

have spoken about this threat. In fact, Director Wray announced that the FBI is opening a new China-related investigation on this topic every 10 hours—a new investigation every 10 hours—with around 2,500 counterintelligence investigations now going on around the country.

We have seen this type of research theft in my home State of Ohio, unfortunately.

Just a couple of months ago, a National Institutes of Health-funded researcher, affiliated with both the Cleveland Clinic and Case Western Reserve University, was accused of hiding that he had received more than \$3 million from the Chinese Government to effectively take and replicate his Cleveland Clinic research at a lab in China. He is actually accused of taking biological samples from Cleveland, OH, to Wuhan, China. And this was taxpayer-paid research by the NIH.

He is not alone. The NIH has recently reported that 54 scientists and researchers have either resigned or been fired as a result of an NIH investigation into American taxpayer-funded grant recipients for their failure to disclose financial ties to foreign governments, particularly China. In fact, according to the NIH investigation, more than 90 percent of the scientists had undisclosed ties to China.

Unfortunately, as it stands, our law enforcement agencies can't go directly after these researchers for hiding their foreign conflict of interest—for not telling the truth—while taking taxpayer money.

As important as it is that we speak out against these improper actions by China around the world, it is also critical that we take steps to clean up our own house right here in the United States and make America more resilient against China. One way we can do that is by stopping research developed in our labs and universities from going to benefit China's military and economy at our expense.

I am pleased to say we have an opportunity to change that right now because this legislation is included in the COVID-19 legislation and in doing so take a stand in a bipartisan manner in defense of our values of research transparency, collaboration, fairness, and national security.

Our legislation is called the Safeguarding American Innovation Act, and I introduced it, along with Senator Tom Carper and a group of bipartisan Senators, to ensure that individuals are held accountable for failing to disclose their foreign ties on Federal grant applications. It will also reform the State Department's vetting process for issuing visas to foreign researchers. It will require more safeguards on sensitive research from our research institutions and our universities and will help us better track who is working on taxpayer-funded research.

This bill is ready to pass the Senate. The Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee voted to ap-

prove it last week with bipartisan and unanimous consent.

I am pleased to say that, again, Leader McConnell has chosen to include this legislation in his phase 5 proposal, the CARES 2.0 package, because it will help protect taxpayer-funded COVID-19 research and serve as a safeguard for the \$150 billion that Americans give to scientists to conduct research every year. That is the taxpayer funding that goes into our research institutions. In that regard, including the Safeguarding American Innovation Act in this CARES 2.0 bill can and should be viewed as a fiscally responsible measure as we continue to take a firmer stance against behavior that China has gotten away with for way too long.

Let's do all we can to put vulnerable American institutions on a solid footing as well. It is time to put an end to the Chinese Communist Party's theft of our taxpayer-funded research, including COVID-19 research.

I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting the Safeguarding American Innovation Act.

MULTIEMPLOYER PENSION PLANS

Mr. President, I am also here on floor today to talk about another critical issue we should be addressing.

As we speak, there continues to be a looming crisis involving what is called our multiemployer pension system, and without reform, it is going to result in pension benefit cuts of over 90 percent for more than 1.4 million American workers and retirees and unnecessary bankruptcies for a lot of small businesses, including many in my home State of Ohio.

Multiemployer pension plans are defined benefit plans maintained by a lot of different companies, multiple companies, and a labor union that pool together their pension assets to cover all workers and retirees in the plan. The multiemployer system now comprises roughly 1,400 plans covering almost 11 million participants and their families.

Unfortunately, it is on the verge of collapse. Years of bad Federal policy with respect to funding and withdrawal, liability rules, losses on risky investments, and failure to take proactive action have led to this crisis, and the current economic slowdown caused by the coronavirus has made the situation even worse.

Not only is the system underfunded by about \$638 billion, but the Federal entity that insures these pensions, the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, is also projected to become insolvent in less than 5 years. So the multiemployer part of the PBGC, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, is projected to become insolvent in less than 5 years. We can't let that happen.

In my home State of Ohio, we have more than 50,000 active workers and retirees in multiemployer pension plans who are facing deep benefit cuts if we do nothing, with hundreds of small businesses contributing to these plans that could be forced to close if we fail to act.

There are about 200 small businesses in Ohio that are going to have huge liabilities, many of which are not going to be able to continue to operate. We can't let that happen.

Nearly 42,000 of those Ohioans, by the way—many of them veterans—participate in a single plan called the Central States Pension Fund, which is also the largest plan considered to be in what is called critical and declining status and is projected to become insolvent by 2025. It is that insolvency that will take down the PBGC if it is not already insolvent.

The good news is that proactive action now will reduce the cost of fixing the problem, will ensure a secure retirement for these participants and their families, and will ensure certainty for employers to make investments in good-paying jobs.

The further good news is that the House Democratic proposal which passed as part of the Heroes Act—it is called the Emergency Pension Plan Relief Act—is more similar to the Senate version, the Senate Republican structure, than the previous Democratic plan. So not only is the Democratic plan in their COVID-19 response bill, called the Heroes Act, but it is also more similar in structure to legislation that some of us have been working on over here on the Senate side. That means we have a better shot, I believe, this year than we have had in a long time to try to solve this crisis and do it in a bipartisan way.

In my view, in order to solve this, it is going to entail three key principles:

First, we are all in this together, and that means we all have a shared responsibility.

House Democrats have proposed using only taxpayer money to rescue these plans. None of the stakeholders are asked to, again, have any shared responsibility. That is not the way to get bipartisan support in Congress. Employers and participants must also share the responsibility, especially since about 94 percent of taxpayers do not participate in this system, many of whom are struggling with their own retirement security. As an example, somewhat higher employer contributions are required if multiemployer plans are to sustainably provide the benefits they promise.

Second, we need to ensure that we safeguard the long-term financial health of the PBGC so we aren't back in this fiscal crisis again soon. Part of that should be a new, small, variable-rate premium for plans, but we also need participants in federally rescued plans to pitch in with solvency fees paid directly to the PBGC. These do not have to be large payments.

The Federal Government and the taxpayer, I think, are willing to play a role as long as this is viewed as something that is part of shared responsibility. But it is important that all stakeholders are contributing to the health of the PBGC in addition to us

here in Congress and therefore the taxpayers because insolvency would be in no one's interest.

Finally, we have to ensure that there is long-term solvency for these multi-employer plans. That entails enacting some restructuring, some structural reforms to the funding rules governing employer contributions so that bailing out these plans doesn't become a habit of the Federal Government. We don't want to fix this problem and be right back in a few years having to fix it again.

We should gradually phase down the rate of return which plans assume in budgeting for promises that are made to participants, partly because that keeps these plans from going bankrupt and partly because that is just fair. Investment risk is a problem in these plans now, and we need to give more certainty to workers and retirees.

The pension crisis is an issue that I, along with Senator GRASSLEY, Senator SHERROD BROWN from Ohio, and many other colleagues here in the Senate, have been trying to solve for quite a long time. We had a bicameral and bipartisan solution very close at hand at the conclusion of a committee process that ended about a year and a half ago, but we weren't quite able to get there. I think it is achievable, particularly now, but only if we are willing to listen to each other and willing to come around the table for a real discussion.

Republicans have reached out. I reach out today. We are ready to find an acceptable compromise. We are ready to talk, but that discussion needs to be driven by the merits of solving this issue, not just the politics of the moment. We owe solving this problem to those beneficiaries—the retirees, the workers, the active workers in these plans—and to the small businesses participating in these plans. We have to find common ground. We have to deliver a sustainable and lasting solution.

I believe we have an opportunity right now, this month, to try to come together, working with the House and the Senate and the administration. Everybody has a responsibility to do it. We talked about shared responsibility with regard to the plans; there is also a shared accountability here in the U.S. Congress. This is our job. We can get this done. I think we are quite close now with similar structures and having gone through various iterations during the select committee process a year and a half ago. Let's do the right thing. Let's act now.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a pe-

riod of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO U.S. SENATE INTERNS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this summer, it was my privilege to select several talented young Kentuckians for an internship in my Washington Senate office. As a former Senate intern myself, I am proud of the individuals who are eager to apply themselves to public service.

I would like to take a moment to commend James Adams of Jefferson County, William Cohen of Jefferson County, Julian Colvin of Jefferson County, Garland Ellis of Bell County, Mary Grace Furnish of Harrison County, William Miller of Taylor County, Lauren Reuss of Spencer County, Samuel Rickert of Oldham County, Elizabeth Rupp of Fayette County, Madelin Shelton of Owen County, Victoria Sisk of Christian County, Jordan White of Campbell County, and Erdin Zukic of Warren County for their interest in serving the Commonwealth of Kentucky and our great Nation. Each of these young people has developed an impressive list of leadership experiences and extracurricular activities. Their applications stood out, and I was proud to offer them an internship.

Unfortunately, the coronavirus crisis forced the cancellation of this summer's internship program. The virus may have taken away this opportunity, but it can never change the great potential these Kentuckians have in store. I would like to thank each of them for pursuing public service and to extend my best wishes for a bright future.

TRIBUTE TO U.S. SENATE PAGES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, it was my privilege to select three outstanding high school students from Kentucky for this summer's U.S. Senate Page Program. These talented young people completed a highly competitive application process, and they represent the next generation of Kentucky's leaders.

I would like to take a moment to commend Jackson Hester, Charlotte McCarthy, and Thomas Schrepferman for their interest in serving the Commonwealth of Kentucky and our great Nation. Their applications showed a broad range of leadership experiences and extracurricular activities. These Kentuckians and their families should be proud of all they've accomplished at this young age.

Unfortunately, the coronavirus crisis made it impossible for the Senate Page Program to bring these students to Washington this summer. The virus may have canceled this opportunity, but it can never change the great potential these young people have in store. I would like to thank Jackson, Charlotte, and Thomas for their com-

mitment to public service and extend my best wishes for a bright future.

NOMINATIONS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, workers right now are dealing with unprecedented challenges and are making great personal sacrifices to keep the country running during this crisis.

And the nominees under consideration today for the National Labor Relations Board will play a critical role in safeguarding their rights and protections.

That is why I voted for Lauren McFerran to serve another term on the NLRB.

She is a dedicated, qualified, and well-respected public servant who had a proven track record of fighting for workers before she joined the Board and has stood by workers in enforcing these fundamental protections during her time on the NLRB.

But unfortunately, the opposite is true for Marvin Kaplan, the Republican nominee to the NLRB.

Mr. Kaplan spent his career working to further corporations' interests and gut workers' rights instead of protecting them. That is why Democrats opposed his nomination in 2017, and that is exactly what he has done since joining the NLRB.

He is exactly wrong to serve another term on the NLRB, and that is why I voted against his confirmation.

I am also extremely disappointed we do not have the nomination of another highly qualified Democrat to the NLRB, Jennifer Abruzzo, to consider today.

Years of Republican obstruction of highly qualified Democratic nominees to critical worker protection agencies like the NLRB and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission shows a blatant disregard for longstanding deference to the minority party and is a significant departure from the customs of this institution. It is unacceptable, and I will not stop pushing for Democratic nominees.

I urge my colleagues to vote today to stand up for workers and their rights.

I would also like to say that, after months of delay from my Republican colleagues, the COVID relief proposal Republicans put forward this week is incredibly late, profoundly inadequate, and can't credibly be considered a starting point for negotiations.

It gives corporations a "get out of jail free" card to prevent employers from being held accountable for keeping their workers safe and a license to discriminate including on the basis of age, race, sex, and disability status.

And instead of expanding unemployment benefits that have been a lifeline for workers in my home State and across the country—which by the way, are due to expire tomorrow—Republicans have slashed them.

This bill doesn't get us anywhere near where we need to be on developing a vaccine that is accessible and affordable to every person and is completely