

COVID debacle—falls on the shoulders of President Trump, who failed to prepare our Nation for the initial surge, failed to organize a national supply chain of PPE, failed to develop a national strategy for testing and contact tracing, and failed to even communicate the depth of the challenge our country faces. And much of this still proves true today.

The Washington Post reported this morning that Arizona, which has experienced a huge surge in cases, still doesn't have the testing supplies they need because of a national supply chain failure.

Even after 2.6 million infections and 120,000 American fatalities, the President said yesterday:

I think we're going to be very good with the coronavirus. I think at some point that's going to sort of just disappear.

Can you imagine the bubble this man is in? He is only concerned about scratching and stroking his own ego and not about what is going on in the country, so he can just dismiss the seriousness of this—the most serious health and economic crisis we have had in decades. It is amazing.

That is what President Trump said yesterday: “We're going to be very good with the coronavirus”—on the same day the United States reported the most new cases of coronavirus in a single day ever. The President is so eager to declare victory and pat himself on the back and then move on that he is ignoring reality completely.

The June jobs report showed modest growth, but we know conditions have worsened since the survey was completed in the middle of the month. Experts believe 10 percent of the workforce has lost their job permanently, with Americans of color counting for a disproportionate share.

Again, in terms of the long-term health of the economy, the most concerning and important number is the number of new COVID cases. The number of COVID cases, health-related, is the No. 1 effect on the long-term health of the economy. President Trump seems oblivious to the fact that almost everyone who studied this issue knows. The President's own CDC Director says the number of cases may be 10 times higher than reported. Imagine that. We could have 26 million people infected and likely many, many more to come, but the President assumes that the coronavirus—and the economy—will just take care of itself.

If President Trump reacted to the jobs report like he has reacted to COVID and says, “We're in the clear; we don't have to do anything,” then we will soon be in even worse trouble than we are today.

Here in the Senate, the Republican majority has been out to lunch since we passed the CARES Act way back in March. It has been over 3 months since the Republican Senate has considered major COVID relief legislation. Weekly unemployment claims are measured in the millions. States are shedding pub-

lic service jobs in the tens of thousands. The number of new cases is accelerating in nearly half our States.

Still, the Republican majority, in the words of its majority leader, “has yet to feel the urgency of acting.” Still, the Republican leader says we must “assess the conditions” in the country before providing relief to our citizens. Just how much more assessment do we need when we remember those two numbers—52,000 new cases and 1.4 million people applying for unemployment?

Every day this week, Senate Democrats have come to the floor to plead with our colleagues to take up legislation to help millions of American workers and small businesses that are struggling right now. Every day this week, Senate Republicans have blocked our requests: rental assistance, blocked; food assistance, blocked; moratorium on evictions, blocked; resources for schools, nursing homes, State and local governments, Indian Country, and elections—blocked, blocked, blocked, and blocked. Just how long will this Republican Senate majority prevent the American people from getting the aid they so desperately need?

Now Republicans are saying we have to do another bill before August. I am glad they are finally talking seriously about a fourth phase of coronavirus legislation, though the need has been obvious for months. But the Republican leader at the moment insists that the next bill will be “written in his office.” Written in his office? That is the same one-party, “take it or leave it” partisan approach that delayed the CARES Act and utterly failed on policing reform.

Leader MCCONNELL likes to remind us that we need to make a law, not a point. To make a law, leader, you need both parties, you need both Chambers of Congress, and you need the signature of the President. Starting the next phase of COVID legislation in the majority leader's office is exactly what you do if you wanted to make a point, not a law.

The House of Representatives already has a bill that it has passed. It needs to be part of the equation here. In order to make a law, both parties in both Chambers should have a seat at the table. That is how we got the last phase of COVID-19 legislation done, and it is the best way to get it done this time.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA STATEHOOD

Mr. President, we have serious disagreements here in Congress. We trade in passionate words, but words sometimes get a little too hot under the collar. There are times when we need to take a step back and really think about what we are saying.

Yesterday, speaking in opposition to DC Statehood, the junior Senator from Montana said lawmakers should “go out to where the real people are across the country and ask them what they think.”

“Go out to where the real people are.”

Over 700,000 people live and work in the District of Columbia, 46 percent of them are Black. They hold jobs just like everyone else. They teach, deliver groceries, care for our sick, and work in our restaurants and churches. Many of them work here in the Capitol, providing essential services to some Senators who, obviously, don't consider them “real people.”

My friends on the other side of the aisle would have you believe that every member of this city is a lobbyist or defense contractor or a reporter. Not only is that comically false, but I don't remember the part of the Constitution where it says your rights as American citizens only apply if Republican Senators approve of your line of work.

I have noticed that it has become fashionable for elements of the political right to accuse Democrats of ignoring “real Americans.” It seems that the political right has a clear idea of which Americans are real and which Americans are not.

When Republican Senators are outright dismissing the personhood of thousands of American citizens—most of whom are Black—it is time for the political right to look in the mirror.

DC residents fulfill all the obligations of citizenship. They pay Federal taxes. They can be summoned for jury duty. They have served in every war since the Revolutionary War. But they are denied real representation in Congress.

We can have a real conversation about Statehood without denigrating or dehumanizing these citizens, but the far right is so afraid of losing political power and so unwilling to appeal to anyone who doesn't already agree with them that their strategy has become: restrict voting rights and deny equal representation in Congress to hundreds of thousands of Americans.

Self-governance and equal representation aren't Democratic issues or Republican issues. Voting rights shouldn't be a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. These are issues of fairness, of equality. It is not about right or left. It is about right and wrong.

SENATE RULES

Mr. President, for a minute on rules changes, I heard the Republican leader come forward and decry any attempt to change the rules. He is not a good one to give advice. Leader MCCONNELL has shown that he will change the rules when it suits his purposes and defend the rules when it suits his purposes. He is no icon standing in the way of any rules change. We all saw what happened in the last few years.

So please, Leader MCCONNELL, don't give us advice on rules changes when you are so inconsistent about which rules are OK to change and which rules are not.