

boundaries of what can be said without the threat of reprisal.”

Well, you can guess what happened next. The grievance industrial complex came after the letter itself. The authors were accused of advancing bigotry and the cycle of nonsense started all over again.

The United States of America needs free speech. We need free expression. And all of us, from all perspectives, need the courage to speak up and defend it.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 4049, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 4049) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2021 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Inhofe amendment No. 2301, in the nature of a substitute.

McConnell (for Portman) amendment No. 2080 (to amendment No. 2301), to require an element in annual reports on cyber science and technology activities on work with academic consortia on high priority cybersecurity research activities in Department of Defense capabilities.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, Democrat Senators returned to Washington on Monday prepared to work in a bipartisan way on the next phase of coronavirus relief.

After stalling for months while COVID-19 surged in more than 40 States, Senate Republicans finally said that now—the end of July, more than 3 months after the CARES Act passed—would be the time for another emergency bill. But here we are. It is in the middle of the week, and the Republican Party is so disorganized, chaotic, and unprepared that they can barely cobble together a partisan bill in their own conference.

Indicative was Leader McConnell's speech. He rants and raves about the

New York Times and cancel culture, but there is not a word about COVID. People are ready to lose their unemployment benefits, to lose their apartments and be evicted. Local governments are laying off people because they don't have the dollars. We are in a national crisis.

We don't hear a word out of Leader McConnell as we are on the edge of so many cliffs. Instead, there is lots of talk about the New York Times and cancel culture. That may be fodder for the far right. That is not what America needs.

When Leader McConnell, at this crucial moment, can't even mention COVID-19, it shows what a knot the Republicans are tied in. The bottom line is this: The White House Chief of Staff said Republicans “were on their own 20 yard line” when it comes to their legislative proposal—their own 20-yard line, 2 months and a week after we passed the COVID 3 bill, after millions more Americans applied for unemployment, after many small businesses went under, and many more died and were hospitalized as COVID-19 rages in many Southern States. We are still on the 20-yard line? Where have the Republicans been?

I have never seen a political party in the middle of a crisis so tied in a knot that the majority leader can't even mention it in his speech and spends time ranting against favorite targets of the far right and can't come up with a proposal.

This is not a game. This isn't typical Republican dysfunction about whether or not they did or didn't see the President's last tweet. The disarray on the Republican side has real consequences. Americans will suffer unnecessary pain and uncertainty because of it.

The only reason there hasn't been another relief package in Congress already is due to this Republican incompetence and reckless delay. Even after all of these months, the White House and Senate Republicans are starkly divided about what to do. The White House is insisting on policies, like a payroll tax cut, that would do nothing to help millions of unemployed Americans and that many Senate Republicans don't even support. The Republicans can't even seem to agree on whether to provide any new aid for State and local governments or if the States should be able to more flexibly use the support we have already given.

A few of my friends on the other side of the aisle hardly want to spend any more money to help our country in this once-in-a-generation crisis because it might add to the national debt. Giant corporate tax cuts—\$1.5 trillion to \$2 trillion of them—are OK, but fighting the greatest public health crisis in a century and forestalling a depression is a bridge too far? Where are the priorities on the other side of the aisle? I guess they are for helping big corporate fat cats—wealthy people—but not average people who are hurting. That is the trouble with the Republican Party.

Seriously, there are only 3 weeks left until the August work period, and the Republicans are still in the opening phases of preparing their bill. We don't have time for this mess that the Republicans are in. The moratorium on evictions that we passed in the CARES Act expires in 2 days. The Wall Street Journal reports that nearly 12 million adults live in households that missed their last rent payments and that 23 million have little or no confidence in their ability to make the next ones.

Next week, the enhanced unemployment benefits we passed in the CARES Act will expire while 20 to 30 million Americans will still be without work. A recent study showed that those enhanced benefits prevented nearly 12 million Americans from slipping into poverty—12 million. Yet, because the Republicans can't get their act together, those benefits might expire next week.

Congress needs to act quickly. The Senate Republicans and the White House need to get on the same page, produce a proposal—not just drop it on the floor but start negotiations. Better yet, we could start negotiations on the Heroes Act, which already passed the House, and, unlike the developing Republican proposal, it would actually match the scale of this crisis.

Speaker Pelosi and I met yesterday with Chief of Staff Meadows and Secretary Mnuchin. Even with all of this chaos, we have had some indications about what the Republicans are trying to do in their bill. Over the weekend, we heard that the administration was trying to block additional funding for coronavirus testing and contact tracing. President Trump has also ended the CDC's data collection efforts, potentially risking access to data that public health experts so vitally need. So, when we met with Chief of Staff Meadows and Secretary Mnuchin, Speaker Pelosi and I told them to back off these counterproductive and dangerous ideas.

In addition, we will be sending a letter to the administration to demand answers on how data is being reported to the White House, as well as pushing for legislation in the upcoming bill to ensure that COVID-19 data is fully transparent and accessible without there being any interference from the administration.

We know Donald Trump likes to hide the truth. He thinks, when the truth doesn't come forward and when he muzzles government officials, that it changes things. It doesn't. The virus still rages and will rage unless we do something about it, not simply hide the statistics that show his depth in mendacity. We will make sure that those statistics are made public so all of America, including the President, will know how bad the situation is, because that is what we need—the truth to set us free and then to act on it. Let me repeat: If the administration refuses to reverse course, the Democrats will insist on data transparency in the next COVID relief bill.