

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I would just say that the fact that the Senator from Oregon is down here right now instead of the Democratic leader I would characterize as movement in the right direction. And the fact that he is making a proposal that is based upon legislation that, as he mentioned, he has introduced that actually has a trigger, if you will, or a way of phasing down unemployment benefits, I think, is a step in the right direction because, up until now, every time that the Senator from Arizona has come down here to offer up a 1-week extension of unemployment benefits—and, by the way, I think it is very reasonable and, to the Senator from Oregon's point, I find it hard to believe that any State and any computer system which is already paying out the \$600 bonus wouldn't be able to continue that. It strikes me as just really unexplainable that you would have problems adjusting a computer system that is already programmed to pay \$600 to continue to do that for an additional week. That defies logic to me.

So I think that is a very reasonable request. It would allow us additional time to work on proposals like what the Senator from Oregon has suggested. And there are others out there. The Senator from Utah, Senator ROMNEY, has a proposal that would ramp down the unemployment benefits over time. It seems to me, at least, we might be able to find some common ground there between what the Senator from Oregon has proposed and what the Senator from Utah or other Members on our side have proposed.

I do believe that what the Senator from Oregon is suggesting—that is, to lock in the \$600 bonus indefinitely—one, puts it on autopilot; two, sort of takes Congress out of the equation; and, three, it continues to offer a benefit that, for five out of the six people who are receiving unemployment benefits, offers them more in terms of a benefit than what they were making when they were working.

That, to me, is something that I think needs to be addressed. And if you talk to any small business across this country right now, they will tell you one of the big challenges they have is trying to find workers and to compete with an unemployment payment that actually pays them more than when they were working. Trying to get those employees back, I think, has been a real challenge for a lot of the employers across the country.

So I think that is an issue that has to be addressed, and I have heard people on this side of the aisle, both House and Senate, say the same thing. There have been Democratic Governors who say the same thing, that the \$600 benefit needs to be modified in a way that more reflects what people were actually making when they were working.

So I think there is some common ground that we can find, but, again, the idea that has been advanced by the

other side prior to the Senator from Oregon coming down here, which has been put forward by the Democratic leader, is that the Heroes Act should be taken up and passed by unanimous consent. That has been the unanimous consent request now on multiple occasions when Senator MCSALLY or others have come down here to try and get action on this unemployment issue, which is to come over and offer unanimous consent to pick up and pass the Heroes Act, which, as we all know, is not a serious piece of legislation.

In fact, the Democratic leader's paper of record in New York, the New York Times, said: "The bill was more a messaging document than a viable piece of legislation." That comes from the New York Times. Many of the proposals in that legislation had nothing to do with the coronavirus and, in fact, addressed a lot of other what I would call extraneous items on the policy agenda of the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives, to include mentioning "cannabis" more times than it mentioned the word "jobs" in that legislation.

There are studies authorized in the Heroes Act that look at diversity—diversity—in the cannabis industry—more mentions of that than mention of the word "jobs," which I think right there tells you that it wasn't a serious piece of legislation.

It, furthermore, included—if you can imagine this—tax cuts, tax cuts for Manhattan millionaires. Tax cuts for Manhattan millionaires is included in the Heroes Act—again, not something that has anything to do with helping the people who are hurting as a result of the pandemic or get at the point that the Senator from Oregon is talking about; that is, addressing the unemployment issue.

So I view this as progress. I view this as movement in the right direction, the fact that the Senator, not the Democratic leader, is down here offering an unemployment proposal, not the Heroes Act. I hope we can build on that and find that common ground that would enable us to address clearly what are serious needs among lots of Americans who are, through no fault of their own, unemployed as a result of this pandemic.

Having said that, I will object to the request of the Senator from Oregon right now but suggest to him that he and Democrats other than the leader—and I think there are a number of Democrats on this side of the aisle, including those who lead committees like the Senator from Oregon, who is the ranking member on the Finance Committee, a committee on which I serve and with whom I have worked on a lot of issues—can sit down and find common ground.

But as long as rank-and-file members and leaders of relevant committees are sort of locked out and the leaders continue to try and do this behind closed doors, it is going to be very hard, I think, to find those types of practical, real-world, commonsense solutions.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, while my colleague is here, just a brief reaction—and I think my colleague knows that you don't go out and negotiate from the seat of your pants on the floor.

First, I want to be clear on this proposal. This is a proposal the Democratic leader and I, as the ranking Democrat on the Finance Committee, worked very closely together on. It is a proposal that many Senate Democrats think could be the basis of reform, and lots of people who look at the future of these kinds of economic challenges find this idea attractive. That is No. 1.

No. 2, my friend from South Dakota thinks that somehow the benefits can just be turned on with a snap of the finger. The National Association of State Workforce Agencies have said that the proposal offered by the Senator from Arizona would not get benefits that make rent and pay groceries to people anytime soon.

The question is, Are you going to solve a real economic challenge here? The economy has faced, last week, a staggering economic contraction. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the last numbers, there are four unemployed workers for every job. This idea that unemployed folks don't want to work is just insulting.

What unemployed people tell me at home is that if somebody offers them a job on Monday night, they will be there first thing Tuesday morning.

What is really needed are solutions to this question of unemployment insurance that ties the benefits to the real world conditions on the ground. In fact, when you have unemployment like this—well over 10 percent—the \$600 extra per week coverage is clearly what is necessary to make rent and pay groceries. But make no mistake about it—I see my colleague from South Dakota leaving the floor—I listened when he said that there ought to be a benefit for folks when unemployment is high and that when unemployment goes down, the benefits would reflect that. That is the American Workforce Rescue Act.

If my colleagues are saying they want to back S. 4143, I would like to get that message in a direct kind of way.

With that, I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:18 p.m., recessed until 2:16 p.m. when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. CAPITO).

MORNING BUSINESS—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

THE GREAT AMERICAN OUTDOORS ACT

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, this morning, I had the privilege of attending the President's signing of the Great American Outdoors Act.

Now, this is a town, Washington, DC, that is accustomed to hyperbole—that is exaggeration—and excessive partisanship. Yet, today, we had neither. As the Secretary of the Interior said, the bill the President signed is, clearly, the most important conservation and outdoor recreation legislation that has passed in this Congress and become law in at least a half century. It may only be exceeded by the actual funding of the National Park System itself as it was gradually created, over time, to become an agency with 419 properties.

This legislation does two things.

One, it tackles the deferred maintenance backlogs in the Park System. By that I mean, look at our campground in the Great Smokies, which normally has 5,000 families camping there, but it has been closed for a number of years because the sewage system doesn't work. There are examples all across this country, from the Pearl Harbor Visitor Center to the National Mall, of worn-out trails, of roads with holes in them, of roofs that leak, and of sewage systems that don't work. As a result, campgrounds are closed because bathrooms don't operate.

All of these are our national parks and our public lands, which is where we want to go and where we especially want to go right now because what all of us want is to get out. We want to get outdoors. We want some fresh, clean air that we can breathe.

The head of Bass Pro Shops was telling me at the White House this morning that, at first, COVID really hurt Bass Pro Shops and that they had to close a lot of stores. Guess what is happening now. The purchasing of fishing licenses is going up at a record level. People are taking their sons and daughters and grandsons and granddaughters fishing and hunting—outdoors and to the parks. This is something that everyone who cares about the outdoors has been worried about since the last generation—that young people were not going out to the parks. They are going today because they want to get outside.

So today was a wonderful day, and everyone agreed that this was the most important bill for conservation and the outdoors in at least a half century. The Republicans agree with that. The Democrats agree with that. Hundreds of conservation groups agree with that. The President of the United States also agrees with that. It is no exaggeration to say that something remarkable and historic happened today when the President signed the Great American Outdoors Act. It is also accurate to say it was wholly bipartisan because it never would have passed if it had not been, and it barely passed even though it was. It took a Herculean effort. So I come to the floor briefly today to talk

about some of those persons who made a difference in this historic event.

There were many marchers in this parade. There always are when something passes in the U.S. Senate. One Senator never really does anything. It takes a parade of Senators—almost always of both parties—and it takes the House of Representatives. It also takes the President of the United States.

Because Presidents don't always get the credit they deserve, I want to say that there were many marchers in this parade—there were Democrats and Republicans, and there were hundreds of outdoors groups—but this historic conservation legislation would not have happened had it not been for President Trump. Here is why.

He is the first President of the United States to allow and support the use of money derived from energy exploration on Federal lands for deferred maintenance in our national parks, and if the President and the Office of Management and Budget don't support that, it is not going to happen, which is one reason this bill hasn't happened even though people have been trying to do it for years.

I mentioned the history of this and the deferred maintenance. As the Secretary of the Interior pointed out, it was in the Eisenhower years when we had the last big investment in our National Park System. I know for a fact that the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which was the other important part of this legislation—\$900 million a year permanently for the Land and Water Conservation Fund—was a recommendation of the Rockefeller Commission in the Lyndon Johnson administration, which Congress enacted in 1964.

I spent some time on that myself when I was Chairman of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors in 1985 and 1986. It was our No. 1 recommendation that Congress should do what had been recommended in 1964, and now we are in 2020.

So good people have been working since 1964 to make the Land and Water Conservation Fund permanent, and it was signed into law today. Good people have been working since the Eisenhower years to deal with the deferred maintenance backlog—the potholes, the roofs, the sewage systems, the visitor centers, and the malls—in our national parks. That bill was signed today. It is historic. If the President had not allowed the money to be used in that way and had not supported it strongly in the Republican caucus, where we had some trouble getting enough votes until we got plenty of votes, it wouldn't have happened.

He did one other thing which people don't know about. Our bipartisan group of Senators asked me if I would ask him, when he visited Tennessee in early March, if he would add to the bill or if he would support adding to the bill the national forests and the national wildlife refuges in the Bureau of Land Management and the Indian

schools, which are in disrepair, so that the deferred maintenance of all of those would be added to this.

He said: Yes, let's do it.

I called that information back to the bipartisan group of managers, and the group was excited. It was added to the bill, and that became law today as well.

Take the Cherokee National Forest, which is adjacent to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. We hear more about the Smokies, for 10 million, 11 million, 12 million people go there every year. It has a \$224 million maintenance backlog. This will cut that in half over 5 years. The Cherokee National Forest is right next to the Smokies and has 3 million visitors a year, which is more than most national parks. It has a \$27 million backlog, and this will cut that in half. The Indian schools will get hundreds of millions of dollars in order to build them back up, and they are in bad shape.

So the President deserves credit for that. There were many important marchers in that parade, but it would not have happened without President Trump.

Let me just mention some of the other marchers, and let's talk about the ones in the U.S. Senate. I will not go on at great length about them, but I do want to acknowledge them.

Let's start with Senator WARNER, of Virginia, and Senator PORTMAN, of Ohio. They, in working with the National Parks Conservation Association and others, introduced the bill to reduce the maintenance backlog in the parks. Secretary Zinke came to Tennessee 3 years ago and asked me to do a similar thing, and I worked with Senator KING of Maine. We introduced a bill. Then we put those bills together. So Senator WARNER, Senator KING, and Senator PORTMAN deserve a lot of credit for the work they have done on that part of the bill.

Then we have the Land and Water Conservation Fund. I mentioned how long that work had been going on. Senator BURR of North Carolina has been an advocate of that for many years. Senator CANTWELL, a Democrat from Washington State, has been as well. More recently, Senator MANCHIN, who is the ranking Democrat on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, has taken a major leadership role in the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Then there were Senators GARDNER and DAINES. If there were a parade, you would have to say they were the drum majors. They were out front. They helped to work with the President. They helped to work with this group. So you can see what kind of parade we are talking about.

Senator HEINRICH of New Mexico—a strong, progressive Democrat, with great respect in his caucus—made sure that we kept the thing on balance and brought a real conservationist zeal to this effort.

We take him for granted, but let us give Senator MCCONNELL, the majority