not to fact-check political advertising ahead of the 2020 election.

INFOTRAXY TEAMS

Facebook launched its research on divisive content and behavior at a moment when it was grappling with its mission to ‘‘connect the world’’ was good for society.

Fixing the polarization problem would be difficult, requiring Facebook to rethink some of its core products. Most notably, the project forced Facebook to consider how it prioritized ‘‘user engagement’’—a metric involving time spent, likes, shares and comments. For years the dominant goal had been to build a platform that for years had been the lodestar of the system.

Championed by Chris Cox, Facebook’s chief product officer and a top deputy to Mr. Zuckerberg, the work was carried out by Cambridge Analytica, the political-analytics startup, improperly obtaining Facebook data about many millions of people. The shift, has gained momentum since, he said: ‘‘The internal pendulum swung really hard to ‘the media hates us no matter what we do, so let’s just button up the hatches.’’

In a sign of how far the company has moved, Mr. Zuckerberg in January said he would stand up ‘‘against those who say that new types of online communications are making us divide up’’—People who have heard him speak privately said he argues social media bears little responsibility for polarization.

He argues the platform is in fact a guardian of free speech, even when the content is objectionable. He believed any regulatory framework that one’s opponents was the problem, according to a slide from the team.

‘‘We’re explicitly built to produce products that attempt to change people’s beliefs,’’ one 2018 document states. ‘‘We’re focused on projects that increase empathy, understanding, and humanization of the other side.’’

HOT-BUTTON ISSUES

One proposal sought to salvage communications in groups derailed by hot-button issues, according to the New York Times and internal documents. If two members of a Facebook group devoted to parenting found about vaccinations, the moderators could establish a temporary subgroup to host the argument or limit the frequency of posting on the topic to avoid a public flame war.

Another idea, documents show, was to tweaks recommendation algorithms to suggest a wider range of Facebook groups than people would ordinarily encounter.

By building these features, combating polarization might come at a cost of lower engagement, the Common Ground team warned in a mid-2016 document, describing some of its proposals as an ‘‘aggressive’’ and reining Facebook to ‘‘take a moral stance.’’

Taking action would require Facebook to form partnerships with academics and nonprofits to give credibility to changes affecting public conversation, the document says. This was becoming difficult as the company struggled through controversies after the 2016 presidential election.

‘‘People don’t trust us,’’ said a presentation created in the summer of 2018.

The engineers and data scientists on Facebook’s Integrity Teams—chief among them, scientists who worked on newsfeed, the division of products that greet users when they visit Facebook—arrived at the polarization problem indirectly, according to people familiar with the teams. Asked to build tools to help build the newsfeed for a hyperpartisan user.

A second finding in the U.S. saw a larger infrastructure of accounts and publishers on the platform that could be manipulated by outside observers were documenting the same phenomenon. The gap meant even seemingly
apolitical actions such as reducing the spread of clickbait headlines—along the lines of “You Won’t Believe What Happened Next”—affected conservative speech more than left-wing speech, in aggregate.

That was a tough sell to Mr. Kaplan, said people who heard him discuss Common Ground and Integrity proposals. A former deputy chief of staff to George W. Bush, Mr. Kaplan became more involved in content-ranking decisions after 2016 allegations Facebook had suppressed trending news stories from conservative outlets. An internal review didn’t substantiate the claims of bias, Facebook’s then-general counsel Colin Stretch told Congress, but the damage to Facebook’s reputation among conservatives had been done.

Every significant new integrity-ranking initiative had to seek the approval of not just top executives but also representatives of the public policy, legal, marketing and public-relations departments.

Lindsey Shepard, a former Facebook product-marketing director who helped set up the Eat Your Veggies process, said it arose from what she believed were reasonable concerns that overzealous engineers might let their bias color the platform.

“Engineers that were used to having autonomy maybe over-rotated a bit” after the 2016 elections, Facebook’s chief ethics officer, Jonathan Zittrain, said in a recent interview. Mr. Kaplan didn’t remember raising the Girl Scout example but was concerned about the effect on publishers who happened to have enthusiastic groups of fans.

The debate got kicked up to Mr. Zuckerberg, who heard out both sides in a short meeting, said people briefed on it. His response: Do it, but cut the weighting by 80%. Mr. Zuckerberg also signaled he was losing interest in the effort to recalibrate the platform in the name of social good, they said, asking the team not bring something like that again.

Mr. Urbe left Facebook and the tech industry within a year. He declined to discuss his work at Facebook in detail but confirmed his advocacy for the Sparing Sharing proposal. He said he left Facebook because of his frustration with company executives and their narrow focus on how integrity changes would affect American politics. While proposals like his did disproportionately affect conservatives in the U.S., he said, in other countries the opposite was true.

Other projects met Sparing Sharing’s fate: weakened, not killed. Partial victories included disassociating Facebook’s trending priorities garnering engagement from a broad user base, not just partisans, and penalties for publishers that repeatedly shared false news or directed users to content that violates the rules.

The tug of war was resolved in part by the growth of the Cambridge Analytics scandal. In September 2018 reorganization of Facebook’s newsfeed team, managers told employees the company’s priorities were shifting “away from societal good to individual value,” said people present for the discussion. The engineering view or post hostile content about groups they didn’t like, Facebook wouldn’t suppress it if the content didn’t specifically violate the company’s rules.

Mr. Cox left the company several months later after disagreements regarding Facebook’s pivot toward private encrypted messaging. He hadn’t won most fights he had engaged in on integrity ranking and Common Ground product changes, people involved in the effort said, and his departure left the remaining executive team with little traction on such projects without a high-level advocate.

The Common Ground team disbanded. The Integrity Team went through many senior staffers left the company or headed to Facebook’s Instagram platform.

Mr. Zuckerberg announced in 2019 that Facebook would take down content violating specific standards but where possible take a hands-off approach to policing material not clearly violating its standards.

“One can’t impose tolerance top-down,” he said in an October speech at Georgetown University. “It has to come from people opening up, sharing experiences, and developing a shared reality that we all feel we’re a part of. That’s how we make progress together.”

END CHILD EXPLOITATION ACT

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I want to take a moment to thank Senator Lindsey Graham for adding the bipartisan and critically important END Exploitation Act to the EARN It Act, which is set for markup on Thursday.

This bill, which I introduced with Senator Gary Peters, would lengthen evidence preservation time in online child exploitation cases and assist law enforcement in prosecuting child predators. Once passed, the law will double the length of time we require tech firms like Facebook and Snapchat to provide reports and evidence online of child exploitation.

In 2018, tech companies reported over 45 million—45 million—photos and videos of child sexual abuse. Unfortunately, that was double the number of reports in 2017. This legislation will give the police more time to investigate these horrific crimes. It will put child predators in jail where they belong.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill 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 (Mrs. Blackburn). Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 3865

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, today is July 1. For millions of Americans, the rent is due. Utility bills don’t stop, either. But too many New Yorkers and too many African-American families will be unable to make the payments amid the pandemic that has already hurt my city and its people.

The first of the month should not be the end of the financial line for working families, and this Congress is here. We must continue to put real pressure on Leader McConnell to pass the COVID 4 legislation that would include critical rent relief to families who desperately need the help.

Our working families—many of color and other minority groups—are in desperate need of this basic assistance so they can continue working, feeding their families, making ends meet. That is our push today.

Enact the Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act—which has a $100 billion promise to renters across the country—and the promise is real help during the real and unprecedented crisis.

Let me give you some background. The Heros Act would authorize $100 billion for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program led by Sherrrod Brown, the ranking member of the Banking and Housing Committee, who has bravely gone to the people and told them they know the crisis and now acting on it. What it does is it helps families and individuals pay their rent and utility bills and remain in their homes during and after the COVID-19 crisis.

The bill was already included in the House-passed and bipartisan Heroes Act, but, unfortunately, once again—as he does with so many other important issues—Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has refused to bring it to the floor, so Senator Brown has come to ask the unanimous sexualized
bans may still face eviction. Let me tell you, once someone is evicted and homeless, they regress. The kids can’t go to school. Healthcare becomes even more remote. Getting to a job through public transportation is so difficult.

This actually is a stitch in time that saves nine. We are in the middle of a crisis, about this. We believe we are not about to do something getting coronavirus? These are human beings. We in this body are Senators. I have a prepared speech I want to make, and I heard Senator Schumer talk about this. These are human beings, We in this body are Senators. We go back and forth to our States. We have the privilege of working pretty safe. We are paid. We aren’t exposed to the virus all that much, mostly because we are pretty careful because we can be, and we have jobs where we can be.

Think about this. You work in a grocery store, and you are exposed to the coronavirus. A grocery store worker told me one day: They tell me I am essential, but I feel expendable because I am not very safe in this job, and they don’t pay me much.

What if she gets laid off—that wouldn’t happen so much in a grocery store because they are hiring—but in another job, they get laid off. They have to worry about potential eviction. Their unemployment will run out at the end of July. We have done nothing to help them.

What happens with all these people who get evicted? They end up on the streets or they go to homeless shelters that are too crowded. They go to live on their car’s couch in the basement. What are the chances of them getting coronavirus? These are human beings in New York and Ohio and Idaho and Tennessee and all over. I can’t believe we are not about to do something about this.

I thank the leader for his involvement on this issue that is so important. We are in the middle of a crisis, unlike anything any of us have ever lived through. That goes without saying. Every single day we hear about hundreds and hundreds more Americans dying.

Back in March, South Korea had 90 cases. The capital of South Korea is 800 miles from Wuhan where this virus started. They have had fewer than 300 people die. We have had 120,000. They don’t have better doctors. They don’t have better public health. They don’t have better medical science. The leaders here are better than we do, obviously. Their unemployment rate is under 4 percent and fewer than 300 people have died. The people who have died are our sisters, our brothers, our parents, our friends, and neighbors.

The President of the United States and the Republican leader down the hall—who occasionally goes in and out of his office—have stopped pretending to care. They rarely talk about the president’s rich friends who are dying; it is our grandparents. They are rarely extended any sympathy to our brothers and our sisters and our parents and our friends and our neighbors who have been sick and who have died. It is not the President’s rich friends who are dying; it is our grandparents. They are rarely extended any sympathy to the people in nursing homes. They are disproportionately the Black and Brown workers who caught the virus on the job.

The Trump administration and Senator McConnell, essentially, have just given up. We can’t. We have to do our jobs. We need to show leadership where the President has failed and where the majority leader—the most powerful person in this body, the top elected official in the Senate, says: “I see no urgency.” He sees no urgency because he is not out talking to people who are about to be foreclosed on or evicted from their home. Imagine being evicted in the middle of a pandemic. Imagine the fear and anxiety a family have when they are in that position. We need to fight the health crisis and economic crisis. We can’t do one without the other. Millions of Americans are in danger of being evicted and having their homes foreclosed on. The last thing we need to do is turn them out on the streets.

We have a housing crisis. Many know this. Senator Menendez has joined us, who is one of the best advocates for these issues of anybody in the Senate. We know there has been a housing crisis before the coronavirus set.

We know that one-fourth of renters in this country, before the coronavirus, paid more than half of their income in housing. One thing happens in their life, just one thing. Their car breaks down. Their child gets sick. They get in a car accident, and they are out of work for a week. They get evicted. They don’t have any kind of margin there.

We know that professions we are recognizing as essential don’t pay enough to afford housing. We are seeing millions of people have these emergencies.

The ones they had before, many people have now. Millions have them all at once. They face impossible choices between rent and groceries, or prescriptions, or draining their savings, or going to a payday lender, and you never go to a payday lender once. You keep going back. If the interest you pay is more than you originally borrowed. In essence, they have no choice at all. It is not a choice between prescriptions and groceries and draining their savings. It is no choice at all. Far too often, it ends up being eviction.

In the CARES Act, we passed emergency expansion of unemployment insurance. I appreciate my friend Senator Crapo, chairman of this committee, who supported that and so much of what is in this package. We provided funding for the most immediate needs of housing and organizations that put a temporary moratorium on evictions and foreclosures for all renters and not nearly all homeowners. It is an important step but not enough.

We face two huge cliffs. This is July 1. On July 31, the $600 a month that has kept people in their homes and kept their their backs of their kids—that $600 a month ends come July 31. At the end, in many cases, the eviction moratorium ends.

The President and Leader McConnell don’t seem to notice. They don’t seem to care. For all those renters who have been protected, back rent will suddenly be due. You may have gotten a moratorium on your rent for 3 months, but now you will owe for 4 months. The same goes for millions who aren’t protected under the CARES Act but got relief from a temporary State or local moratorium or because their eviction courts were closed in many States.

With tens of millions of people filing for unemployment, the President is still refusing to lead and do something about this virus to get it under control. We know people still need help. They still need help paying the rent. They still need help making mortgage payments. They still need help protecting themselves from evictions and foreclosures. Forty percent of Black and Latinx renters report they are unlikely able to make their next payment—40 percent. It is not because they are not working hard. They got laid off and are in low-wage jobs.

That is why Senator Menendez and I and Senator Schumer and others co-sponsored and introduced—39 of my fellow colleagues introduced the Emergency Rental Assistance Stabilization Act. It would provide $100 billion for emergency rental assistance, including help with missed rent and utility bills. It already passed the House twice.

That is included in the Heroes Act that they passed a month ago, and the In Senate this is sitting on the majority leader’s desk because he doesn’t seem to notice. For millions of families, the bills keep
coming and the clock keeps ticking and the stress keeps mounting.

Now a second round of layoffs are starting because this President refuses to lead and get this virus under control.

Two weeks ago, they reopened eviction courts in Columbus. They opened the Convention Center to process evictions. Think of the heartache in that building. People go to court and find out they are evicted. The judge brings down the order, and their lives turn upside down. Reflect on that. Tens of millions of people lose their jobs. We are not using arenas to play basketball or to play indoor soccer. We are not doing that now. We are using arenas as eviction courts.

Before this pandemic, President Trump and his wealthy Cabinet Members didn’t realize or didn’t care that behind the rosy stock market data this economy was already broken for millions of workers—especially for Black and Brown workers for whom the Republicans never worked to begin. Now the Trump administration—sort of like what happened with the Russians paying to kill American troops—the administration either doesn’t know it or doesn’t care that the bottom is falling out for these families.

Without emergency rental assistance, these families find themselves on the street with their lives turned upside down in the middle of a pandemic. People just seemed to ignore the lack of action and lack of accountability. They are tired of being betrayed by a leader who is supposed to look out for them. They are tired of feeling like no one is on their side. We are the greatest country on the Earth, and we should act like it.

American people should not always have to fend for themselves because we have an indifferent majority leader and a President who doesn’t know or doesn’t care in the middle of this once-in-a-generation crisis.

It is time to step up. It is time to lead. It is time to think about what it would be like to face an eviction, knowing your two small children and you don’t know where you are going to live. It is probably going to be in a homeless shelter or in a cousin’s basement. You know your chances of getting infected with the coronavirus go up. Just think about those people when we make these decisions.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 3655, the Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act of 2020. I ask that the bill be considered read three times and passed and that 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 Idaho, Mr. BROWN. Madam President, reserving the right to object.

To date, Congress has appropriated nearly $3 trillion to protect, strengthen, and support Americans in all walks of life, to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and to stabilize the infrastructure and our economic system.

Senator BROWN and I worked on a big part of that package together on a team which was put together by Senator MCCONNELL to try to make sure we addressed, in a bipartisan fashion, the way to respond to this pandemic.

The CARES Act has been central to the effort to take measures to help families directly, to provide aid to small businesses, to assist those in the medical field and on the frontlines of our response effort, and to stabilize our markets.

Soon after, Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act—or CARES Act—codifying and extending these protections and providing financial relief to renters—yes, to renters.

Title IV of the CARES Act contains three housing provisions. Section 4022 imposes a 60-day eviction and foreclosure moratorium for single-family borrowers with federally backed mortgage loans. It allows struggling homeowners 120-days forbearance as long as they do not evict the tenant or charge late fees during the pandemic.

Section 4023 extends similar relief to multifamily borrowers who are current on their mortgage payments. They can request up to 90-days forbearance as long as they do not evict the tenant or charge late fees during the pandemic.

Section 4024 imposes a 120-day moratorium on evictions, fees, and penalties. That moratorium will not expire until August 31.

As with much of the CARES Act, the provisions dealing with stabilizing our economy and helping to support and sustain workers, small business owners, homeowners, and home renters are all playing out right now as we speak.

Yet the real objection here is that Senator MCCONNELL and the Republicans have said we want to work on looking at the next package of support, but we want to see how this one is playing out and identify those places where we need to target the relief most.

The objection is that there is a desire, once again, to go rapidly into passing the House bill and not having regular order follow in the Senate as we work to approach this issue as the existing CARES Act plays out.

All of our housing agencies have extended this eviction and foreclosure moratorium which is supposed to help address the issues relating to tenants. HUD has expanded issuer assistance to include Pass-Through Assistance Program support, which allows servicers to apply for assistance in meeting principal and interest payments, and the FHA has made it clear that no mortgage servicer will be responsible for advancing more than 4 months of missed principal and interest payments on a loan. All of these things have been done to stabilize the housing markets and to assist low-income home ownership and home construction and assistance.

While I am open to looking at the question of whether additional assistance is needed for renters, homeowners, and others in our society, I am not willing to simply bypass the process in the Senate—ignore the considerations that our leadership has called for so as we look to see how our current package is playing out.

This was the biggest rescue package in the history of Congress, and we instability—into a variety of mechanisms in the legislation to ensure that the dollars and programs associated with it reached their intended marks. Many of the provisions in the CARES Act and those appropriated dollars are still making their way to these individuals and families and businesses and markets across the country.

So we must work together to address these critical issues rather than simply to jam one party’s or one side of this Congress’s approach in the solution without going through regular order.

I would say the arguments that are being made that we or any of us are somehow turning a blind eye to the problems that exist could not be further from the truth. As I said earlier, the reality is that we passed the largest relief program in the history of this country. We are working to provide liquidity, as well as actual dollar relief, in the amount of trillions of dollars, and those programs are still playing out.

We need to work together rather than by simple unanimous consent request after unanimous consent request, try to jam down one side’s approach without looking to find the cooperative solutions that I know we can.

I said, I am open to working on these very issues, but the way to do it is not to come to the floor with a unanimous consent request—and take it or leave it. We need to let proper, regular working order operate in the Senate, and we have to do it.

For that reason, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Ohio, Mr. BROWN. Madam President, before turning to Senators MENENDEZ, CORTEZ MASTO, WYDEN, KLOBUCHAR, REED, SCHATZ, and VAN HOLLEN, who all want to speak, I appreciate the comments from my friend—and he really is my friend—from Idaho. We work well together.

We want to do regular order. This last bill was passed in March. Then there was April, May, June. Now we are in July. It is not a question of regular order. It is something we would love to sit down with Senate MCCONNELL and start negotiating as to what is next. We have wanted that really from about April 1. No April Fools’ joke there; we really wanted to do that. Instead, Senator MCCONNELL just seemed to ignore it.

I mean, go back to the human side. What happens when somebody is unemployed? We will be leaving now for 2
weeks. That is why we are doing these unanimous consent requests now. It is because we want to see action. We have asked and asked and begged and begged and pleaded and pleaded. So what happens? We will go back home for 2 more weeks. Right now, if you can’t find a job, if you are unemployed and are receiving that $600 a week, you start paying attention online or you read the papers or however you get your information, and you find out that this is going to expire at the end of July. You don’t know what you are going to do, but you know that you haven’t paid rent in 3 months because you have had an eviction moratorium.

Senator CRAPAO talked about the moratorium. Only half of the people who pay mortgages are subject to that moratorium and are protected, and only a third of people who rent are. So, for most people, that is simply not the case.

Now that the eviction courts are open and the evictions are starting, what happens to those people? Are we just going to say: Well, let’s see it play out. We know what will happen. If you don’t have rental assistance, if you lose your unemployment and don’t get that $1,200 a month, which is basically one month’s rent for most people, we know what is going to happen to you. Your life is going to turn upside down. That is why we need to move. That is why we need to pass this.

I am disappointed that Senator MCCONNELL has shown no interest in doing anything on this other than just sitting tight and hoping that the money he raises from special interests—from tobacco, the gun lobby, banks, and insurance companies—can help his candidates get reelected and he can be majority leader again.

I yield the floor to Senator MENENDEZ.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, let me thank my colleague, the ranking Democrat—the senior Democrat—on the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, for his passion and his commitment. He has really elevated housing within the jurisdiction of the committee, which is something I am passionate about. Very often, everyone refers to the committee as the Banking Committee, but housing is a critical component of what it does. He has elevated it, and I really appreciate his passion on behalf of the millions who own homes and want to keep them to try to be able to do so.

I would just say to my distinguished chairman of the committee that I do have the highest respect for him.

Look, with the CARES package, we lumped in trillions of dollars, but overwhelmingly that money went to businesses. Of course, I support that, but it went to huge businesses. It went to ultimately help small, mid-sized, and even large businesses. It went to sustain sectors of our economy like the airline industry and others.

What we are talking about goes to the very essence of what it is to have a home. “Home” is one of the most important American concepts. It is where we are taken when we are born. It is where we are nurtured while we are young. It is where we are schooled. It is where good times and bad times take place. Ultimately, it is where we build a life around our families if we are fortunate to have a home. Then, in a pandemic, it is that it is also a place in which to shelter.

I come to the floor today to warn of an impending storm that is brewing, and it is headed our way.

When the funds for the PPP—for the business program—ran out, we didn’t have regular order to see if the PPP had been working well. No. There was a rush to put more billions in it. It was only when we said “Wait a minute, this isn’t working so well for small and mid-sized businesses” that we made some reforms. So there was a rush then. There was no regular order.

We have a storm that is brewing and is headed our way. It will bring with it enormous financial pain. It will threaten housing and eviction moratoriums, saying that the pandemic that much harder, and it will set back our Nation’s economic recovery. If the Senate fails to respond to this looming crisis, Americans will needlessly suffer; families will be displaced; small businesses will be wiped out; and the scars will run so deep that it could take decades to heal the wounds.

As the COVID–19 pandemic took hold, the one saving grace most of us had—the one place we could take refuge to protect ourselves and our families—was our home. Our leading medical experts all urged us to stay home. If you are sick, stay home. If you have an underlying condition or are immunocompromised, stay home. If you are elderly or otherwise at risk, stay home. If you can, work from home. If you are a student, go online and learn from home. If we have learned anything from this pandemic, it is that staying home can help to contain the virus, flatten the curve, and save lives.

What if you don’t have a home? As we speak, millions of our fellow Americans are asking themselves that very same question. At a time when COVID-19 cases are spiking across the country, the provisions that we passed in the CARES Act to help renters and homeowners stay in their homes are about to run out. If we do nothing, we could face a foreclosure and eviction moratorium worse than that which we encountered during the great recession.

There is a storm on the horizon. Americans shouldn’t have to fear being thrown out on the street if they miss their mortgage or rent payments through, really, no fault of their own. They shouldn’t have to fear losing their greatest personal assets or that one safe place in the middle of a pandemic, further exposing themselves and others to the virus.

The Senate can stop this if it wants to. We can make sure that every American has a safe and healthy place to call home. That is why I join my Democratic colleagues on the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs in introducing two bills last month that will provide assistance to homeowners and renters.

The Housing Assistance Fund, led by Senator RICHARD J. DURBAN, provides $75 billion in targeted assistance to keep people in their homes while they search for new employment or a way to get back to work. This money can go toward mortgage payments or utilities or as other support to prevent eviction, delinquency, or foreclosure.

The Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act, led by Senator BROWN, would provide $100 billion in rental assistance to help families pay rent and property owners maintain safe and healthy housing. It will help the economic recovery by stabilizing the rental market overall.

We also have to empower Americans to make informed financial decisions—to help them navigate the maze of lenders, landlords, government agencies—to find a sustainable path to stay in their homes.

We all know there is a housing affordability crisis in this country that jeopardizes the aspirations of millions of Americans who hope to join the middle class, and just as they have borne the brunt of the COVID–19 pandemic, low-income and minority Americans will disproportionately suffer during economic downturns.

The provisions that the chairman talked about in the law that we passed in order to help are going to be expired. To the extent that you know about it and might involve yourself against an eviction or a mortgage foreclosure, but if you don’t know about it and either the financial institution or your landlord looks the other way and doesn’t follow the law, well then, you won’t get the protection.

That is why I and 19 of my Democratic colleagues introduced a bill on Monday to provide $700 million in housing counseling assistance. Research shows that homeowners who receive housing counseling have better outcomes than those who don’t, and that evidence is overwhelming. Their risk of default goes down, and they are more likely to see their credit scores rise and their debt levels fall.

In rough times like we are in right now, these borrowers are more likely to get sustainable mortgage modifications and are less likely to end up in default. The benefits of housing counseling flow to the community at large because when a family is able to buy a home, they can save, build equity, and ultimately achieve the American dream, our towns and cities thrive. And during a pandemic, having
Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, I join my colleagues this afternoon in appreciation of Senator Brown, who has been relentless—absolutely relentless—in prosecuting this cause of trying to get a fair shake for millions of Americans who are walking on an economic tightrope. Every single month, they balance the food bill against the rent bill against the energy bill, and Senator Brown—whether it is supercharged unemployment benefits, whether it is housing, whether it is taking on the big pharmaceutical companies—is there again and again and again to stand up for people who don’t have power until they have clout, and I want to thank him especially for giving us this opportunity to focus on the avalanche of evictions that I believe will be headed in our direction in weeks if the Senate doesn’t act.

Yesterday, I walked about soon possibly seeing as many as 100,000 new coronavirus cases a day. You simply cannot have a healthy economy in a country suffering from mass illness and death.

There are already tens of millions of Americans out of work as a result of a pandemic that is only continuing to spread, and it has hit the whole affordability of rent for millions of Americans like a powerful storm. According to the Census Bureau, 40 percent of Black and Latino renters are worried they will not be able to make the rent this summer due to the pandemic. That in and of itself is an outrage and a scandal.

My question for our Republican colleagues today involves this frightening day at the beginning of the month—the frightening day when families sit around their kitchen tables and, you can see the anguish in their faces when you talk to them because, around that kitchen table, they are saying to themselves: What am I going to spend our scarce dollars on this month? Is it going to be rent? Is it going to be groceries? What about that big pile of medical bills that is off in the corner that we have to pay?

It is July 1, and the rent is due. Our question for our Republican colleagues is, What is your plan?

Senator Brown has been leading us every day—day in, day out—with a set of sensible policies that respond to the reality of what those who are walking on a kitchen table. We fought for the moratorium on evictions that was included in the CARES Act, but it goes poof in a few weeks.

Already this week my Republican colleagues have blocked funding for State and local governments that could have been used to help people who are walking that economic tightrope.

This morning, Leader Schumer and I laid out a plan that I think is a path to a better future in America and, specifically, an extension of supercharged unemployment benefits, which ties the benefit to economic conditions on the ground. It will be a financial lifeline for millions and millions of people. Republican colleagues have been opposed to that. Those benefits are going to expire in a matter of weeks, and as I said to colleagues: Better know what you are going to be looking at when you go home in August if there hasn’t been action or legislation to make sure that there are supercharged unemployment benefits so that people can pay the rent and buy groceries.

If they are home all August long, in the heat with families, and they are going to have nowhere to turn in terms of paying for a roof over their heads and groceries, this is going to be a long, long, hot summer that will never be forgotten.

So let’s be clear what is at stake. Long before the pandemic hit, housing cost too much. Homelessness was way too common, and, in my view, the rate of homelessness among children is a true national scandal.

In the wealthiest Nation on Earth, no child should be without a home. But even before the COVID crisis, 1.5 million children were experiencing homelessness—1.5 million youngsters living outside, living in cars, sleeping on floors, sleeping on the ground.

Colleagues, in my home State, they have said that school buses have had to go to the parks. They have had to go to bring the kids back up school. They are living outside with their families.

It rains once in a while in Oregon. It is cold in Oregon. And to think that kids in the richest country on Earth are spending the night in the parks and the school buses have to come and get them while we have huge tax cuts for those who are powerful and have lobbyists shows that things are really out of whack.

What I describe as it relates to those kids living in the parks—those kinds of conditions exist for youngsters all over America, and that was before the joblessness crisis hit and threw so many more working families into economic hardship.

If the Senate doesn’t step up to help families stay in their homes, it is going to get much, much worse because there are hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of kids facing this recipe for disaster. They are out of school. They are isolated, and they are more exposed to neglect and abuse. I am so pleased that my friend from Nevada has been talking about those families and talking about those kids.

They are hungry. Their families are facing the threat of eviction. If the Senate just sits back and allows these children to fall into homelessness, they may never have a chance to get ahead.

So what it comes down to is that the Senate has an obligation to help, and Senator Brown is on target in saying that this is the time to pass his Emergency Rental Assistance Act. I am with him. I think we have a lot of colleagues here who have the same sentiment, too, who want to speak up for the radical idea—what a radical proposition—that in the richest country on Earth, the vulnerable ought to have a roof over their head.

Senator Brown’s proposal is a vital step forward. I think we all agree that much more needs to be done. I am very interested in the proposal I call the DASH Act, the Decent, Affordable and Safe Housing for All Act. I hope we will be able to get serious about that in 2021.

The step to take today is to pass Senator Brown’s bill, and I look forward to
Eviction isn’t just a matter of spending a few days scrambling to find a new place. The financial consequences can follow families for years, and as for the effects on children’s physical and mental health, well, there is no way to undo that. Believe me, I know. The foreclosure crisis hit Nevada in 2008, and I saw up close the pain that caused throughout my State when people were evicted from their homes. Lenders took the homes of more than 219,000 Nevada families and the pain forced them to the street for a lot of time. That is why it is so vital that we pass legislation now to help Nevadans and people all across the country pay their rent and utility bills when they cannot safely go to work.

I support Senator Brown’s Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act, as well as other bills introduced by my colleagues to keep homeowners in their homes. These bills provide essential stability to the rental and mortgage market. We can’t expect landlords to keep shouldering the burden of missed payments. Landlords have bills to pay, as well—mortgages, taxes, insurance, and staff. Without assistance from us, many of them may go bankrupt or can be forced to sell their properties.

Experts estimate that Nevada is going to need nearly $1 billion in rental assistance to keep families housed this year. Landlords can’t lift the load and neither can State budgets that are already stretched too thin.

So let’s focus here on the essentials, the basic need for things like shelter. Let’s keep people safe and off the streets. Let’s pass Senator Brown’s rental assistance bill, Senator Reed’s housing assistance fund bill to help homeowners avoid foreclosure, and Senator Menendez’s housing counseling bill, and the others we need to prevent an epidemic of homelessness.

Across the country, almost half of workers earning under $40,000 a year have lost income. Some people just don’t have the luxury to fully cover the rent or mortgage, particularly when they are asking them to shelter in place.

The thing is, in Nevada, we were already in the midst of a housing crisis even before this pandemic hit us. Almost half of Nevadans haven’t yet received their unemployment benefits or their pandemic unemployment benefits.

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The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Madam President, I rise to support efforts by my Democratic colleagues to pass much needed and delayed economic measures by unanimous consent.

It is painfully obvious that the economy is in bad shape. Families and small businesses continue to struggle and there is a real need for further Federal assistance. In order to get our economy back on track, this body must take action in crafting another comprehensive, bipartisan COVID relief package, and it must include additional help for families and communities including eviction and foreclosure prevention assistance, as well as additional help for State and local governments.

The Senate unanimously extended the PPP application window. This was a tiny but needed step in recognizing the depth of the economic crisis Americans are facing. Now the question before us is, will Republican leaders allow this body to work its will and provide needed, targeted, and effective rescue assistance, or will it continue to delay and deny assistance which will only prolong the pandemic, deepen the financial hole, and make the remedy costlier and recovery steeper?

Strong State and local governments are critical to our economy. Indeed, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, State and local governments provide about 20 million jobs and contributed 3.4 trillion dollars to the national GDP in 2019. They did so by not only serving as customers and clients for our local and national businesses, but also by providing the essential services, such as public infrastructure, education, and health care. These necessary functions that provide the business certainty that make our country attractive to businesses and investors throughout the world. We should do everything possible to maintain our people’s current advantage relative to other countries.

But today, as a result of the tremendous economic shock created by the coronavirus and the lack of a coherent public health strategy from the Trump administration, estimated State revenue shortfalls will total about $615 billion over the next 3 fiscal years, not including the added costs of fighting COVID-19. This is just for the States—$615 billion.

This is why I initially fought for $750 billion in the Coronavirus Relief Fund when negotiating the CARES Act and introduced S. 3671, the State & Local Emergency Stabilization Fund Act, which would provide an additional $600 billion to State and local governments to supplement the $150 billion in coronavirus relief funds I secured in the CARES Act.

Madam President, would it surprise you to learn that the Trump Treasury Department has issued a new+

In this pandemic, housing is healthcare. I know that a lot of Americans have had their lives upended by this coronavirus pandemic, but I would like you to imagine for a moment how much more chaotic your life would feel if you woke up tomorrow you were going to be evicted. Imagine trying to make sure you are washing your hands while you are living in your car.

We are in the middle of a public health crisis where we need people to be socially distancing, and that means they simply must have a safe, stable place to be at the end of the day.

We realized this months ago in my State and that is why Governor Sisolak put a hold on evicting residents. In my State when people were evicted during that period of time, my State and that is why Governor Sisolak put a hold on evicting residents. In my State when people were evicted during that period of time, landlords took the homes of more than 219,000 Nevada families and the pain forced them to the street for a lot of time.

So let’s focus here on the essentials, the basic need for things like shelter. Let’s keep people safe and off the streets. Let’s pass Senator Brown’s rental assistance bill, Senator Reed’s housing assistance fund bill to help homeowners avoid foreclosure, and Senator Menendez’s housing counseling bill, and the others we need to prevent an epidemic of homelessness.

Across the country, almost half of workers earning under $40,000 a year have lost income. Some people just don’t have the luxury to fully cover the rent or mortgage, particularly when they are asking them to shelter in place.
that, ironically, if your concern is big State government, then the last thing you need to do is force States to replace one-time lost revenue with permanent tax increases.”

As the primary author of the Coronavirus Relief Fund, I can tell you that it is fully within the Treasury Secretary’s authority and the intent of the CARES Act for these funds to be used to replace lost or delayed tax revenues and maintain public services. To prevent the flexible use of these relief funds that is neither required nor intended by law.

Unfortunately, this completely unnecessary choice has already created avoidable economic harm.

Since February, State and local governments have cut a total of 1.5 million jobs, an 8-percent drop that is twice the decline seen during and after the 2007–2009 recession. In addition, the Center for Economic and Policy Research reports that “job losses forced on State and local governments by pandemic-related shortfalls will disproportionately impact the African American workforce . . . 14 percent of state and local employees were African American compared to 11.7 percent of private-sector employees, a margin of 20 percent.”

As the Wall Street Journal reported in a May 24, 2020, article titled “State and Local Budget Woes Create Drag for Healthy Economy,”

“Based on evidence from the last recession, Mr. Chodorow-Reich, a Harvard economics professor, estimates that every dollar in cuts costs the economy $1.50 to $2. He also said every dollar in new spending adds $1.50 to $2 to the economy.

Of all the regulations that this administration seeks to cut, it should start with this one if it really wants a healthy economy. With just one stroke of the Secretary’s pen, our economy can receive a direct multibillion dollar jolt today.

But to be clear, this administrative fix is by no means sufficient because of the massive revenue shortfalls our State and local governments are facing. We need to provide additional and flexible fiscal relief to our State and local governments as part of its next fiscal package, and it is my hope that S. 3671, the State & Local Stabilization Fund Act, is included.

As I indicated earlier in my remarks, keeping families in their homes also must be included in the next package.

According to Nicholas Chiumenti, with the New England Public Policy Center in the research department at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston:

If current economic activity does not improve substantially, without an extension of the CARES Act, unemployment insurance or additional federal money or other fiscal relief, up to 13 percent of homeowners and 33 percent of renters in Rhode Island are at the risk of being unable to pay their mortgage or rent payments.

This represents over 80,000 Rhode Island households.

Nationally, according to census survey data, 23 percent of all adults reported being housing insecure in mid-June, meaning that they had missed last month’s rent or mortgage payment or had slight or no confidence that their household could pay next month’s rent or mortgage on time.

We know that behind each one of these numbers is a family that can be homeless at the worst possible time in the middle of a public health emergency.

For some, given their current health situations and need for additional human toll that we surely should strive to avoid. We implore our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to work with us to keep our constituents in their homes so that they too can make it to the other side of this public health emergency.

In that spirit, I draw your attention to S. 3620, the Housing Assistance Fund. This legislation expands the existing “Hardest Hit Fund” model and provides it with additional resources for each State to keep families in their homes, the utilities on, the internet connected, and the property taxes paid. As a result, landlords who are also struggling to pay their own bills would receive some support.

Madam President, it is not every day that the Independent Community Banks of America and the Credit Union National Association support the same legislation with consumer rights and affordable housing organizations, such as the National Housing Conference, the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the Center for Responsible Lending, and the National Consumer Law Center.

As we work toward this next fiscal relief package, I hope you and our colleagues will consider joining with us in enacting S. 3620, the Housing Assistance Fund.

But we can’t stop there. We must also immediately, among other needs, increase SNAP benefits to help the almost 150,000 Rhode Islanders who are food insecure during this crisis; boost public health efforts to keep the virus at bay; and contact tracing to support our healthcare providers, to developing effective vaccine deployment systems; help childcare centers, public schools, and college campuses to safely reopen and support libraries in keeping our communities connected; provide relief for the hardest hit small and mid-sized businesses, many of which will continue to be shut down for the foreseeable future; and safeguard our election infrastructure as Russia and other foreign actors seek again to use voter suppression, hacking, and disinformation in the 2020 elections.

What exactly are we waiting for? Is it not enough that, according to a June 29 CNBC article, “the employment-population ratio—the number of employed people as a percentage of the U.S. adult population—plunged to 52.8 percent in May, meaning 47.2 percent of Americans are jobless, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics?”

Is it not enough that 46 percent of Business Roundtable CEOs expect employment at their companies to decrease in the next 6 months?

We don’t need to inflict any further unnecessary economic pain and suffering. I would also urge my colleagues to consider the costs of inaction.

Indeed, during an April 29, 2020, press conference, Federal Reserve Chairman Powell stated:

I have long-time been an advocate for the need for the United States to return to a sustainable path from a fiscal perspective at the Federal level. We have not been on such a path for some time, which . . . just means that the debt is growing faster than the economy.

This is not the time to act on those concerns. This is the time to use the great fiscal power of the United States to do what we can to support the economy and try to get through this with as little damage to the longer-run productive capacity of the economy as possible.

This week we are also considering the National Defense Authorization Act, and everyone over the last 59 years, Democrats and Republicans have come together to strengthen our national security and to help all Americans. We have proven that we are more than capable of working together productivity on the most complex and controversial issues in service of our constituents, and we would like to continue that not just in the context of national defense but in the context of economic prosperity and security.

One final point. We also need to extend unemployment insurance because we know it will run out, and everyone has told us that unemployment rates will not drop dramatically. They will stay persistently high. People will need this assistance going forward.

We must do more, and I hope we can do much more going forward.

I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I thank Senator INHOFE so much for his allowing me to say a few words. I know it is late time. And I thank my friend Jack Reed.

Today is July 1, which means that rent and mortgage payments are due, and as I speak today, so many families across this country are being forced to make the difficult decision about how they will make this month’s payment to stay in their homes.

Even before the pandemic began, almost one-fourth of all renters, or 11 million households, were forced to pay more than half of their income for housing. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, more than half a million people experienced homelessness on a
given night before the pandemic, and that has just gotten worse.

That is why I am a strong supporter of Senator Brown’s Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act, which will provide $100 billion in emergency funding in Black and White ownership rates before the pandemic due to discriminatory practices, and it has only made it worse.

St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter, a leader and a good friend, has repeatedly reminded us that this means investing in programs like section 8 housing, which still remains unavailable to so many families.

You need to address this shortage of affordable housing. We need to take action now. I thank my colleagues. We have an opportunity. The Fourth of July is at the beginning of July, but by the end of July, we had better have gotten something done, and that means help our State and local governments; that means funding for elections; and that means making sure we are responding to the crisis in housing.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, today is the 1st of the month, and that means the rent is due, but for the 9 million renters who have lost their jobs, they may not be able to pay.

Now, in March, we made sure that the CARES Act included cash assistance, unemployment benefits, and suspensions on evictions and mortgage forbearance to help the people who have been hurt the most by this pandemic. Lots of States and counties have set up their own programs, either subsidies or prohibitions on evictions themselves, but we are now 3 months later, and deployment, I am also on the stand to expire at the end of this month and moratoriums that allowed families to stay in their homes are ending. Eviction courts are reopening. Think about that. Eviction courts are reopening.

So what we are facing is a ticking timebomb. We are facing the fact that it is true that people got forbearance on their rent or forbearance on their mortgage, but I remember very well in March and April, as I explained to the people of Hawaii, you are getting forbearance not forgiveness, which means you just simply don’t have to pay your mortgage or your rent this month. You do have to eventually pay your mortgage or your rent.

So what is going to happen is, for the most economically challenged among us in the United States, they are going to face a huge backpayment at the beginning of August or the beginning of September, and they are going to lose the place they live in.

Now, I am very, very hopeful that cooler heads will prevail and that we will intervene in July and incorporate the legislation Senator Brown is leading because the rent is going to be due, and we are going to—just as we faced this pandemic square in the eyes, we are going to be facing a massive eviction crisis, we have to take action.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, while we continue negotiating an agreement on an amendment that we need to move forward and start voting on some of the amendments we know need votes.

Therefore, in just a minute, I will call up the Paul amendment regarding the withdrawing of troops from Afghanistan. While I disagree with the substance of the amendment, I think the Senate should vote on it. So, at 5:30 today, I will move to table the amendment. We have talked to Senator Paul’s office about this.

AMENDMENT NO. 201

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I call up the Paul amendment No. 201 to the text proposed to be stricken.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senate from Oklahoma [Mr. INHOFE], for Mr. PAUL, proposes an amendment numbered 201.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To withdraw all United States Armed Forces from Afghanistan)

At the end of subtitle B of title XII, add the following:

SEC. 1216. WITHDRAWAL OF UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES FROM AFGHANISTAN.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The Joint Resolution to authorize the use of United States Armed Forces in Afghanistan of September 11, 2001 

(2) Since 2001, more than 3,002,635 men and women of the United States Armed Forces have deployed in support of the Global War on Terrorism and more than 140,000 are deployed in support of this war.

(3) The American people are in the midst of a global war and must be afforded the right to make the decisions regarding the war.

(4) On May 2, 2011, Osama Bin Laden, the leader of Al-Qaeda, was killed by United States Armed Forces in Pakistan.

(5) United States Armed Forces have successfully routed Al-Qaeda from the battlefront in Afghanistan, thus fulfilling the original intent of Public Law 107–40 and the justification for the invasion of Afghanistan. However, United States combat presence in Afghanistan has waned in recent years.

(6) An October 2018 poll found that 57 percent of Americans, including 69 percent of United States veterans, believe that all United States troops should be removed from Afghanistan.

(7) In June 2018, the Department of Defense reported, “The al-Qa‘ida threat to the United States and its allies and partners has decreased, and the few remaining al-Qa‘ida core members are focused on their own survival.”

(b) PLAN REQUIRED.—Not later than 45 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense, in cooperation with the heads of all other relevant Federal agencies involved in the conflict in Afghanistan shall:

A. formulate a plan for the orderly drawdown and withdrawal of all soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines from Afghanistan who were involved in operations intended to provide security to the people of Afghanistan, including policing action, or military actions against paramilitary organizations inside Afghanistan, excluding members of the military assigned to support United States embassies or consulates, or intelligence operations authorized by Congress;

B. appear before the relevant congressional committees to explain the proposed implementation of the plan formulated under subparagraph (A);

C. appear before the relevant congressional committees to explain the proposed implementation of the framework formulated under subparagraph (A); and

D. formulate a framework for political reconciliation and popular democratic elections independent of United States involvement in Afghanistan, which may be used by the Government of Afghanistan to ensure that any political party that meets the requirements under Article 35 of the Constitution of Afghanistan is permitted to participate in general elections; and

E. removal and bonuses.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act—

(1) all United States Armed Forces in Afghanistan as of such date of enactment shall be withdrawn and removed from Afghanistan; and

(2) the Secretary of Defense shall provide all members of the United States Armed Forces who were deployed in support of the Global War on Terrorism with adequate compensation to recognize that these Americans have served in the Global War on Terrorism exclusively on a volunteer basis and to demonstrate the heartfelt gratitude of the American people.

(d) REPEAL OF AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF MILITARY FORCE.—The Authorization for Use of Military Force (Public Law 107–40) is repealed effective on the earlier of—

(1) the date that is 365 days after the date of the enactment of this Act; or

(2) the date on which the Secretary of Defense certifies that all United States Armed Forces involved in operations or military actions in Afghanistan (as described in subsection (b)(1)(A)) have departed from Afghanistan.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, as I said earlier, I will move to table the Paul amendment at 5:30 today, and Senators should expect a rollcall vote at that time.

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. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.
Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, Congress has taken action in response to the coronavirus pandemic and its significant effects on workers, families, and the economy. It is because the State, Federal, and local governments shut down the U.S. economy for the first time in the 240-year history of our country.

We enacted four laws in March and April which CBO says has increased the deficit by at least $2.4 trillion, but that doesn’t measure the entirety of the relief. If you add in support from programs initiated by the Fed and the Treasury, you would add trillions more of relief.

One of the recent pieces of legislation, the CARES Act, devoted $150 billion of direct Federal relief to governments of the States, localities, territories, the District of Columbia, and Tribes. That is around 16 percent of the total fiscal year 2020 State general fund expenditures enacted prior to the public emergency.

In addition to the $150 billion, CBO has identified hundreds of billions more of emergency relief programs that are directed to State and local governments. From the $340 billion of emergency funding in the CARES Act alone, the Senate appropriators have told me that more than 80 percent, or roughly $275 billion, goes to States and localities.

So, you can see, the CARES Act alone provided $150 billion of direct aid to State and local governments, and the emergency funding added $275 billion. That means that $425 billion in the CARES Act is directed to governments of the States, localities, territories, Tribes, and the District of Columbia. That happens to be 47 percent of the total State general revenue expenditures in the last budget year.

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under. They do provide constraints. I also believe that proponents of massive amounts of additional Federal aid to States and localities overstate the severity of those constraints. I think State budgets are more flexible and fungible, for example, than some would have us believe.

We have seen that flexibility recently in legislators’ consideration of altering police funding or using taxpayers’ funds to erect barriers in occupied zones of lawlessness as just one example of it.

There are also many issues about incentives associated with massive new amounts of direct Federal funding of State and local governments. Sending massive amounts of additional Federal dollars to States that were responsible in good times and built up rainy day funds means that they are treated the same as States that didn’t build much, if any, in rainy day funds, as I said, Illinois and New Jersey, for examples. Those States that acted irresponsibly then get rewarded.

Since funds in State and local governments are fungible, sending massive amounts of additional Federal dollars to States and localities means that hard-earned tax dollars coming from Iowa, as an example, can end up helping financially unsustainable pension promises of fiscally irresponsible States, and it means that Federal tax revenues get channeled to States run by people who will not even enforce existing Federal laws and who use taxpayer resources on lawless occupied zones or sanctuary cities to provide benefits to undocumented residents.

There are many of my constituents in Iowa who do not support those uses of Federal funds.

So, as I wind down here, I am highly skeptical of sending massive amounts of additional Federal dollars to States and localities, since future needs are so highly uncertain and there is still unspent money in the pipelines.

I am, however, sympathetic to providing additional flexibility for funds we have already provided in the CARES Act so that State and local communities can make broader uses of those funds. And I believe that if the pandemic and the economy worsens, under those circumstances, future needs can be addressed when needed.

I understand that there are a range of views on additional funds to States and localities. At this point, I believe it may be useful to entertain more flexibility in what has already been approved, and there may be a need to make sure that States get shares of money they have received to counties and cities, some of whom may not have even expected additional fund for limited additional funding to States and localities in the near term, although, as I said, I am a bit skeptical.

But spending half a trillion dollars to $1 trillion of additional funds for uncertain future needs right now to cover unknown State and local needs as far out as 2 years down the road just isn’t the responsible or prudent action to take.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore of the Senate from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be allowed to complete my remarks.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore of the Senate. Mr. Paul is allowed to complete his remarks without objection, so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 2011

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, Senator Udall and I have presented a bipartisan amendment that will finally end America’s longest war. Our amendment will finally and completely end the war in Afghanistan.

Over 4,000 Americans have died in Afghanistan, and over 20,000 have been wounded. It is time to bring our soldiers home.

I supported going into Afghanistan originally. Had I been in Congress at that time, I would have voted in favor of it. But the fact is that we flew on 9/11 have all been killed or captured. Most of the people fighting us today are their successors or children or the children of their children. In fact, we now have soldiers who were born after 9/11 serving in Afghanistan.

The hard reality is the sign of ending. The war shows no sign of ending. It is not sustainable to keep fighting in Afghanistan generation after generation.

We have been fighting in Afghanistan for so long that our youngest soldiers fighting there weren’t even born at the time.

We have spent about $1 trillion to establish an Afghan Government—a government that is ripe with corruption and dysfunction. We spent more to rebuild Afghanistan than the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe after World War II. We have built infrastructure in Afghanistan and then watched it deteriorate and watched the Afghans be unable to even maintain the infrastructure they built and then ask us for more money to maintain the structure. Meanwhile, our roads and our bridges crumble here at home as we rebuild the infrastructure in Afghanistan.

One example is, several years ago, we reportedly hired a local security consultant to help secure the roads at a cost of $1 million per year. But according to the report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, American officials came to suspect that the money was being funneled to insurgents to stage attacks on our infrastructure to justify the security contract. So our money was going to a guy who was paying insurgents to pretend to attack him so he could provide security for their infrastructure. It is crazy.

We spent $43 million on a natural gas station. Guess how many vehicles in Afghanistan run on natural gas. Zero. We can’t ever find the gas station. My staff went there to see if the money had been spent, and they couldn’t go there because it was too unsafe. Now the report is that the gas station has been abandoned—$43 million.

We spent nearly $80 million on a luxury hotel. Why is the American taxpayer building luxury hotels in Kabu? Guess what. A contractor ran off with the money. It is a skeleton. The doors are now gone into the structure and shoot down at our Embassy. What kind of foolhardy nature of government are we that we continue to stay there?

These are just a few of the many examples that have had us spend more than we spent in Europe on the Marshall Plan.

We continue to pour good money after bad into Afghanistan, hoping that the outcome will somehow change, hoping that maybe the first 20 years will produce better results than the last 20 years did.

This NDAA, this defense authorization that we are debating here in the Senate, even has the sense of the Senate in it opposing a precipitous withdrawal from Afghanistan. We have been there for 20 years. How can we characterize withdrawal after 20 years, after we defeated the enemy, as precipitous? It is crazy. The American people say “Come home,” and this is your chance.

Many people have said that we should end the war. Today, you get to vote. Are you for staying in Afghanistan for another generation? Are you for continuing a war that has lost its purpose? Today, we get to vote or down: Are you for the war or against the war? Does the war still have a mission?

The American people know better. They are ready to declare victory and come home. It is why President Trump’s message resonated with so many. He said “It is time to come home,” and the people agreed.

Not only is it time to end the war and focus on our needs at home, but it is time to reward those who fought the battle. We are spending $50 billion a year over there.

From the savings in the first year, in our amendment, Senator Udall and I will provide a $2,500 bonus for anyone who has been deployed in the long War on Terror. That is a pretty good bonus. Our soldiers deserve it, and they also deserve to come home because there is no military mission left.

Instead of spending another $50 billion in Afghanistan next year, let’s give some of that money to our soldiers who fought the war, and let’s begin saving some money from the massive deficit we face here at home.

This is the Senate’s chance to show that it is time to declare victory. It is time to come home.

I urge support for my amendment, and I also remind Senators this is your chance to vote to end a war.
I would ask unanimous consent, as Senator Paul did, to complete my remarks and unanimous consent to complete my remarks right here on the floor before we have the vote.

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

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I am a strong supporter of the AFGHAN Service Act, which I introduced with Senator Paul.

It has been nearly 19 years since the United States entered this war in Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks, and we have had several Presidents—one a Democrat, one a Republican—say they want to end this war. They announced: We don’t want endless wars. We want to end this war.

Our current President has said he wanted to do this for the last 3½ years. He hasn’t gotten it done. President Obama wanted to end it. This is the way—the responsible way—to end this war. We give a year timeframe. We make absolutely clear we are not against our American soldiers. We give them a bonus, and we say: You have done a good job.

So don’t listen to the distortions that will be talked about what this amendment is about. We have soldiers who are heading to fight in this war who weren’t even born when it began, and most of the soldiers I have talked to who have come home from Afghanistan believe we should be out of there by now. This is one of the most persuasive things I have seen. Several of those soldiers have been elected to the U.S. Congress and have spoken up very, very strongly about continuing our war in Afghanistan.

It has been nearly 10 years since I first came to the Senate floor in 2010 to call for the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Afghanistan. We have accomplished our goal of routing al-Qaida and killing Osama Bin Laden. Those were two of the big things that were talked about originally when President Bush went in and basically said: We have these short-term objectives, we are going to get them achieved, and then we are going to be out. We have achieved those objectives. There is no reason for delay and to continue this endless war. The longer we stay with an ill-defined mission, the greater the risk of a wider war in the region. I listen to people who have come home. They don’t want a wider war. They want us to bring our troops home.

The recent news that has gripped the Capitol only underscores that our men and women in Afghanistan remain in harm’s way. They are one of the most brough home and focus on our core national security.

After 19 years of war, peace in Afghanistan will need to come from negotiation, and the United States can and should continue to play a role in those diplomatic efforts.

This legislation ends the U.S. involvement in the war in a responsible way, with a yearlong timeframe. It also sunsets the 9/11 AUMF, which has been stretched beyond recognition to justify wars we never considered.

Even to this day, some in this administration envision using the 2001 AUMF to justify a war with Iran rather than actually standing on the floor and introducing a proposal, as required by the Constitution to get in a war, as is Congress’s authority.

On the AUMF, this isn’t something sudden either: It would give Congress a year to consider a new AUMF, if needed. It is long past time for Congress to support the restoration of congressional war-making authority and vote against tabling this amendment. This amendment deserves an up-or-down vote, not a tabling vote, so vote no to tabling this amendment. I say this in great respect to Senator Inhofe, and I know that Senator Inhofe has been very, very strong in this regard.

At this point, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Motion to Table

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, there is another side to this story and I think, when you hear those promoting this particular amendment, it is one we all agree—we want an end to the war. We want this to happen. But there are some other reasons that this probably is not the best way to do it.

First of all, the amendment directs a calendar-based withdrawal from Afghanistan rather than a conditions-based. We have talked about this quite often. It is something that you can’t just say “It is going to happen by this date” but, rather, under these certain circumstances.

It undermines peace negotiations and the Trump administration’s Afghan strategy. He has talked about that publicly. We have talked about this quite often. It is something that you can’t just base. We have talked about this quite often. It is something that you can’t just say “It is going to happen by this date” but, rather, under these certain circumstances.

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up call. The virus didn’t start here, but it came here and Americans are now suffering from the effects of an epidemic that shows no signs of stopping.

Even if we bring it under control in the United States, in the absence of U.S. leadership for a truly global response, that means ending the pandemic, we cannot safeguard American lives without one, but we cannot lead or even meaningfully participate in a global response when we don’t have a coherent and effective domestic strategy.

The President’s desperate denial, his refusal to take this pandemic seriously, and his seeming inability to care about the health and well-being of all Americans are as shocking as they are dangerous.

As opposed to a pandemic response strategy, the White House seems to have a dangerous public relations strategy focused on perpetuating a false narrative that insists the pandemic is over, that the United States was responsible for the pandemic, that the WHO is to blame, and that the White House is leading the global response. Meanwhile, the rest of the world is stepping up and stepping past us. For example, when Chinese President Xi Jinping addressed the World Health Assembly in May, he pledged $2 billion over 2 years to combat COVID–19. Secretary Azar used the opportunity to attack the WHO and cast blame on China. The President, the Secretary of State, and the Deputy Administrator of USAID have all used racially stigmatizing language to describe China. The United States was invited to participate, but the White House declined the invitation. Is this what the President means by “America first”?

In May, the administration announced a 30-day plan to review the organization’s handling of the pandemic response. But less than 2 weeks after it announced that sham review, the President said he was going to withdraw from the organization—so much for the need to review.

Next, the administration doubled down on blaming China. The President, the Secretary of State, and the Deputy Administrator of USAID have all used racially stigmatizing language to describe China. The United States was invited to participate, but the White House declined the invitation. Is this what the President means by “America first”? Well, if China did introduce a modest bill in response to the pandemic, its global response plan, as well as a bill that would have us believe the COVID–19 pandemic is over, it completely ignores the US. response to the pandemic. In keeping with the Trump administration’s domestic and international response, the virus can and will return.

Secretary Pompeo is right. The American people are the most generous in the world, but the White House is not leading the global response to one of the greatest threats we face in the 21st century—and this pandemic will, most certainly, not be our last—I have to wonder if, instead of what we are witnessing from the U.S. response, the end of American exceptionalism, brought about by the inattention and ineptitude of the Trump administration, both here and abroad.

But the White House is also not leading the global response to one of the greatest threats we face in the 21st century—and this pandemic will, most certainly, not be our last—I have to wonder if, instead of what we are witnessing from the U.S. response, the end of American exceptionalism, brought about by the inattention and ineptitude of the Trump administration, both here and abroad.

The European Union has also put $10 billion into the emergency fund at the World Bank designed not to fund at the World Bank designed not to work in tandem with the WHO on incentivizing countries to mobilize their own resources for epidemic and pandemic preparedness. CIRRA also puts in place mechanisms to help us prepare for the next pandemic. It requires an annual national intelligence estimate on pandemic threats, and it establishes a White House adviser for global health security to coordinate a whole-of-government approach to global health security emergencies, aimed at improving both domestic and international capacity to prevent, respond, and detect epidemic and pandemic threats.

Since the administration doesn’t seem to have any ideas, Democrats on the Foreign Relations Committee introduced a bill to provide some. S. 3699, the COVID–19 International Response and Recovery Act, or CIRRA, presents a clear strategy to confront the ongoing pandemic—prepare the United States to deal with the next.

It compels the Trump administration to constructively engage with other countries, international organizations, and states to stop the spread of the coronavirus. Specifically, our bill authorizes an additional $9 billion in funding to fight the COVID–19 pandemic through contributions toward vaccine efforts at the Coalition for Preparedness and Innovations; a contribution to the Global Fund for Aids, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, for its COVID–19 response mechanism; additional funding for emergency overseas humanitarian assistance in response to the pandemic, ensuring that these funds are provided both to the U.N. for its global response plan, as well as directly to NGOs working on the frontlines; and a new surge financing authority at the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, or DFC, that will allow the DFC to expedite decisions and make strategic investments quickly to aid in COVID–19 reconstruction efforts. CIRRA also puts in place mechanisms to help us prepare for the next pandemic. It requires an annual national intelligence estimate on pandemic threats, and it establishes a White House adviser for global health security to coordinate a whole-of-government approach to global health security emergencies, aimed at improving both domestic and international capacity to prevent, respond, and detect epidemic and pandemic threats.

It clearly delineates the roles for the State Department, USAID, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in responding to pandemic threats, and it directs the U.S. Executive Director at the World Bank to begin negotiations to establish a trust fund at the World Bank to compete with or supplant the World Health Organization but to work in tandem with the WHO on incentivizing countries to mobilize their own resources for epidemic and pandemic preparedness.

Now, my Republican colleague on the Foreign Relations Committee finally did introduce a modest bill in response to the pandemic. In keeping with the Republican effort to pretend that the pandemic is over, it completely ignores the current crisis.

Instead, it focuses on giving legislative cover to elite proposals from the White House that seem to strip essential pandemic response functions from USAID and put them in the State Department, and sets up a structure at the World Bank that would allow the White House to channel funding meant for the WHO into another multilateral mechanism.

Colleagues, to say that that approach is inadequate to meet the crisis of the century would be so much of an understatement as to almost be a lie in and of itself. The chairman’s legislation
completely ignores the current pandemic while setting us up for failure when we are confronted by the next pandemic. We quite simply must do better.

More than 700 Americans a day are dying from the finger-ling, blame-game, race-baiting statements linked to the origins of the disease, nor a strategy centered on denial will win the battle against COVID-19. It is painfully apparent that Congress needs to lead in this fight, just as it led in domestic relief and recovery efforts. If we fail to develop a proposal that boldly and robustly addresses the current crisis, ensures that we are adequately prepared for the next one, and aids countries around the globe with recovery, we will have failed in the American people and fallen painfully short of the legacy created through initiatives such as the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the Marshall plan, to name a few.

We are in the midst of a global pandemic that led to a report that came out of a potential swine flu. Well, whether it is that or something else, we have the risk of the next pandemic. Our engagement globally is not just about being a good global citizen. It is about security and health at home here.

When we can engage abroad to stop the flow of a virus, then, we ultimately achieve the success on behalf of the American people, and we leave the world in a better position. That is what we are seeking to do, and we will come back to the floor at the appropriate time to seek to move that legislation.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 5084

Madam President, turning to a different topic for the moment, one that my colleague from Louisiana is also here to join me in—and I appreciate his being here—I come to the floor today, in addition to speaking about the COVID-19 international legislation, to seek unanimous consent on H.R. 5084, the Improving Corporate Governance Through Diversity Act of 2019.

This is a bipartisan piece of legislation aimed at increasing transparency in America’s corporate boardrooms and ultimately lead to greater diversity in the upper tiers of America’s companies.

We know that corporate America has a diversity problem. Boards and executive offices across the United States do not look like the customers they serve. Multi-studies, including my own, have demonstrated this hard fact. Since 2010, I have conducted four surveys focused on the Fortune 100 companies looking into this problem. They had very big response rates, for which I am grateful to the companies who participated.

My latest survey revealed that since 2010, women and people of color have made only marginal gains in representation on corporate boards. For example, in 2018, women held only 25 percent of corporate board seats on Fortune 100 companies. Despite making up over half of the entire U.S. population, they held only 25 percent of corporate board seats, and only 5.8 percent of that 25 percent were women of color. While men make up 75 percent of Fortune 100 corporate board seats, only 13.7 percent of those are women of color.

I am grateful to the companies who are looking into this problem. They have made a diversity problem. Boards and executives at the upper tiers of America’s companies.

I am grateful to the companies who are looking into this problem. They have made a diversity problem. Boards and executives at the upper tiers of America’s companies. Since 2010, I have conducted four surveys focused on the Fortune 100 companies, but I think I have made the point. I was originally hopeful that the Securities and Exchange Commission would help address this problem through its 2009 diversity disclosure rule, but the 2009 rule failed to even define diversity and gives companies far too much discretion on what they report. That is why I introduced a bill last year with Representative MEeks to improve the SEC rule.

The bill does three main things. No. 1, it requires public companies to disclose numeric data related to the racial, gender, ethnic makeup and veteran status of corporate boards and senior management—simple disclosure. No. 2, it requires public companies to disclose whether they have policies in place to increase gender, racial, and ethnic diversity in corporate America.

Let me be clear. The bill does not force companies to be more diverse, but it does require them to be more transparent about their numbers and their practices. That is valuable information that the public and potential investors should have when deciding where to put their money.

The House passed this bill on a bipartisan vote in November, and it enjoys bipartisan support in the Senate. It is supported by a fantastic coalition that includes the NAACP, the National Urban League, the Latino Corporate Directors Association, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Corporate diversity is not just morally right; corporate diversity makes financial sense. McKinsey & Company studies have consistently found that greater diversity on executive teams has led to greater profitability. The need for increased corporate diversity is not an act of benevolence; it is a necessity for businesses looking to compete in a diverse 21st-century economy.

Before I proceed to my unanimous consent request, I would like to yield to Senator KENNEDY for some remarks he has on this issue, and then I will proceed to that consent request.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, thank you to my colleague from New Jersey for yielding the floor.

I sit on the Banking Committee with Senator MENENDEZ, and it is my privilege. I have learned a lot from listening to him, along with our chairman, Senator CRAPO.

While convictions are important to us on the Banking Committee, so is data. I believe that as much as we can be, America is and should be a color-blind America.

I also believe in data. I believe in facts. This is a data bill. This is a fact bill. This doesn’t make anybody do anything except be transparent.

This bill applies to public companies. Some may call them Wall Street companies, but they are spread throughout America. I make that point simply to reaffirm that this does not apply to small, publicly held companies we sometimes call Main Street businesses. This bill is endorsed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. This fact and data bill passed overwhelmingly in the House with a bipartisan coalition, and as Senator MENENDEZ eloquently pointed out, it simply requires public—usually large, but not always—public companies to make the data that they report to the SEC. This is not a law that is simply going to require companies to do more, it simply requires public—usually large, but not always—public companies to make the data that they report to the SEC.

The data that these companies are being asked to report is data with respect to veteran status, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, veteran status of corporate boards and senior management, simple disclosure. The data that these companies are being asked to report is data with respect to ethnicity, and data with respect to race to the extent that the board members, nominees, and the executive officers themselves report that data.

That said, I will end on this note, I was very surprised that we didn’t have this data. In fact, when I first read Congressman MEeks’ bill and Senator MENENDEZ’s bill, I thought: This can’t be necessary; we must have this data at the Securities and Exchange Commission. We do not, but we will if this bill becomes law. For that reason, I rise in support of Congressman MEeks’ legislation and Senator MENENDEZ’s legislation, and I support it.

With that, I would yield to Senator MENENDEZ.

Mr. MENENDEZ. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. I thank the Senator from Louisiana for his words and for his support, and I wish we had this already. It is not very difficult—transparency, information for which consumers can make decisions and investors can make decisions, and you would think in the 21st Century, that is not a problem.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be discharged from further consideration and the Senate proceed to H.R. 5084; I further seek unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, the purpose of the Securities and Exchange Commission...
is to protect investors and to maintain orderly and efficient markets. This bill would change that deal. It would change the entire premise of the SEC. It would use the SEC to pressure people to disclose personal information that has nothing to do with the health of the company. Information that many people understandably, justifiably, and with really good reason prefer to keep private. Why? Because it is not the public’s business; it is theirs. This bill forces businesses to disclose the race, gender, ethnicity, and veteran status of not only those already on the senior payroll of their companies but also anyone who is even considered for those positions.

Secondly, the free market already provides a way to achieve these goals. If investors prefer to invest in companies that have certain kinds of people on their boards and certain kinds of people in executive positions, they can avoid those companies. That is all it is. We should not use the heavy hand of government for things that the American people already have the opportunity to do on their own and in many, if not most, cases already are doing on their own.

Finally, the bill co-ops Federal employees at the SEC to create a diversity advisory group of government bureaucrats and academics who would advise Congress on policies to increase ethnic and gender diversity on corporate boards. We already have a diversity advisory group. We already have it. It is the millions of Americans whom we represent. To the bureaucrats at the SEC who would inform Congress of the importance of inclusion and diversity better than the American people is wasteful, and to think that it is appropriate to vest in the SEC an entity designed to protect investors from fraudulent activities of those running these enterprises is just the wrong conception, not only of the SEC but of government in general.

For these reasons, Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. I am not surprised, but I am deeply disappointed that my colleague takes that position. First of all, the SEC has had a diversity rule since 2009. It has a diversity rule, but the diversity rule as they devised it doesn’t do anything about the transparency of those rules. So we are not creating something at the SEC that the SEC itself wasn’t pursuing in the protection of investors.

If I were an investor, I would like to know whether a company is diverse or not. Latinos represent 25 percent of the population, the fastest growing, largest minority in the Nation. I would like to know if the money I am going to put into a company—does it reflect the understanding of that community in any way? African Americans—does it reflect that understanding? Does it reflect the understanding that 50 percent of the population are women? The free market—yes, the free market works on information. You make decisions in the free market based on information, but when the information is hidden from you, when you can’t find it out, in fact, what is the diversity of the corporate board, senior executive management, procurement and other things, then the free market doesn’t work very well, does it?

The heavy hand of government—oh, my God—to disclose, to be transparent—that is the heavy hand of government? When the government doesn’t work to make our systems more transparent, investors and consumers can make decisions, who will do that? The free market? I don’t think so.

The Senator from Utah, I know, has been very much an advocate of transparency in other matters; somehow, in this one, it seems to be a problem. And to protect investors—yes, we ought to protect investors because investors who would be making investments in a company that does not have information on African Americans, devoid of Latinos, devoid of the representation of who America is today may think twice about the large pension funds and other entities. They may say: Wait a minute. Maybe that is not the type of company I want to invest in.

But the investor will not know that unless they have that information. I would think, in the 21st century, when we see the investors that are talking about the economy of what race, on questions of ethnicity and other things, we would want to at least have the data so that we can make intelligent decisions.

By the way, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce—the Chamber of Commerce is normally not on my side. They came and testified specifically in support of this provision. They represent business in America, and they came forth and said: We believe, this is good for business. If it weren’t good for business, they wouldn’t be there. They wouldn’t be advocating for it.

So we will succeed at this. We may not have done it today by this process, but I will welcome because this is because the Nation requires it. It is good accountability. It is good transparency. It is good for the free market to know what the information is. It is to prevent people from doing that at the end of the day, about protecting investors. So I look forward to making that happen at the appropriate time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I have deep affection and adoration for my friend and colleague, the Senator from New Jersey. I do respectfully but strongly disagree with his position on this.

He made the point several times that if he were acting as an investor, he would very much like to know the composition of a corporation board or an executive team within a corporation, which is great. A lot of people feel the same way. That isn’t the question. No one is stopping a corporation from disclosing that information. In fact, a whole lot of corporations do.

Some may not want to do that. Some might want to disclose some of this information but not all of it. Some might not want to be in a position of asking probing questions regarding the gender and ethnicity and race of their employees, understanding that it will then be disclosed to the public under the crushing force of Federal law.

There are legitimate reasons why a company, some of which have to do with that company’s own ability to treat its employees and its board members and its executive team with dignity and respect. In some circumstances, not even the public has the legal right, as an investor, to know what the identity of its shareholders is. Transparency, yes. It is absolutely something that I believe in. Transparency usually refers to what we need when it comes to government action. Transparency is what we would want when we require open public hearings when government does business. Transparency is what we require when we allow government documents to be made public and allow the public to see what the regulatory process is doing.

Transparency doesn’t mean that everything that everyone does in America that has a tie to economic activity is the public’s business. The fact that it is publicly traded doesn’t mean it is owned by the public.

So the statement made by my colleague to the effect that when information is hidden from you, then the free market doesn’t work very well—I don’t understand what we are trying to accomplish. I believe it is hidden in violation of law, that is not the case. If what he is suggesting is that the free market can’t punish those who refuse to disclose information about the boards and reward those who do, that is exactly what the free market does. The free market has every opportunity to work here. It is not as though nobody is providing this information, but it is not their business.

As to the suggestion that because the Chamber of Commerce supports this, therefore it is pro-business, and because it is pro-business, we should all support it, I respectfully but strongly disagree. I know that as a Republican, I am supposed to automatically agree with what the Chamber of Commerce says. Sometimes I do, but, you know, a whole lot of the time, I don’t.

This goes back a long time. It goes back to the time when the U.S. Chamber of Commerce opposed a massive tax reform bill that was proposed by President Calvin Coolidge. I found some relief in the fantastic, eponymous book...
“Coolidge” about President Coolidge and his proposal of that reform—a reform that, by the way, helped build America’s middle class and resulted in explosive economic growth. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce opposed that reform.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce gets a lot of things wrong, and it is wrong here. This isn’t the government’s business. These businesses are not government. They can do what they want, and it is not our place to say otherwise.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I appreciate the intellectual exercise we are going through on the floor. I will just make two final comments because I know that my colleague is anxiously waiting to talk about the need for people to be able to put food on the table.

Look, the Securities and Exchange Commission exists, yes, to protect investors and also the marketplace, but they make all types of demands upon the companies that are publicly traded in terms of disclosure of information, so I don’t know what is so difficult about that.

I will say this: The Nation will have a rude awakening if it thinks it can continue with business as usual—a rude awakening.

Something as simple as simply knowing the information about diversity on corporate boards, which every study shows actively improves the bottom line and which investors should be able to have to make those decisions—and we are not talking about the employees; we are talking about the corporate board members, my God, the people who make billions of dollars of decisions, who ultimately decide whether they go to a community or don’t go to a community to invest in, who ultimately get the dollars from the communities that I like to see represented.

It is not enough to take our money, but it is not good enough to have us have any representation. And evidently this body is not even good enough to have the information so I know who is taking my money without representation. That cannot be. That cannot be the American way.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, as my distinguished member and colleague from New Jersey says, the fact that they make all types of demands on publicly traded companies is not a substitute for an actual logical or legal argument as to why they are entitled to information that is not theirs. Information these companies may or may not choose to collect because that is their business. It is not the government’s business, and it sure as heck isn’t the government.

So the fact that they make all types of demands on publicly traded companies doesn’t prove the point here. We have to remember something, and, yes, we have to remember it right now in this moment—not in spite of this moment but because of it. Government is for. We have seen the catastrophic consequences of people who lose sight of what government is for and what its limitations are.

The fact is that we don’t have access to angels, as James Madison described it in Federalist 51. If men were angels, we wouldn’t have a need for government. If we had access to angels to run our government, we wouldn’t need all these rules. But because we are not angels, we have access to them to run our government. We have to have rules, and there have to be limitations on what is and isn’t the role of government.

Now, look, there are all kinds of businesses that keep track of this information on the corporate board members and those considered for those positions and their executives and those considered for those positions. It is not our role to tell them the information they have to extract from each and every person they interview for those positions and demand that it be publicly disclosed. Why? Well, because, among other things, it is none of their darn business, and in many cases, it is none of our business. That is the business of the individual.

We shouldn’t be punishing companies, businesses, and hard-working Americans. Yes, some of them are rich, and a whole lot of them are not rich. We shouldn’t be punishing them just because they don’t happen to share our view of how they ought to be operating.

I find it curious that he says over and over again that this is how they will be more successful and this is how they will make more money. It is not our place to decide. They are free to operate their business in a foolish way and in a way that might cost them money. It doesn’t make it our place to decide this.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise today to be joined by my colleagues as well. I am very grateful to the Senator from Ohio here.

Thank you so much for being on the floor.

Other colleagues will join to speak this evening on behalf of millions of Americans and cosmetic firms, struggling firms, and millions to make ends meet and feed their families at this incredibly challenging time.

The COVID-19 crisis is taking a profound toll on our economy and the quality of life of millions of families.

As businesses have closed and millions have lost their jobs, the number of people in need of food assistance has soared. Food banks have seen a 70 percent increase in demand—70 percent increase in demand. We have all seen the photos of food trucks stretching on and on for miles, waiting in parking lots with moms and dads, trying to get food for their children.

And even though donations have gone up—we are a generous people in this country—donations have gone up, but the need has far outpaced the funds that are available.

As the pandemic swept across our Nation in five states, millions faced food insecurity—one in five. More than 3 months later, even more Americans in every State are struggling to put food on the table. These are laid-off workers who lost their jobs due to the pandemic and aren’t sure they will be able to feed their families. They need food assistance, and it is for the first time in their life that they need to ask for that help.

These are single moms and dads who are worried about getting their kids fed before they even think about themselves.

These are veterans who are willing to put their lives on the line for the country. Now they are struggling to find work and make rent and just need a little help getting the food they need to survive.

These are senior citizens who are at high risk of COVID-19 and have had to make drastic changes to their day-to-day life just to stay safe.

These are children who relied on school meals for breakfast and lunch, possibly after school as well, who have gotten used to the pain of an empty stomach since their school closed.

To these people, hunger is not a partisan issue. It is not a political issue. For them, it is a daily reality that they face. For many of them, SNAP is the vital lifeline that keeps them fed in times of need, and today that need is even greater. If we are looking at the direction of COVID-19 and what is happening across the country, I am concerned, but I think it is realistic to say that the need is going to go even higher.

In any crisis, it is just common sense to make sure affected families have their basic needs met. When I think of my friend from Ohio, who is our champion on housing—we talked about housing as being a basic need. I don’t know anything more basic than a roof over your head and food on the table. Food and housing are pretty basic. We would all suggest that those are things that you start with and that you want for yourself and your family.

When people’s lives are turned upside down through no fault of their own, Americans come together to provide a temporary safety net to help them get back on their feet. That is what the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is, SNAP. It is not there for when folks don’t need it; it is there for when they do need it.

During every past disaster, we have acted to make sure, as Americans, that people don’t go hungry. On a bipartisan basis, we have increased SNAP benefits when families are in need and in cases of natural and economic disasters, like after the 2008 financial crisis.

I do note that my dear friend, the chairman of the Ag Committee—who I
think is on a different side of what we are going to be asking for—then I and I have come together over and over again on a bipartisan basis and will continue to do that to work together on these issues.

We approved additional help to people in need. That is the first thing we do. Yet we know that increasing SNAP benefits, in addition to helping people in need, should be No. 1. Put people first—that should be No. 1.

Families in the U.S. have been struggling to make ends meet. We need to support them. SNAP supports nearly 41 million people, including 6.4 million children. SNAP provides a vital source of nutrition and stability for families in need. It is the most efficient way to help families and to help the food industry, is to allow people to have money to buy food for themselves and their kids and for their parents. We know that every additional billion dollars in SNAP supports nearly 14,000 jobs.

Usually families spend their benefits immediately, so it is very quick. I mean, you don’t spend a lot of time—if you are not going to go wait a couple of weeks before you use your SNAP benefits; you are going to immediately go to the store. That is an immediate economic impact.

When families buy food at grocery stores and markets, as we said, they are strengthening their local economies and the supply chain as a whole, from the farmers to the truckdrivers, to the stockers, to the cashiers, to the folks who invest in the stock markets.

In fact, farmers understand better than anybody that families are their customers. That is why, when we write a bipartisan farm bill, which I am proud that we have been able to do, we make sure it helps both farmers and families.

Farm bills are about a farmer safety net. Farmers need additional help right now. It is also about a family’s safety net, and families need help right now. Families across the country need help right now, and this time is no different. Nearly 2,500 farm and food advocates agree with that. In a letter to Senate leadership, these groups, including the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, the National Milk Producers Federation, the National Farmers Union—thousands of organizations—have urged us to increase SNAP benefits for families in need right now with what is happening right now in this crisis.

We are asking for something very simple and very reasonable, a 15-percent boost in SNAP benefits. This increase means an additional $25 a month per person. That may not seem like much, unless you don’t have any food, unless you can’t feed your children, unless you are a senior, and you can’t get food.

The fact is, it may mean that a mom can actually give her children some fruits and vegetables so they can stay healthy while they are staying at home through this crisis. It means maybe one less skipped meal at the end of the month. One less skipped meal, that is what we are talking about.

The reason we need to do this is to ensure that families most affected by the pandemic will be able to cover the cost of food while they stay safe, while they look for work, and while they rebuild their lives, which many families are needing to do.

We also need to increase the minimum amount of SNAP from $16 to $30 per day. Again, for all of us, that doesn’t seem like a lot. The reality is, this may be lifesaving—saving this difference, especially for our seniors who live alone.

We must also waive the Trump administration’s harmful regulations that will take food assistance away from hungry Americans when they need it the most. At a time when our neighbors and our economy are struggling, it is unconscionable to move forward with rules that would cut and deny benefits to millions of Americans, and that would end SNAP benefits for millions of families, including the most vulnerable.

The Senate has the power to provide quick help to millions of people in every State across the country right now. Right now. What a great way to spend a Wednesday evening to be able to help millions of families during this crisis.

This is urgently needed. This is urgently needed help for the millions of families who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own in this crisis.

When an unprecedented emergency has put American lives and livelihoods in danger, we have an obligation to act. It is not only our sworn duty; it is the right thing to do. It is just, plainly, the right thing to do.

Boosting SNAP benefits is a tried-and-true, effective way to strengthen the economy and help Americans put food on the table. The U.S. Senate should not look away in the face of so much need.

Therefore, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of my bill to make temporary modifications to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which is at the desk. I further ask that the bill be considered read three times and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of my bill to make temporary modifications to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which is at the desk. I further ask that the bill be considered read three times and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. I rise to respond to this unanimous consent request to call up and pass a bill to make modifications to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as SNAP.
individual who needs food assistance—not just some but that every single one can get the help they need at this time.

What has been done up to this point was a start. It is surely not enough—surely not enough. At the very beginning of this process, it was not clear how we would go or how deep this was going to go.

The U.S. Senate needs to respond to what we are seeing now and how families are being affected across the country.

I am going to now yield to Senator Brown and then Senator Stabenow. I believe I saw her on the floor as well. Yes, Senator Klobuchar and then Senator Wyden as well—three tremendous advocates.

Thank you so much.

Senator Brown. Thank you, Senator Stabenow, and thank you for introducing this bill and your leadership on all issues agriculture, especially the importance of SNAP and feeding people.

This is the United States of America. One specific thing Senator Stabenow said that really caught me was, it is pretty simple: People should have a roof over their head, and people should have food on the table.

Think if you don’t. I don’t think that probably most of us know, intimately, people who don’t have enough to eat and people who get evicted. I don’t think we feel the anxiety they feel every night, wondering about the next meal. Today is July 1, wondering about the rent payment.

Senator Klobuchar said this earlier today: that before the coronavirus, 25 percent of Americans who rent spend more than half their income in rent. So if one thing goes wrong in their life—one thing goes wrong: their car breaks down; they have a problem and their roof leaks; their child gets sick; they get hurt on the job and miss 2 weeks of pay, their life turns upside down.

Do we think about them? Do we think about their anxiety? Apparently not.

Today, this could have been a really, really good day for workers in this country—for fast-food workers, for the people who change the linen in hospitals, for custodians, for data entry people, for home care workers—people who are on their feet all day long working. It could have been a big-deal day. It could be a red-letter day for them because we could have assured them that they will not get evicted; that they will not get foreclosed on if their hours have been cut back or if they are laid off; and we could have assured them that they would get a little food on the table. But under the leadership of Senator McConnell, we don’t ever do that.

Senator McConnell’s office is back there. I don’t know if he ever thinks about this. One of my favorite Lincoln quotes is he said: I have to get out of the White House and get my public opinion baths. I have to see how people are living, I want to hear about people’s lives.

I can’t imagine Senator McConnell does any of that; otherwise, he couldn’t make these awful, hard-hearted decisions to eliminate unemployment when it ends at the end of this month. Maybe he will decide, but, right now, if you are an unemployed worker, and you can’t find a job in Detroit or in Portland or in Eugene or in St. Paul, you wonder if your unemployment is going to just stop, and you are in a country that doesn’t have enough food, and we don’t do a damn thing about it here.

This is the United States of America. Couldn’t we help hard-working Americans? Instead, we see an objection to rental assistance. We see an objection to increasing food benefits. I don’t get it, the United States of America, that this would possibly happen.

We should take up and pass Senator Stabenow’s bill right now to increase SNAP benefits.

At a time when the country is finally focusing on racial injustice, we have to recognize these issues are all connected.

You all know that this pandemic has been the great revealer. It has revealed income inequality. It has revealed racial disparities. It has revealed life expectancies. If you look like me, your life expectancy is a good bit longer than if you are African American or Latino, because our earning power is more and that our educational opportunities are greater. We know all that. Are we doing anything about it here? No, we are not.

The President of the United States has put all of that behind him. He doesn’t care about the pandemic. He never mentions the 120,000 people in this country—our brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers and children and grandparents who have died from the coronavirus. He has forgotten about that. He just doesn’t want it to affect the stock market.

It goes on and on and on. Increased demand at food banks, we hear it all the time. We see the stress on employees and the volunteers at food banks.

Governor DeWine, to his credit—an effective member of the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee, as is our next speaker, the senior Senator from Minnesota—two Members that I am so proud to have as partners on the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee.

I yield time to Senator Klobuchar.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. Stabenow. Mr. President, I want to thank Senator Brown for his eloquence and advocacy, and I want to thank him also for being an effective member of the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee, as is our next speaker, the senior Senator from Minnesota—two Members that I am so proud to have as partners on the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee.

I yield time to Senator Klobuchar.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. Klobuchar. Mr. President, I want to thank the Senator from Michigan for her leadership on the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee, helping to pass and lead the last farm bill in the Senate, along with Senator Roberts and so many of us who are on that committee.

We understand that rural America is hurting right now, and rural America is actually part of the solution as well for so many people who are hungry and who need help.

We also know a pandemic and its economic impact has left 41 million Americans unemployed and strained the financial security of hundreds of thousands of families across this country.

I have always worked to ensure, from the minute I got on the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee, that we focus on nutrition. Programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—or, as it is known, SNAP—are the place to do this; to provide meaningful relief to families, children, senior citizens, veterans. People all over this country, people who never thought they would be out of a job, people who used to—and I heard this story in Minnesota—volunteer in food banks, now they are standing in line at food banks because they unexpectedly lost their jobs.

Many of us have seen this. I have visited these food banks. Even before the pandemic, more than 37 million people, including more than 11 million children, were living in a food-insecure household.

Analytics released by the national nonprofit Feeding America in April...
The 350 food shelves in my State operated by Second Harvest Heartland are seeing double or triple the number of visitors this week, so on Sunday, I visited one of our biggest food shelves, Second Harvest Heartland, with Director Allison O’Toole, with a number of people who were working there around the clock. They just released a study. What the study said is that since we had pandemic 1 in 11 Minnesotans were living with hunger. Now, they project for August—only a little over a month from now—that one in eight Minnesotans will be food insecure—one in eight.

They said, tracking our State’s history back to the Great Depression, they have never seen anything like this since the Great Depression—not even the economic downturn 10 years ago, not the ups and downs in unemployment. And as we have seen in our rural areas, the farm crisis up in Northern Minnesota—nothing like they are projecting to happen.

July begins with the Fourth of July. The Fourth of July is when we celebrate what America means. My hope is that we will end July by actually passing the Heroes Act. I know we are going to negotiate it, colleagues. I know we will make changes over what passed in the House. We cannot let our States go bankrupt. We must help local areas.

I was on the phone today with our friends in the Fargo-Moorhead area, and we have seen it there too. We have seen it all over our State.

The SNAP program was originally designed to respond to changes in the economy by expanding to meet increased need during economic downturns and contracting as economic recovery alleviates the need for food assistance. Under the farm bill that was signed into law under Senator Stabenow’s leadership in 2018, we preserved this critical lifeline. The conference report, which passed with 87 votes in the Senate and 269 votes in the House of Representatives, avoided making cuts to benefits or changes to eligibility that would take away benefits or create obstacles.

At this difficult time, we should ensure care is being extended to all of those who need it, not put up new barriers—not with what we are seeing with more COVID cases in the southern part of this country and in the western part of this country. In fact, the facts and the numbers bear out that we should be increasing those benefits. The House has taken action to do just that by passing a 15-percent increase in SNAP benefits during the pandemic. That is what they did in the Heroes Act. That is what we should do here.

At the same time, the middle of a pandemic is the wrong time to be cutting SNAP benefits or kicking partici-

pands out of the program, and that is why I have called on the administration to withdraw rules that would take these benefits away from families in need.

As for food deserts, again, the pandemic simply put a big, fat magnifying glass on a problem that already existed, and that is that 23.5 million Americans live in a food desert where the absence of a grocery store within 1 mile of their home makes it more difficult to purchase fresh, nutritious food.

Low-income Americans and people of color are much more likely to live in a food desert, and people in rural areas live in these food deserts all over America.

That is why Senator Brown and I wrote a letter with 20 Senators urging the Department of Agriculture to prioritize these programs intended to minimize food deserts and support local and regional efforts for these projects.

We cannot overlook the capacity needs of food shelves, and that is something I talked about with our friends at Second Harvest Heartland just this weekend.

The WORK NOW Act is something that—I appreciate Senator Wyden is here as one of the cosponsors, along with Senator Brown and Senator Schatz—supports nonprofit organizations, to make it easier for them to hire people who are actually out of work, who could then help other people.

It is why I joined Senator Stabenow and several of my colleagues in the Agriculture Committee in introducing the Food Supply Protection Act to help food banks increase their capacity and strengthen partnerships to prevent food waste while feeding more families. One of my predecessors, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, whose desk I stand in front of today—his name is carved in the desk—served on the Agriculture Committee. He grew up in a small town in South Dakota. He became a professor eventually, but his father was a pharmacist. He understood the importance—growing up in that family, seeing the ups and downs of rural America—of stable government policy for both agriculture producers and families struggling to put food on the table.

He was a leading advocate of Federal nutrition programs and played an instrumental role in the passage of what was then called the Food Stamp Act of 1964, which turned what was then just a pilot program into the permanent program we know today. He knew that the moral test of government is how government treats its most vulnerable citizens: those in need, those who are seniors, those with disabilities.

He once said this: “We will be remembered not for the power of our weapons but for the power of our compassion, our dedication to human welfare.”

In these times of uncertainty and with rising food insecurity, we need to work to ensure that the nutrition needs of our most vulnerable citizens are met.

I yield the floor.

Mr. STABENOW. Mr. President, I want to thank my friend from Minnesota for her wonderful words. Again, we think about all the need that is there, and we are here just trying to make sure that people can get their basic needs such as food on the table for the kids.

We are very fortunate, and I feel very fortunate to have both Senators from Oregon here on the floor this evening. I am going to first yield now to Senator Wyden, but I want to say first: Senator Wyden is the ranking member of the Finance Committee, as we know. I think that is a pretty powerful committee, and we are grateful for his leadership.

I am particularly grateful for the work the Senator is doing and has done on unemployment compensation and what needs to be done and the importance of trying all of the options, for somebody having enough income to be able to pay the rent and then getting enough help to put food on the table.

I am proud to be his partner and very much appreciate all that he is doing to put people first—Senator Wyden.

Mr. Wyden. Mr. President, I thank Senator Stabenow, my seatmate on the Senate Finance Committee. We are a bit more socially distant now, but we still have spent this time plotting and thinking about what could be a future that provides the kinds of priorities that we have been talking about today.

Senator Stabenow’s reports particularly—these wonderful reports that document the cost of inaction—I have almost made them a reference tool on my desk so, when I have to look at a particular area, I can turn to one of those Stabenow reports. They are already understandable, always cutting right to the heart of the issue, which is this: How are you going to give the opportunity for everybody in America to get ahead—not just the people at the top but everybody in America the chance to get ahead?

I am not going to take but a few minutes. I do want to note that I believe that Oregon is the only State to have produced 100 percent of its U.S. Senators on behalf of the cause tonight. This is something that is very unique, and I enjoy doing when there is an opportunity to speak for justice.

I want to reflect for a minute on how the day started, because I guess it was almost 12 hours ago our Democratic leader, Senator SCHUMEE, stood right there; I stood where I am; and he outlined the Schumer-Wyden proposal for the next steps on dealing with this crushing unemployment we have in our country—30 million people.

The number is so large that the experts can’t get their arms around exactly how many people are unemployed, but what we know is that every
week it goes up far more than that of kind of similar period during the great recession.

We talked about what is going to happen July 31. July 31, if the Senate does not act, we are going to have a tsunami of evictions. We are going to have families who are going to bed hungry at night?

Senator MERKLEY and I have the privilege of talking about with respect to housing and evictions, there are a lot of people who are just going to fall between the cracks.

I thought, it being 12 hours since we began this, that I might just connect the dots for a few minutes.

In the face of this historic public health emergency, we know that millions have their health on the line, and because Donald Trump has failed to get the COVID-19 virus under control, we have now got jobs on the line.

Now many people are being forced to choose between feeding their child or paying the rent to keep a roof over their head.

So you have housing, you have healthcare, you have unemployment, and we are trying very hard to be creative.

I know, for my colleague from Michigan, hardly a day goes by when she doesn't talk to me about the benefit of Work Share, a creative way to make unemployment dollars stretch.

By the way, Senator MERKLEY talks about it almost as much as my friend from Michigan because he feels very strongly about it.

So as we connect the dots, as we have over the last 12 hours, and we talk about housing and healthcare and unemployment, I also want people to understand that those challenges were serious last week and the week before.

We ought to put in context what we heard yesterday from Tony Fauci, who said that the trajectory as of right now is one where our country may possibly see 100,000 new cases a day.

So let's picture what that means for the SNAP program and how hard Senator STABENOW's work is going to be, because we have heard Chairman ROBERTS—and you all have worked very well—the Senate, and hopefully we can get that worked out because I don't even want to begin to imagine how much hunger and unemployment and housing challenges we are going to face with 100,000 new cases a day.

So the work that Senator STABENOW is doing is urgent business. It really also brings us back to this: How can it be, in a country as strong and as good as ours, that we have all these kids going to bed hungry at night?

In Oregon, the Oregon Food Bank, serving a lunch. I would shoot baskets with a Senator?

What this comes down to is what Senator STABENOW is basically doing, is being in the Tikkun Olam business. That is a phrase Jews often use; it is about perfecting the world. It is about the moral obligation we have in America to do everything within our power to make sure that kids and families do not go hungry. Susannah Morgan was really very wonderful and smart. She wants to make sure they got out. She wants to make sure that people can get assistance through a regular EBT card.

The Trump administration, of course, has pushed to impose strenuous work requirements, which don't make any sense—particularly in a public health crisis—in workplaces and can be dangerous.

We want to expand ways to get food to SNAP participants, like home delivery, curbside pickup. We want to extend what has come to be known as the pandemic EBT through the summer and any future school closures.

This is so important because, even before the pandemic, I often would go to various kinds of programs run by community groups, and they would be serving a lunch. I would shoot baskets with kids for a bit. I would see the kids drift away, and they would take at least one lunch. I was struck, they were incredibly hungry. This was pre-COVID. I would ask: What did you have to eat since you were here yesterday to shoot baskets with a Senator?

They would look at you and say: Well, I had a Milky Way.

That is what we are dealing with in America right now. Senator STABENOW is working for you, and you are going to have a lot of people like those kids I met going hungry.

For some going to close with one last thought that is important to us in our part of the country. The reality is that, for many years, none of this was at all partisan. We have all heard about Bob Dole and George McGovern and the history books, and that is a common cause with respect to agriculture, and they would round up urban legislators. We read about that, various historical figures from the East, they weren't partisan.

In our part of the world, when we talk about the practical, commonsense ideas that Senator STABENOW is offering for feeding hungry people, we just call them the Oregon Way. People ask: Well, where is the Oregon Way? Where is this thing? Is it on the top of the capitol dome or Pioneer Square in Portland? I say: No, it is what we have tried to do for years.

I want to thank Senator STABENOW for bringing heart and a pragmatic approach to this. We saw how you just reached out to Senator ROBERTS. By the way, I am on the Intelligence Committee. I am not going to give out anything classified, but Senator Roberts was very, very friendly, and he said: We are going to get this worked out. We are going to figure this out.

I am going to end on a little bit of an upbeat note because that happened maybe only half an hour ago, and having watched my seatmate in action with Chairman ROBERTS often pull together agreements where nobody thought an agreement was possible—no pressure, don't feel like we are singling you out—but just know that a lot of us are going to be your allies in this fight because it is a fight for fairness, it is a fight for kids, it is a fight for families that are hurting, and it is a fight for an America where everybody gets a chance to get ahead.

Thank you for doing that.

Ms. STABENOW, I am going to yield to Senator MERKLEY in a second. First, I want to say to the senior Senator from Oregon, when you talk about the Oregon Way, this needs to be the American way. This is the American way.

Right now, the average food benefit under SNAP is $4.17 a day for a person.
Think about going to the grocery store—$4.17 a day. We are asking for a 15-percent increase during this pandemic. We ought to all be looking at these numbers and going: Come on, the America way ought to be to make sure somebody can put food on the table for the children who are eating a Milky Way until they can get to school.

I am going to now turn to Senator MERKLEY. I want to give a shout-out to Senator MERKLEY, who is the ranking Democrat on the Agriculture Subcommittee of Appropriations, extremely important. He is such a wonderful partner and advocate on all of the food access issues and healthy food issues and so on. We are so lucky to have Senator MERKLEY in the position that he is in. I will turn to Senator MERKLEY.

I yield time to Senator MERKLEY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. It is being driven by Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to engage in colloquy with my colleague from Michigan.

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

Mr. MERKLEY. Senator STABENOW, it is a pleasure to be here with you in this fight for something as fundamental as hunger. As I was listening to the conversation, your words and our colleagues’ from Ohio, Sherrod Brown, who is out of the room, his colleague from Oregon, I thought: How many Senators have experienced hunger this last week, the inability to have a meal? What is your sense of that?

Ms. STABENOW. My guess would be that everyone is like me, and, no, I have not experienced a sense of it.

Mr. MERKLEY. No one in this Chamber is missing a meal.

Ms. STABENOW. We are all extremely fortunate; we don’t have to experience that.

Mr. MERKLEY. I am pretty sure, down the hall in the House of Representatives, nobody is missing a meal; yet so many people in each of our States are missing meals. In my State of Oregon, hunger has doubled since March. I imagine hunger has increased in your home State of Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Absolutely—at least doubled, absolutely.

Mr. MERKLEY. It is being driven by massive unemployment. The estimate in April was for families who earn less than $40,000 a year, 40 percent had lost their job. I think that was April. Now, maybe it is well over 50 percent. Half of working America of modest incomes lost their jobs, and it wasn’t that easy to sign up for unemployment benefits.

We still have a couple hundred thousand people in Oregon who are waiting for unemployment benefits. I can guarantee you they are very hungry. I know there are those in Michigan as well, and

The majority leader has decided to send the Senate on vacation for 2 weeks. I guess my question to you is: Does hunger take a vacation? Do those who are hungry in Oregon and hungry in Pennsylvania, is it going to take a vacation for 2 weeks?

Ms. STABENOW. I don’t think hunger ever takes a vacation, if it is in the middle of the night, early in the morning, 2 weeks, 1 to 2 weeks, 3 weeks. I mean, the reality is, when we are here, there are people around this country who are hungry. When Senator McCONNELL adjourns the Senate for the week and we are not here for the next 2 weeks, we do not continue to be hungry and probably getting more and more hungry as the economic situation gets worse.

Mr. MERKLEY. We might think of hunger as kind of a temporary discomfort, something you get through, but my understanding is, when children are hungry, when they don’t have the basic nutrients on a regular basis, it damages the development of the mind.

Is that something you heard?

Ms. STABENOW. Absolutely.

Mr. MERKLEY. We are talking about millions of American children who are suffering not just discomfort but damage to their minds because they don’t have enough to eat. The majority leader is sending us on vacation rather than addressing it.

Thank you to my colleague for coming to the floor, organizing, carrying this forward, the work you do, and authorizing the work the Appropriations Committee does.

We have got to address this. We have to recognize how bad the situation is, how bad things are nationally. More than 40 million people have lost their jobs; 120,000 people have died. The rate of infections are escalating across the country—and how bad things are in my home State—243,000 people are out of work. We have an unemployment rate of over 14 percent, higher than it was any point in the great recession. Food insecurity has doubled since March. Food is at the top of the hierarchy of needs for human life.

All we have done is come to the floor and say: Let’s help in a pretty modest way with a 15-percent increase—the $4 and change that the Senator talked about—60 cents? We probably should be doubling it.

But that 15-percent increase in the maximum benefits does make a difference. It makes a difference. Hunger doesn’t take a vacation and neither should we.

As Senator STABENOW proposed, we should debate a bill now—pass now a bill. We should effect these changes at this moment and not leave this Chamber until we have gotten the work of the American people done for the most important need any human being has, and that is basic nutrition.

When Martin Luther King was accepting his Nobel Peace Prize, he said that he had “the audacity to believe that people everywhere could have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits.” Let this Chamber have the audacity not just to believe that people can have three meals a day but to make it happen.

I am fully in support of your efforts, a full partner on behalf of all those who suffer hunger in the United States, on the behalf of our child welfare system, the basic foundation to thrive here in the United States of America. We are failing in our job. Hunger doesn’t take a vacation and neither should the Senate. Let’s get the act passed now.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. (Mr. GARDNER.) The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I want to thank my friend from Oregon for his comments and his ongoing leadership on the Appropriations Committee. It is incredibly important. Now, I am going to turn to the Senator from Pennsylvania, Mr. CASEY, and thank him on so many different issues, which range from children and what they need, in terms of healthcare and the support they need to be able to grow and be successful, all the way up to our older citizens and those in nursing homes, where he is providing such advocacy now as we look at what needs to be done to support our seniors and those in nursing homes.

Thank you for always putting people first and for joining us tonight.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I want to thank the senior Senator from Michigan for her leadership. I will say more about her work in a moment.

We would not be here tonight talking about this program if we were not well aware by the acronym, but the words are all important. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—SNAP—what we used to call food stamps. We wouldn’t be here without her leadership and those who made food insecurity and all hunger initiatives a priority. This program, that I believe is core to our responsibility to support American families during this national crisis—the public health crisis and the jobs crisis. This program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, is a lifeline for millions of Americans to access the food they need to survive. I think that is an understatement. As the junior Senator from Oregon, Mr. MERKLEY, just said, this is about life itself. This is about being able to live and being able to survive. No human being can survive without food, and so many go without food on a regular basis. So many others are food insecure, but that doesn’t mean they have not felt the pain we are talking about. I wanted to say just a couple of words about Senator STABENOW because this has been not just an issue for her, not just a program, the SNAP program, and not just a cause of food insecurity, but it has really been a passion for her. Some people are mission-driven in their work. She has been one of those Senators who has been mission-driven to make sure we are doing everything
we can with every opportunity, every budget, every season of the Senate; that we do everything we can to help the most vulnerable.

Someday, many years from now when many of us may not be around, there may be chroniclers who are chronicling or summarizing the history of the Senate on particular issues. I am sure, just as we make reference to work that has preceded us or Senators who have preceded us—I have no doubt when a Senator stands up on this floor years from now, and people all across the country will read and they talk about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, if they start to itemize or catalog or list the Senators who had the most profound impact on this program, Senator STABENOW will be one of very few who will be listed in such a chronicle of the advocacy done for the SNAP program.

William Jennings Bryan said a long time ago, in a different context, but he said it well about a cause, about how one person can make such a difference on one issue or one cause. We have seen some of that lately with Americans demanding action on a range of issues—marching and protesting for criminal justice reform or changes to policing or advances to social, economic or racial justice, whatever cause. William Jennings Bryan said it well. I think he said it in 1896: “The humblest citizen in all the land, when clad ... in a righteous cause, is stronger than all the hosts of error.”

“I think what he meant by that is that one citizen can have a huge impact. What we have even with Senator STABENOW’s work is one Senator who can have an impact. This has been for her. I know, her righteous cause, and the country is better for her service and better for her work on this issue.

What are we talking about here? When food insecurity, that may not sound too threatening to a lot of people. That means you are hungry. The person we are talking about might be an adult, but all too many times it is a child. When a child is hungry, it is hard as an adult to really fully understand what that means. I never lived a day of my life when I was hungry the whole day or the second day or the third day, so I really can’t explain it. I never experienced it. I think that is probably true of most Members of Congress, maybe not so much of you. We were, but many, of course, now don’t feel that sense of food insecurity.

It is a devastating reality for tens of millions of Americans. That was the case before the jobs crisis, before the COVID-19 public health crisis. It is even more so now in the aftermath of the onset of the virus and while we are still in the grip of this COVID-19 disease—what we know and are describing worldwide as a pandemic.

The pandemic has only made this crisis worse. Even more urgent is the crisis of food insecurity and economic insecurity. The unemployment numbers that we see now are further exacerbating what were already the undeniable realities of hunger, poverty, and food insecurity in this country.

I know, for example, in my home State of Pennsylvania—I haven’t seen the latest—put out that in April numbers were high: 15 percent unemployment, 975,000 people out of work, heading toward a million people out of work in one State. I am certain that number will be lower in May, and thank God for that, and I hope lower in June again.

When you are saying in one State there are hundreds of thousands more on top of the unemployed numbers from March, you can understand the terrible impact. When we talk about unemployment, that often leads to food insecurity, and that may lead to the kind of desperation that hunger can bring. You are talking about real pain being felt by a parent or a child. Hunger may not be able to articulate the pain they are feeling. They may not be able to function, literally. They may not be able to function in any way. They certainly can’t be in school. Hunger may not be able to function in any way. They certainly can’t be in school. No human being can learn and grow if they are hungry all the time—no one, not the strongest person we know.

I come from a heritage of people who left Ireland because of hunger. They lived with it their whole life. When policies were put in place or actions were not taken and hundreds of thousands of people starved, millions left Ireland, just like people leave their homelands today to escape hunger, to escape poverty, and even famine itself—the most extreme version of hunger around the world.

We are talking about real physical pain. We are not just talking about a casual missing of a meal or being a little bit hungry, as so many of us have never experienced. It is pain, but it is also fear. Imagine the fear of a parent. I can’t even begin to imagine as a parent knowing that, for a lot of different reasons, your children could be hungry at the time.

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think the moral question is settled. I just hope folks will consider it.

How about the economic case?

Say that you are a Member of Congress and that you don’t like this program. There are not many people who would do that, but you don’t like it, and you don’t want to add more funding to it. That is your position. That is a morally objectionable position, but let’s say that is your position. You could also be for an increase to the SNAP program because it is a good bang for the buck, OK?

So if all you are interested in is going back home and saying “Do you know what I did today? I voted for a program that will more than pay for itself, and it will help everybody”—if that is what your game is and if that is what makes you happy, your going back to your community, to your State, then fine. This program, the SNAP program, is a great bang for the buck.

If you spend a buck on SNAP benefits in an economic downturn—and I will make sure I cite the source here. It is the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service. Guess what. You will get $1.50 in return, maybe as much as $1.80 with the current number of $1.50. That is a pretty good ROI, return on investment.

If that is all you care about, is a return on investment, and you don’t care about the impact of that buck and what it means to someone who is troubled by food insecurity, you are not really persuaded by the pain of hunger—then support it because it is a good bang for the buck. That would make sense. That is the American way to consider what we should be doing here. Consider the moral case, which should be enough, but you can also consider the efficacy of the program—the effect, the value—in an economic sense.

We are all better off when SNAP is funded at an adequate level—all of us—because of that bang for the buck and because when people get SNAP dollars, they spend them. Guess what. That is good for all of us. It is good for our local economies, and it is good for our State economies. It is good for producers, for the people transporting the food, and for the people marketing the food. That is why farmers and people in the ag sector of our economy are sometimes the biggest proponents of the SNAP program.

This is the right thing to do to try to ease some of that pain—that awful pain—that children feel in the middle of the night, in the morning when they wake up, at lunchtime when other kids are eating something and they may not be eating, especially now that they are away from school, at night, and when they go to bed at night.

So let’s come together and get something done. There is some good news in that we might be considering another bill, but let’s meet our obligation on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. If others who have been reluctant to do that vote for this and support this, then you can do all the pats on the back that you want, but let’s do the right thing for America, especially for those suffering from the pain of hunger.

I yield the floor to the senior Senator from Michigan.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, first, I thank my friend from Pennsylvania for his passion and for his being such a wonderful partner on these issues. I very much appreciate his speaking about the fact that there is an economic benefit.

If nothing else, if someone wants to look at how we can help our farmers, how we can help our grocery stores, how we can help those in the food chain—all of whom we want to help as well—you do that in the most efficient way possible, which is by giving people the funds to access in the grocery stores so that they are able, when they have a need like this, to support their families.

The great thing about SNAP is that it is set up so that when the economy gets better, the food assistance goes down, and when the economy gets worse, the food assistance goes up. The challenge for us right now is that there is such a crisis and there are so many more people needing help—people who never in their lives thought they would need support in a situation in which we are called upon to meet that need and to be able to increase what we are doing.

There was a small effort at the beginning to provide some additional help, but it was nowhere near the need we have now—nowhere near. When I think about negotiating the CARES Act and the fact that, again, the average benefit for food assistance in this country per person is $41.7 a day, the White House thought that was too much for an increase to the $41.7 a day. Leader MCCONNELL said no to any increase in the CARES Act—to the $41.7 a day for people.

There is something wrong with that, so we are here on the floor to say we have to do better. The Senate has to do better. The House did better when it passed the Heroes Act. It gave some additional support and help. The Senate needs to do the same. The Senate could have done the same tonight rather than talk for 2 weeks, as we will not be in session. We haven’t really started negotiating what comes next, and it will take weeks after that.

Every single day, there are people going hungry. The pain that Senator Casey talked about is something being experienced by people in a night, and being experienced by people in the morning and every single day going forward. That is the reality for too many families in America—in the United States of America—and it doesn’t have to be that way.

We can at least give some help. I wish we could do more. We couldn’t get a 15-percent increase in the CARES Act. I would love to be able to do more than that, but at a minimum, we should be doing that. That is what the House did. That is what has been done in other economic downturns, and that is what we should be doing to help families in America who, frankly, just need to know where their backs right now when everything is coming at them and when they are trying to figure out how they are going to keep their heads above water and care for their children and make sure that the adults in the family have the help and support they need as well.

We are going to keep working on this until we get it. There is just no excuse not to be able to meet the need that so many millions of families are feeling right now.

This is a moral moment for the Senate. It could have been a moral Wednesday. If there had not been an objection, we could have gotten it done tonight. Wouldn’t that have been a great way to begin the July weekend—being able to provide some small, additional food assistance for millions of Americans who are in need right now? This is not going to happen now because of the objection, but we should keep going until we can get families the help they need.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in the morning business.

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

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, before we close tonight, I want to talk about a story that is troubling a lot of Americans—one that we have just learned about in the last couple of days—and that is the recent events regarding the U.S. presence in Afghanistan and some of the reporting.

Like many of my colleagues—and I am sure this is a feeling shared by tens and tens of millions of Americans—I am alarmed, as I know they are, by reports of the intelligence community’s discovery that the Russian Government offered to pay Taliban and Haqqani Network militants to target American troops in Afghanistan.

The New York Times broke the story on June 26. Since then, several questions have emerged regarding how the intelligence has been used, how long decisionmakers within the U.S. Government have known about this, and thirdly, what measures the administration is taking to hold Russia accountable to their actions.

Obviously, there are a number of stories by other news outlets in addition to that by the New York Times. I will just refer to one excerpt from the New York Times’ June 26 report.

It read: “An operation to incentivize the killing of American and other NATO troops would be a significant and provocative escalation of what American and Afghan officials have
said is Russian support for the Taliban.”

The story later goes on to read: “Any involvement with the Taliban that re-
resulted in the deaths of American troops
would also be a huge escalation of Rus-
sia’s so-called hybrid war against the
United States, a strategy of destabiliz-
ing adversaries through a combina-
tion of such tactics as cyberattacks . . . and covert and deniable military
operations.”

We have learned in recent days that
these reports have been circulating
through the U.S. intelligence commu-
nity since early 2019, but there was lit-
tle to no action taken. The timeline reg-
arding these events is of particular
concern to me and, I know, to many
Americans but especially to those who
represent a State in which there is a
direct connection.

In April of 2019, three U.S. marines
were killed in a car bomb near Bagram
Airfield in Afghanistan. There was spe-
cifically that the incident may have been
a bounty attack that had been carried
out by the Taliban for the Russians.

There has been further reporting on
this—tracking the dollars—by the New
York Times and maybe by a few other
outlets, but I know the New York Times
did.

One of the marines killed in that
April 2019 attack was a Pennsylvanian.
If there had been credible intelligence
regarding the Russian plot and if that
intelligence had been acted upon, one
question I have is—and it is only a
question; I don’t know the answer to
this question, but I ask it—could the
death of this young Pennsylvania ma-
rine and his brothers in arms have been
averted?

That is a question. I don’t know the
answer to it. I hope, in the coming days
and weeks—and I hope not longer than
weeks—we will have an answer to that
question, among many, as it troubles
so many Americans.

As of the close of last year, December
of 2019, 294 servicemembers from Penn-
sylvania had been killed in the wars in
Iraq and Afghanistan—the third high-
est toll of any State. Our State has
sacrificed a lot. If Russia had had any
hand in contributing to these losses, to
say that it is offensive, enraging, and
deeply problematic is an understa-
tement and warrants a close look not
only at the U.S. engagement in Af-
ghanistan but how we respond—
how the United States of America re-
sponds—to Vladimir Putin’s efforts to
disrupt U.S. efforts overseas and take
American lives while doing it.

Accordingly, I have several questions
about how arms intelligence has been
handled and what measures have been
taken to hold Russia accountable for
these horrific, incendiary, unlawful ac-
tions contrary to international law.

The administration must brief all
Members of Congress immediately. I
think Americans are offended by the
administration briefs one side of the
aisle. All Members of Congress should
be briefed. Those briefings should occur
immediately and in close proximity to
the reporting. The briefings should in-
clude when they received the intel-
lignce—when the administration re-
ceived it—when the President was
briefed, and what actions were consid-
ered in response. I also call on the ad-
ministration to report to Congress on a
process for protecting our troops in
moving forward.

You could be justifiably offended by
inaction by the administration or for
the knowledge that preceded that inac-
tion, that they did nothing in response
to it.

It is especially offensive now to a lot
of Americans that this information
now is in the public record and there
seems to be no evidence of any kind of
response, any kind of an action.

So I think the administration should
report to Congress not just on who
know when, but also on what we
do going forward.

The families of these fallen soldiers
deserve answers. The American people,
obviously, deserve answers as well.
We cannot let Russia and Vladimir
Putin get away with this.

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

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I want
to thank all my colleagues and my
partners, my partner Senator REED, for
working so hard today to come to an
agreement. It has been a tough day. We
think we have created a package that
is acceptable to everyone and we will
be hotlining it tonight.

The Senate will come back into ses-
sion at 10 a.m. tomorrow, and
hopefully, we will be able to lock in our
deal here.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask
unanimous consent that the Senate be
in 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.

NATIONAL DEFENSE
AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I
rise to clarify a point concerning my
amendment No. 2270 to the National
Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal
Year 2021, S. 4049. This amendment
would establish in law the position of
the Special Envoy for Hostage Affairs
at the State Department and provides
that the Special Envoy shall have the
rank and status of ambassador. Under
article II of the Constitution, the
President’s power to appoint ambas-
sadors is subject to the advice and con-
sent of the Senate. Accordingly, it is
my view that the appointment of the
Special Envoy with the rank and sta-
tus of ambassador, pursuant to this
amendment, requires the advice and
consent of the Senate.

FOURTH OF JULY

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise
today to speak about our Nation’s
independence.

Some 244 years ago this Saturday,
the Founding Fathers of this country
voted to declare our independence from
Great Britain.

All Americans know the basics of
this story, but not everyone knows the
story behind one of our Nation’s found-
ding documents.

Thomas Jefferson was just 33 years
old when the Second Continental Con-
gress commissioned him to draft a de-
claration of independence. When he sat
down in a rented room in the heat of
the Philadelphia summer to write it,
the American Revolution had already
begun.

On one level, he was simply putting
the reasons for independence into
words. The first shot had been fired
over a year earlier, after decades of in-
creasingly tyrannical British abuses
had culminated in open revolt in Mas-
achusetts.

Even so, it was not yet clear whether
the delegates from all 13 colonies
would put their names to a formal doc-
ument declaring our independence.
They had to be persuaded.

After 17 days of writing and re writ-
ing, struggling to find the right words,
Jefferson presented his work to Ben-
jamin Franklin and John Adams. He
then submitted a draft to the Congress
on July 1, which officially adopted it
days later.

Each year on the Fourth of July, we
celebrate this moment—the moment
that we declared our independence
from the British Empire and began to
see ourselves as our own nation.

I love Independence Day celebrations
in Nebraska. Like many people, my
family often spends the day enjoying
the great outdoors before hosting
friends and neighbors for a barbecue.

But the Fourth of July is about more
than food and fireworks or parades and
pancake feeds. It is an opportunity to
reflect on the nearly two and a half
centuries of our nation’s history and
remember what it means to be an
American.

To me, America is a nation based on
an idea. It is the idea, as Jefferson
wrote, that “all men are created equal,
that they are endowed by their Creator
with certain unalienable Rights, that
among these are Life, Liberty and the
pursuit of Happiness.”

Belief in this creed is what unites us
as Americans. And while we may not
live up to this ideal, we can never stop
trying. We should count ourselves
fortunate to live in the greatest
nation on earth, where the notion