

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.