

I know there are some who say the investments we are proposing are too much. Well, what I would say to them, as a former chair of the Budget Committee in the Senate, is that budgets are statements of our values and our priorities, and I believe that one of our top priorities at all times, but especially in a pandemic, should be making sure that students and families and educators do not have to choose between safety and quality public education.

The parents and families I am hearing from are under such immense pressure right now. My question to Republican leaders is, why, when things are already so hard, are you determined to make them harder for people who are already struggling so much?

This question is personal for me for a lot of reasons, one of which is because, when I was growing up, my family fell on hard times. My dad, who was a World War II veteran, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, and he couldn't work any longer. That meant that my mom, who had stayed home to raise our family, had to take care of him while also working to support our family. Her job didn't pay enough to support me and my six brothers and sisters or cover the growing medical bills. For several months, we had to rely on food stamps, and then my mom got Federal support to go back to school, and she got a better job. My brothers and sisters and I got grants and student loans to go to college.

The point is, I know things could have gone a far different way for us had the government just said: Sorry; you are on your own.

Well, right now, families across the country have fallen on incredibly hard times. They are worried and scared because, so far, "You are on your own" is largely what this Republican-controlled Senate and administration have told them.

We owe every worker and family, including immigrant families—so many of whom are on the frontlines of this fight—relief that reflects the depth of this crisis and helps them get back on their feet, just like mine was able to; relief that helps kids learn safely and keeps families in their homes, with food on the table, until we can get through this; relief that helps us come back stronger as a nation. It is not too much to ask. In fact, it is what we are supposed to be here to do, and it is what I and Democrats are going to keep fighting for.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

TRIBUTE TO JOE BARKSDALE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, for the benefit of my colleagues who want to speak next, I have a 1-minute remark and approximately 5 minutes of remarks.

Today is National Chocolate Chip Cookie Day. It is a perfect day to salute an Iowa entrepreneur who built a cookie empire at the Iowa State Fair. Last year, his business sold 2 million chocolate chip cookies during the 11 days of the fair.

A lifelong salesperson and legendary concessionaire, this 92-year-old Iowan is in a league of his own. After more than a quarter century rolling cookie dough at the State fair, Joe Barksdale decided it was time to hang up his apron. However, his legacy will continue for generations to come. He is paying it forward by giving back to the people of Iowa. Joe gifted his legendary cookie recipe to the Iowa State Fair so that its profits could be reinvested for years to come.

As of today, Barksdale's State Fair Cookies has a brand new home. The permanent cookie building will shorten customer wait times with a dozen sales windows. For anyone who hasn't tasted this State delicacy, I suggest you put it on your bucket list.

CATTLE SPOT PRICING

Mr. GRASSLEY. On another matter, Madam President, Iowa is home to 86,000 family farms and leads the Nation in the production of commodities, such as corn, where we are No. 1; soybeans, No. 2; pork, and eggs, No. 1. Iowa also ranks in the top 10 in cattle production, as many family farms raise livestock alongside their corn and soybeans.

The 2017 USDA Census of Agriculture showed over 23,000 farms in Iowa that raise cattle or calves, with annual sales of \$4.7 billion. Caring for livestock takes a spirit of commitment, selflessness, and, of course, hard work. These farmers get up very, very early in the morning, work on their farms all day, and are active members of their communities. These families and their values form the foundation of what makes up our rural communities across Iowa.

However, over the years, the consolidation of the beef industry has threatened the very livelihood of these families and rural communities where they reside. From the 2012 USDA Agriculture Census to the 2017 Agriculture Census, Iowa lost nearly 1,500 cattle producers. This is not a new issue to the beef industry. The concern of fair and transparent cattle pricing has seen increased attention due to disruptions in our food supply chain. It has been very obvious during this period of the virus pandemic.

For background, the U.S. Department of Agriculture mandates price reporting for live cattle and tracks the spread between fed cattle prices—what the producer gets paid—and the boxed

beef values, which is what the packing company gets paid.

For the years 2016 to 2018, this spread averaged about \$21 per hundredweight. Soon I will be comparing that to a very, very big increase from that \$21. However, during April and May, there were major beef supply disruptions, as large numbers of plant workers contracted COVID-19. Because there are only four companies that slaughter 80-percent of the cattle, companies have the advantage of purchasing cattle from thousands of producers, acting as a chokepoint for the entire industry. These packers dominate the marketplace and limit opportunities for price negotiation.

During this time, in these recent months, packer profit margins topped out at a spread of \$279 per hundredweight compared to the \$21 that I previously mentioned. This was the largest spread between the price of fed cattle and the price of boxed beef since the inception of the mandatory price reporting law of 2001. So while all the packers were making record profits, the independent producer had nowhere even to market his livestock.

It is important to note that the impact of consolidation doesn't just hurt producers. It hurts consumers. We have seen the price of ground beef and steaks—a staple in many American diets—double or triple recently. Grocery stores also limited the amount of meat that families could buy. All this has made it very clear that the cattle market is broken and real action is needed to fix it.

Thankfully, the Trump administration stepped up to this cause. It has responded with two decisive actions to address the country's cattle market. First, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Justice are both investigating the practices of these packing companies, particularly the four that dominate the market. While this will take time, President Trump has personally asked for these investigations and said he did it because he wants to protect the family farmer.

Second, on July 22, the USDA issued a significant report that lays out a roadmap to fix the cattle marketplace. The U.S. Department of Agriculture mentions 12 different ways to create additional price discovery, increase marketplace competition, and have a more transparent relationship between the price of live cattle and the beef products that the consumer buys.

This investigation and report are very much a breath of fresh air, particularly for this Senator who has been bringing this issue to the attention of Agriculture Department and Justice Departments under both Republican and Democratic administrations for a long period of time. We have had multiple administrations from Democrats to Republicans ignoring independent cattle producers and the broken cattle market. So I am very grateful that President Trump and Secretary Perdue