

if cloture is invoked, all postcloture time be considered expired and the Senate immediately vote on his confirmation. I further ask that the cloture vote on the McFerran nomination occur at 4:45 p.m. today and that, if cloture is invoked, all postcloture time be considered expired and the Senate immediately vote on her confirmation. Finally, I ask that, if any of these nominations are confirmed, that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Derek Kan, of California, to be Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Mitch McConnell, Chuck Grassley, Joni Ernst, John Cornyn, Lindsey Graham, John Boozman, Lamar Alexander, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Marsha Blackburn, Richard Burr, Mike Crapo, Pat Roberts, James E. Risch, Shelley Moore Capito, Michael B. Enzi, Mitt Romney, John Barrasso.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Derek Kan, of California, to be Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote or change their vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 76, nays 22, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 147 Ex.]

YEAS—76

| | | |
|-----------|--------------|------------|
| Alexander | Cortez Masto | Hassan |
| Barrasso | Cotton | Hawley |
| Blackburn | Cramer | Hoeben |
| Blunt | Crapo | Hyde-Smith |
| Boozman | Daines | Inhofe |
| Braun | Durbin | Johnson |
| Burr | Enzi | Jones |
| Capito | Ernst | Kaine |
| Carper | Feinstein | Kennedy |
| Casey | Fischer | King |
| Cassidy | Gardner | Klobuchar |
| Collins | Graham | Lankford |
| Coons | Grassley | Leahy |
| Cornyn | Harris | Lee |

| | | |
|-----------|------------|------------|
| Loeffler | Risch | Sinema |
| Manchin | Roberts | Smith |
| McConnell | Romney | Sullivan |
| McSally | Rosen | Thune |
| Moran | Rounds | Tillis |
| Murkowski | Rubio | Toomey |
| Murphy | Sasse | Warner |
| Paul | Schatz | Whitehouse |
| Perdue | Scott (FL) | Wicker |
| Peters | Scott (SC) | Young |
| Portman | Shaheen | |
| Reed | Shelby | |

NAYS—22

| | | |
|------------|------------|------------|
| Baldwin | Gillibrand | Stabenow |
| Bennet | Heinrich | Tester |
| Blumenthal | Hirono | Udall |
| Booker | Menendez | Van Hollen |
| Brown | Merkley | Warren |
| Cantwell | Murray | Wyden |
| Cardin | Sanders | |
| Duckworth | Schumer | |

NOT VOTING—2

| | |
|------|--------|
| Cruz | Markey |
|------|--------|

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 76, the nays are 22.

The motion is agreed to.

The Senator from Minnesota.

CORONAVIRUS

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise to address the impact that the coronavirus pandemic is having on rural America.

We know that it affects every area of this country. In the urban areas of our country, we have seen what this has meant to the people who are in crowded housing and to the people who work every day in our urban hospitals. We have seen it in the suburban areas with small businesses and with moms who are trying to figure out how to handle the summer with their kids, but the rural areas sometimes don't get as much attention. The Presiding Officer knows of this in his home State of Oklahoma. He understands this.

There are a lot of rural areas in our country that have suffered as well. They have suffered not only because of spikes in the virus, like we have seen recently, but also because of the economic implications—a farm economy that was already in trouble because of the price of commodities, because of world trade barriers, because of weather events. You name it. It has affected rural areas in a big, big way.

According to several recent reports, as of July 14, one-third of all rural counties are now considered red zones, places that in the last week of testing added 100 or more new cases per 100,000 people. Between June 13 and July 12, the number of new cases in rural counties increased by 150 percent. That is why we must take immediate action to provide the critical support that the rural areas need.

They are areas that may not have easy access to hospitals or that may have smaller hospitals. That is why the issue of funding for State and local governments, as long as we make sure the rural areas are able to share in this funding as well, is so important for the rural hospitals, for their equipment—all of this.

This is beyond what we all know already of the food supply chains and our nutrition programs. We certainly don't want a situation in which one can't get

homegrown American food. Just as we have learned with the medical equipment supply chain, we can't always get the swabs that we need for so much of our testing and the like.

I just want to make clear that people sometimes see rural areas as though they are out there, doing fine—all of these idyllic pictures. I don't think they understand the struggle, the fact that rural poverty for kids is often higher than it is in urban areas, and this was before the pandemic. To me, the pandemic has just put a big magnifying glass on some of these disparities that we knew already existed.

There is a more senior population in rural areas, so you have people trying to keep themselves safe. They are isolated in seniors' homes or in areas of smaller assisted living, where they are very, very isolated, even more so than they might be, but where they have their families nearby who can at least visit them through a window. That is even harder. So, really, all of these challenges conspire to make this a topic that we must discuss.

The operation of public hospitals, long-term care facilities, and first responder services during a public health crisis requires a significant mobilization of resources, and this relief package that I am pleased we are debating now—I would like to see more movement, but at least the negotiations are ongoing—must include the funding for rural area hospitals as well as for State and local governments. Local governments in rural areas are facing both falling revenues and increased emergency expenses. They have smaller margins under which they operate, which threatens their ability to provide essential public services and their ability to continue paying teachers and first responders.

The public health crisis is putting incredible pressure on our public health system, and many rural hospitals and health systems already have limited ICU beds and resources. The disproportionately low number of healthcare providers across rural America has been brought into sharp focus by this crisis. We have already heard stories of the hospitals that were once delivering babies but that lost one OB/GYN doctor and could no longer deliver babies. Then the family has to go miles and miles and hours and hours just to have the delivery of a baby in a safe situation. That is why we need to do much. It is the funding.

There is a bill that Senator GRASSLEY and I have that will actually allow some of the smaller hospitals—this was prepandemic—to exist in different circumstances, like emergency room circumstances, so they don't entirely close down. It is why I have led the reauthorization of the Conrad 30 Waiver Program, which has brought in over 15,000 immigrant doctors to fill the gaps. We also know there are issues of personnel in these hospitals—nurses and doctors. This is a program that allows for immigrant students who have

gotten degrees from American medical schools to be able to serve out their residencies in underserved areas in America, which sometimes means in urban areas that don't have enough personnel and which, lots of times, means in rural areas. That is why, in fact, the initial author of this bill was Senator Kent Conrad of North Dakota. It is because of the problem North Dakota had.

As I have traveled through the country in the last year, I have continued to hear about all of the problems we have in our VA hospitals and the like. They want to have these physicians who have been trained in America and have degrees from America to stay and not have to go back to their home countries when, in fact, they want to stay in America.

Helping rural hospitals also means ensuring they have vital protective equipment, like masks, gowns, and gloves; and medical supplies, like ventilators.

That is why I have urged the administration to deliver supplies from the Strategic National Stockpile and to protect consumers' access to medical and hygiene products.

It also means delivering additional resources for testing and for contact tracing, like the \$75 billion that the House passed in the Heroes Act, and it means expanding telehealth services, which my bill with Senators Casey and Capito—the ACCESS Act—would do.

I recently had the experience of my own dad, at age 92, with coronavirus. He ended up at age 92 surviving it, with just having lost 10 pounds and a very poor appetite, but he came out of it as strong as he went into it. But I didn't know that was going to happen, and I will never forget that moment of our family standing outside the window because, of course, we couldn't go in. We are standing out there en masse while he is in his room—or in a room that they had given him, because he got coronavirus—and they put the telephone on so that he can hear us on speaker phone, but he cannot figure out what is going on. He doesn't really understand, with his disease, why we are wearing the masks and we can't even hold his hand. And you don't know if that is the last time you are going to see your loved one at that moment. As it turned out, it had a happy ending for him, and he is doing fine, but not for everyone else that was in his home.

That is why these services, where maybe he could see us on a big TV, instead of maybe on the little iPhone when we do FaceTime, would make such a difference, not just to people in his situation who are in a small assisted living, with the need of services, but if people are there because they wanted to have a living situation where they could hang out with their friends and play bridge and the like. We are going to have to think of those senior facilities and the access we can give not only to doctors to consult

with patients, but also for them to be able to see their families.

This means broadband. That is why I introduced the Accessible, Affordable Internet for All Act—comprehensive broadband legislation led by Representative JIM CLYBURN of South Carolina. I was honored that he asked me to carry this bill in the Senate. It would invest \$100 billion to build high-speed broadband infrastructure in underserved areas. Underserved areas, a lot of times, as he knows from his State of South Carolina, include a lot of rural areas and rural farmers. In his case, there are so many African-American communities that are underserved by broadband, and it would make a big difference all over the country.

Senator CRAMER of North Dakota and I introduced the Keeping Critical Connections Act, which, again, is another way of focusing on low-income and on rural areas to help our small broadband providers who, in my experience, have tended to really put their money where their mouth is and actually build out in these areas so that people get high-speed broadband.

Our bill now has 34 cosponsors—half Democrats, half Republicans—and I keep working to ensure that students in low-income families, regardless of their ZIP Code, are connected.

I don't want to hear another story like I heard of the high school student who had to take her biology exam in the liquor store parking lot in town because she didn't have high-speed access; or the doctor who can, yes, see the x rays at his rural hospital, but if he wants to do work from home, as so many of us are doing in the pandemic, he has to go to the McDonald's parking lot to be able to view these x rays.

Iceland can do this. They have volcanoes. They are covered at times in ash, and they have been able to get high-speed internet to every person in their country. We should be able to do the same.

Farmers. I spent the morning on a number of Zoom calls with our farmers in Minnesota—our soybean farmers and others—and I have to say that they are in hard times right now. They are in hard times because, as I said, before this pandemic, we were having problems. Our food supply chain has been hit—from the farmers who grow our food, fuel, and fiber, to the workers in the processing plants, of which I have many in my State.

I was just in Worthington, MN, which is the home of one of biggest food processing plants that was hit hard by the coronavirus. They have put in place some better safety measures, and they are now operating.

There are the truckdrivers and barge operators, who deliver products to stores and export terminals and the families who may be struggling to put food on the table due to sudden unemployment.

When many businesses began shutting down in March, commodity futures prices tumbled, given the lower

demand for food and fuel. At the beginning of the pandemic, dairy producers estimated that milk prices would drop by \$2.85 billion in 2020. Cattle ranchers and hog producers saw the value of their livestock drop by 30 to 40 percent, and the futures price for corn and soybean fell 10 to 15 percent per bushel.

These losses occurred as farmers were still recovering from weather conditions that delayed or prevented harvest last year. Many farmers were barely breaking even as it was, and they began this spring planting season behind, and then they confronted the pandemic.

In March, we passed the CARES Act. It was not perfect. We all know that, but it provided \$23.5 billion in disaster assistance for farmers and livestock producers impacted by the pandemic. The Department of Agriculture began making payments in June, and, as of yesterday, they had processed over \$6.5 billion in payments to more than 473,000 producers.

But there is still money that has been unspent. That is \$14 billion. In addition to funding for the next package, it must reach producers of all sizes. This has been particularly hard in my State, waiting for that help.

The House has already taken action to provide additional direct assistance for farmers and dairy and livestock producers. I met with Representative COLLIN PETERSON, who heads up the House Ag Committee, this weekend, when we were both here, marooned in Washington, and went through the work that he had done, and I am very hopeful that we can do something similar in our bill here.

While farmers and livestock producers need emergency relief, we also must recognize that the pandemic has placed a significant strain on workers and consumers. We cannot slow the spread of the coronavirus when tests can take as long as 12 days to provide results.

A friend back in Minnesota, just a week ago or so, got a test. He felt sick, didn't want to get his family infected, and spent 6 days in the basement not being able to see his family, and it took that long to find the result. And then he found out he didn't have it. Those stories are just as similar but, of course, much more fortunate—but similar to people who wait when they are sick, and they need to know if they are sick. And not everyone has a basement to stay in. So the point of this is that these delays in testing are very, very difficult on our economy.

That is why, in May, I joined Senator DEBBIE STABENOW, the ranking member of the Agriculture Committee and my Democratic colleague on the Senate Agriculture Committee, in introducing the Food Supply Protection Act. The bill would provide support for food banks to upgrade their infrastructure to handle additional demands, strengthen food partnerships to prevent food waste, and protect workers through grants—and here we get to

what I was talking about—for protective equipment, test kits, and cleaning supplies.

Also, last week, I joined Senator JERRY MORAN of Kansas in introducing the Requiring Assistance to Meat Processors for Upgrading Plants Act, or the RAMP-UP Act, that we are doing together.

The closure of meat packing plants highlighted the need to provide consumers with more choices and farmers with more flexibility when marketing their livestock.

Our bill would help small and medium-size meat packers make improvements to their facilities so they can meet the standards necessary for Federal inspections. This will allow them to make sales across State lines and increase market opportunities.

These two important pieces of legislation—the Stabenow bill I mentioned and the one that Senator MORAN and I just introduced—should be included in the next relief package.

Another critical component to the rural economy is our Nation's biofuel industry. In the first quarter of 2020, biofuel processing plants purchased an estimated 1.3 billion bushels of corn and supported over 350,000 jobs.

Many of them are based, of course, in rural communities. In fact, a lot of our farmers own the plants. In fact, a lot of our local people depend on these plants for one of the major businesses in their small towns.

Even before the pandemic, the misuse of small refinery exemptions under the renewable fuel standard by the EPA had led biofuel plants to shut down.

I will never forget visiting a biodiesel plant in Iowa that had been shut down, and there was one worker left. His job was to maintain the plant, and he took me on a tour of the empty plant and then pulled out a coat rack that contained the uniforms of the people—his friends—who used to work there. And embroidered on the uniforms were the names of the workers, with names like Bob, Joe, Salvador. A tear goes down his cheek, and he said: I kept these uniforms. I keep them pressed on this coat rack because I hope they will come back and work here.

That was before the pandemic, and that is what we have seen because of some policies by this administration that claim that they wanted to help the Midwest but instead granted wholesale a bunch of exemptions, not just to the refineries. It is in there for a good reason—to help struggling refineries—but they, literally, granted those exemptions to Exxon, to Chevron, to dozens and dozens and dozens of companies. And that is before the pandemic.

That is why Senator GRASSLEY and I have taken this on in a big way. These losses—this is, again, prepandemic—have resulted in over 100 biofuel processing plants nationwide idling production or closing altogether. It is combined, prepandemic and during the pandemic.

That is why in May I introduced legislation with Senator GRASSLEY to sup-

port biofuel producers during the pandemic. Our bill involves reimbursement for their feed stock or commodity purchases through the first quarter of this year.

It is also why I led a letter with 19 Senators urging the EPA to deny 52 petitions for waivers that would enable more billion-dollar oil companies to receive small refinery exemptions.

The approval of these retroactive exemptions at this moment would only worsen the unprecedented economic challenges facing the biofuel industry. Competition is good in America. That is why we have the renewable fuel standard, because it is a nascent new fuel, and it had to really get into that market in a big way against Big Oil, which gets many more subsidies than the biofuels do. And this is not a time to go backward and shut down every biofuel plant in America, and that is where this administration is headed, if it keeps up these practices.

There is much more we must do to help our rural communities. I would note that one of the emerging issues I have heard about a lot in my State is these childcare deserts, and that is that rural families are seeing unavailable childcare. This is, again, prepandemic. It was a big problem, where you would have so many people who wanted to work but were unable to get childcare to be able to do that work.

That is not just in my State. It is all over the country. That is why Senator SULLIVAN and I introduced the Child Care Workforce and Facilities Act prepandemic, which would address the national shortage of affordable, quality childcare in these rural areas to help them expand their childcare workforces.

Right now, the economy is slowly but surely starting to reopen, and we know that for families who have been at home and the parents are still working, this has become harder and harder for moms and dads to figure out what they are going to do about childcare.

So this should be a time where we step back and say: OK, how are we going to deal with this, not just with the threat moving from the pandemic now, today, but the day after tomorrow? And I mean that as a metaphor for next year. How are we going to make this work for rural areas?

And I have gone through everything I think we need to do to get there: the healthcare, making sure that we have healthcare available in rural areas; the broadband, making sure that something we can do is available; the childcare deserts; and the ag economy.

I will say that there is a big argument for rural America right now, as we have seen that people are able, with the right connections, to work from home, and we need new ideas and new startups, and it is actually less expensive to start new companies in the rural part of this country, where the cost of living is lower.

We know that there are farmers that want to keep farming their small plot

of land in places like South Carolina and in places like Oklahoma and in places like Minnesota. But if we just allow rampant consolidation in the ag industry and the tech industry—where there is a hearing going on, as I speak right now, over in the House that maybe a few more people are watching—the point of it is this: We have to also take on consolidation during this pandemic and look at our laws next year. And I am not just going to wait for a bunch of judges to make decisions when they have been going against the antitrust laws now at the Supreme Court level for years—one loss after another. It just so cries out for a change in our antitrust laws. We have adapted these laws over the years.

I will end with one story involving that. I was at a small cafe a few years ago in Albert Lea, MN. A woman was there with her farmer husband and her brother-in-law.

She turned to me and she said: “I just saw you on TV.”

I said: “Was it about Russia and the elections?”

The Presiding Officer and I were doing a lot of work at the time nationally on protecting our elections from foreign interference.

I said: “Was that it?”

She said: “No. That wasn't it.” She said that it was on the local station. It was about States. It was about how things are getting too big, and it makes it hard for us.

We want to maintain our rural spaces. It is not just a romantic vision of the past. We want to maintain our rural areas for America. It is about having food that is ours, having it made in America so we are not dependent on foreign foods. It is about having our own energy supply, which can be varied and vast. It is about having our own technology and developing the next new idea and the next new iPhone. We are not going to be able to do that if we shut out a big swath of our country. That is not going to work. We actually want to encourage development in rural America. That is what I think we need to do.

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

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

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, just 75 days ago today, the Democratic House passed the Heroes Act. The Heroes Act was a comprehensive and I think very bold bill that addressed the very real needs that face this country as we struggle to contain the coronavirus.

During the 75 days that passed, we Democrats pressed the Republican leadership to take up the Heroes Act in the Senate, and for 75 days, we have been told no. The point was simple:

Bring it up, vote for it or against it, amend it if you want, but let's have some real action.

For 75 days we have watched the virus spread. We saw the death toll rise as President Trump stood by, denying the severity of the crisis, attacking the science, and assuring the American public that the virus would just go away on its own. For 75 days we watched as critical deadlines bore down on us for programs that offered a lifeline to the American people, including the expiration of Federal unemployment benefits and a moratorium on evictions.

This week, on Monday, after 73 days of waiting, Senate Republicans finally unveiled their proposals to address the coronavirus pandemic, and even some Republicans have said it is disjointed and in disarray. One has to ask, what has been done all this time?

Instead of one bill, it is a collection of eight different pieces of legislation, introduced by eight different Members. Instead of a cohesive package to address the needs of the American people and to get the virus under control, their proposals prioritize corporations over people. They put business interests ahead of society.

It is unclear whether the White House has blessed this package. It is even less clear whether it has the support of the majority of Republicans in this body. One thing that is clear: The priorities are completely misplaced.

My friends on the other side of the aisle seem to think they can fix our Nation's problems by simply forcing a reopening of the economy, forcing people back into the workplace, and forcing children back to school as if the virus isn't still spreading like wildfire. It is a terrible approach and would make us less safe.

Everybody wants to get the economy on track. We want schools to reopen, and we want to return to the workplace. But the only way to accomplish that is to contain the virus, slow the spread. That is the only thing that will give people the confidence to emerge from their homes and reengage in society and our economy. To do that, there are certain things we have to do.

We have to have quick and efficient testing and contact tracing. We need a vaccine, but we will have to have a way to mass-produce that vaccine, once we have it, to the people. We need to support unemployed Americans until we get through this crisis. We need to keep people from being evicted and losing their homes. We need to create safe working environments and safe learning environments for our children. Where children must learn from home with parents working from home, we need to make investments in the infrastructure they need to be successful.

The Republican bill fails on all these points. It has insufficient funding for testing and contact tracing. It has insufficient funding for a mass-vaccine campaign once we have a vaccine. It underfunds education programs. It uses

the money as a stick to force school districts to open even if the locality and public health agencies say it is not safe. It fails to provide much needed investment in broadband and internet access for rural areas to allow for distance learning where it is needed.

One teacher said to me: If you force us to open, what happens when a week after it opens, two children and two teachers have COVID-19? The school closes down for a period of time. Let's be realistic.

There is no increase for SNAP benefits even though more people are going hungry today in America. There is no new funding for State and local governments that are laying off teachers and healthcare workers and first responders as revenues dry up.

The Republican proposal inexplicably cuts Federal unemployment benefits to millions of workers. They insist this incentivizes people to go back to work. Where are they going to work? Where are the jobs? People want to work, but jobs are hard to come by. All this does is make more people destitute, put people more at risk of not being able to put food on the table or pay the rent.

To show why this proposal is a non-starter, let me share a few stories from Vermonters who have written or called or come into my office as I have been around Vermont this past weekend.

One man wrote to me because he is concerned he will be evicted from his home in the next few days. He has been out of work since March, only able to survive because of the Federal unemployment benefits in the CARES Act, which in this bill have been callously stripped away. His wife is taking classes at the local community college in the hopes of one day getting a better job. In just a few short days, they could face eviction because they can't afford to make their \$750 rent payment. Instead of inching ever closer to achieving the American dream, that dream is being snatched away through no fault of their own. Homelessness is now a real possibility for them.

He writes:

I hope that you and your fellow Senators can find a solution as soon as possible, because we are all affected by what happens in the Capitol.

He is right. Whatever is done here affects him and his family and all other families. What are the solutions being proposed? Unemployment benefits slashed, no rental assistance, and the expiration of the eviction moratorium. When is the last time anyone in this room struggled to make rent? Who are we to tell this man he does not deserve continued help from his government in the middle of a pandemic?

Another voter contacted me over the fate of her 98-year-old mother. Since March, her mother and the other residents of her nursing home have been confined to their rooms, unable to join each other for dinner and unable to participate in activities. The nursing home staff lack the necessary personal protective equipment and testing capa-

bility. She has not been able to even hug her own mother since the pandemic started.

She writes:

We can't just have a single-state or single-country response to this pandemic. We must all work together to take action now to support the most vulnerable members of our society.

I couldn't agree more. We need to work together. We need to protect the most vulnerable among us. We need to prioritize the most urgent of needs, but the Republican proposal doesn't do that.

Across our country, children are going hungry because their parents are out of work and the cost of food is on the rise. The Republican proposal includes nothing for SNAP and nothing for child nutrition. But there are multibillion-dollar giveaways to the defense industry. Republicans say they want 5 years of immunity for large corporations so they will not be sued if they force their workers back to work if they get sick, but they have no money in there for the protection of those workers. They protect the owners of the company who probably don't even come in the company. They protect them but not the workers in the company.

They take money to replace money that the White House basically took away to build a wall that Mexico was supposed to pay. Then, when I saw this in the proposal, here was \$1.7 billion for an FBI building that was going to be built either in Virginia or Maryland—\$1.7 billion to protect the aging building and prop it up. Why? Because if it were gone, somebody might build a hotel there. There would be potential competition with Donald Trump's hotel across the street. They are going to put \$1.7 billion of taxpayers' money in there to protect his hotel from any competition, but there is no money in it to ensure people can safely vote in our upcoming elections. What is going on? This is "Alice in Wonderland."

In the absence of a President who takes this virus seriously or is able to lead this country through the crisis, the American public needs Congress to step up. The Republican proposal fails to do this. It leaves people behind and our country and our economy even more vulnerable.

Let's stop playing partisan games and offering solutions only one party can get behind. Let's get something we can all get behind. Let's start bipartisan, bicameral negotiations on a bill that can be sent to the President by the end of next week. Let's make priorities of those programs that help us contain this virus and help us protect the vulnerable families like those I have seen the past several days in Vermont—a bill that puts us on the right track to reopening our economy.

Frankly, the American people can't wait any longer. The Vermonters who call and write into my office and stop me in the street to talk with me, they are pleading for help. They can't wait

any longer. And to do nothing—to do nothing is an abdication of our sworn responsibility to serve our constituents.

But to advance this patchwork series of bills offered by the Republican majority is worse. It is a disservice to the thousands of Americans who have died and the millions of Americans who have contracted this virus and the hundreds of millions of Americans who are looking to their government to do something so they can have their country back.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROMNEY). The Senator from Virginia.

(The remarks of Mr. KAINE pertaining to the introduction of S. 4349 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. KAINE. With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

HEALS ACT

Ms. ERNST. Madam President, 4 years ago, Jill Larsen opened Crayons 2 Pencils Early Learning Center in Norwalk, IA. This state of the art childcare center offers full day, before and after school care, and preschool-only programs for children from 6 weeks old to school age. They have even expanded to include a learning center and recreation center. It truly is topnotch. But when COVID-19 hit, Crayons 2 Pencils' enrollment dropped from 150 children to 32. And it was only through the Paycheck Protection Program that this childcare center was able to stay afloat and keep their workers paid.

Jill Larsen's story is not unique. Without the help of the Paycheck Protection Program, so many of our small businesses and childcare programs across the country would have gone under. Ninety-nine percent of Iowa's businesses are small businesses, and the Paycheck Protection Program has been a critical lifeline for so many of them.

I hear it time and again on my 99-county tour—most recently on a Main Street tour in Albia with some outstanding female small business owners. Nearly 60,000 small businesses in Iowa have received PPP loans, saving hundreds of thousands of jobs. But, folks, there are more funds left in the program, and many of these folks need additional help. That is why we should allow our most distressed businesses to receive a second PPP loan—so they can continue to keep workers paid and their doors open. The HEALS Act would make that possible.

While the Paycheck Protection Program helped the Crayons 2 Pencils daycare center keep their employees paid, as folks are getting back to work, these critical facilities are facing new challenges—making up for losses from decreased enrollment, trying to expand to accommodate more kiddos due to school closures, or acquiring critical medical supplies or PPE to create a safe and clean environment for these families.

Just recently, I held a telephone townhall, and I was joined by Iowa's director of health and human services, Kelly Garcia. We heard the concerns of Iowa parents and talked about the solutions we are working on at the State and Federal levels when it comes to childcare access and affordability.

Our working parents are anxious and concerned about what lies ahead. Do they have to quit their jobs to stay at home with the kids? How much will childcare cost? What happens if childcare providers can't open back up?

This is the reality for so many. That is why I made it a top priority to provide additional resources for our childcare programs and our families. Included in the HEALS Act is my bill to create back-to-work childcare grants, which would give providers the resources they need to make it through this crisis. It would also help them access PPE and other medical supplies so they can adhere to the safety guidelines and provide a clean and safe environment.

But it doesn't stop there. I am also working to assist our lower income families, those who rely on the child care and development block grants and those who simply need access to clean diapers.

Just a couple of weeks ago, I was in Davenport, IA, where I got to take part in a diaper distribution with the Hiney Heroes of the Quad Cities—yes, Hiney Heroes. As a result of this visit, the folks over at Huggies and the National Diaper Bank donated 25,000 diapers to this important diaper bank. We know that during this pandemic, the diaper supply has run short. I have teamed up with Democratic Senator CHRIS MURPHY on this effort to include additional assistance for our diaper banks.

COVID-19 has also created challenges for our farmers. These hard-working folks are facing new challenges while working around the clock to make sure Americans have adequate access to food and fuel. I was visiting with some farmers at the Bloomfield Livestock Market in Davis County not long ago, and they described these hardships firsthand. I hear the same from our ethanol and biodiesel producers. That is why I helped ensure more aid for our farmers and producers, including our ethanol producers and so many other important commodities in Iowa.

In our rural communities—like Montgomery County, where I live—COVID-19 has only amplified existing financial pressures on our healthcare centers. Most rural hospitals rely on

services such as elective surgery to keep them financially afloat, but because of the pandemic and the response to it, many hospitals have had to cancel these elective surgeries as protective measures due to the pandemic.

Additionally, the need for PPE and other equipment has significantly increased.

Lower revenue combined with higher expenses has made it incredibly difficult for these rural hospitals to stay afloat. We absolutely can't leave these folks behind. We need our hospitals to keep their doors open so that quality healthcare is accessible to all Iowans, whether they live in the big cities like Des Moines and Polk County or small communities like Red Oak, where I live, in Montgomery County.

As I have toured Iowa over the last several weeks, I have also visited with many of our essential workers. Our nurses, grocery store clerks, truck-drivers, childcare providers, and so many more have been working on the frontlines of this pandemic, rising to the challenge to care for and protect Iowans. That is why I am pushing hard to allow these essential workers to keep more of their hard-earned dollars by suspending Federal income and payroll taxes. These folks deserve a reward for their tireless efforts.

No amount of financial relief will make this virus go away, but Congress has a role to play in helping families get back on their feet, but it is also every single one of us doing our part—wearing our masks, washing our hands, and social distancing as much as possible. Together, with the help of every individual and all levels of government, we will get through this.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I want to talk about the portion of the bill that we have made available to our colleagues and the country this week after lots of input from our colleagues on the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education part of the bill. It is about 25 percent of the bill, almost \$250 billion. That money would be used to get us back on track toward vaccines that work, toward treatments that work, to provide additional resources for testing, for treatment, for care, to get us back to school, to get us back to work, and to get us back to childcare. These are all things that are critical for our economy and families to return in the way they want to.

For those things to work the way we would want them to work, our colleague Senator ALEXANDER put it very succinctly: All things run through testing. If you are going to go back to school, if you are going to go back to work, if you are going to go back to childcare, if you are going to be in a nursing home between now and the time we have a vaccine, we need tests that are easy to take and quick to respond. A test that you can take and have the answer in 10, 12, or 15 minutes