

and economic disaster. Instead, the President engages in a pattern of denial and delay, downplaying the scope of this crisis.

This failed approach has led to thousands of premature deaths, double-digit unemployment, shuttered businesses, and spiking infection rates throughout the country. The economy will not snap back until we get COVID-19 under control and until States and communities have the resources they need to get a handle on this public health emergency.

The costs of fighting COVID-19 is rising. State and local budgets are now under severe strain while demand for essential public services, including medical care, safety, and sanitation, is going up and up and up. Moreover, schools need additional resources to reopen and support students, and the revenue that is coming in to our States and cities and towns is insufficient.

Without more help, they will be forced to make drastic cuts which, in my State, could mean cutting critical funding for hospitals and nursing homes in a State with one of the oldest populations in the country, zeroing out the State's job training program, closing a prison facility, cutting Medicaid eligibility for vulnerable adults, and reducing childcare reimbursement rates, impacting working families and childcare providers throughout the State.

With State and local governments forced to lay off more workers, the unemployment crisis worsens, the customer base for Main Street shrinks, and the economy slides even further away from rebuilding. Indeed, the U.S. economy shrank at a 32.9-percent annualized pace between April and June.

We must break this vicious cycle by passing another emergency relief package that is right-sized to the challenge.

The CARES Act is about \$1.7 trillion, a huge number—difficult to fathom. It wasn't enough. Not even close. In fact, the pricetag was smaller than the 2017 Republican tax bill. Those who now claim they can't afford to help the unemployed and the communities throughout America are the same who quickly passed that \$1.9 trillion tax bill in 2017, which largely benefited big businesses and the very wealthy at the expense of the average taxpayer who needs our help now.

If there was a will then to spend so much so quickly on an ill-conceived and misdirected tax bill, the majority should have no qualms about spending whatever it takes now to beat this virus that is attacking our citizens and our economy.

For starters, we need improved testing and contact tracing, more support for our hospitals and healthcare providers, and an effective approach to vaccine development and distribution. All while preserving as much of our economy as we can to have a strong foundation from which to rebuild and rebound.

As Federal Reserve Chairman Jay Powell said last Wednesday, "The path of the economy is going to depend to a very high extent on the course of the virus, on the measures that we take to keep it in check. . . . We can't say it enough."

That is why we need additional and flexible Federal assistance for State and local governments that are fighting this virus on the frontlines while also trying to keep their local economies afloat. I said before the CARES Act passed, we needed \$750 billion for State and local governments to do both. The CARES Act included \$150 billion, and I have new legislation to provide \$600 billion more.

We should support our State and local governments because they support our economy and, just as importantly, they protect our constituents from COVID-19.

By standing in the way of additional Federal funds for State and local governments, Republicans may force these governments to raise taxes on our constituents, make additional cuts to critical services, or worst, do both. Let's avoid more self-inflicted pain.

Getting a handle on COVID-19 also means keeping families in their homes and avoiding waves of evictions and foreclosures that would lead to a major spike in homelessness, which would likely mean more infections.

At the same time, we should continue expanded unemployment benefits and provide nutrition assistance so people in desperate circumstances, through no fault of their own, can afford to pay their bills and eat. We must provide relief for the hardest hit businesses, many of which will continue to be shut down for the foreseeable future, including relief to the transportation sector.

Any agreement should also include more help for childcare providers, public schools, and college campuses to safely reopen, and support for libraries to keep our communities connected. We must do all of this so that once we have gotten a better handle on the coronavirus, we have enough workers and businesses with which to rebuild our economy.

We also can't lose sight of the need to safeguard our election infrastructure. Our Nation and our economy can't take any more uncertainty. Hand in hand with that is supporting the U.S. Postal Service and its employees, who will play an integral role in delivering mail ballots and are continuing to provide a lifeline to Americans.

For the past 60 consecutive years, Democrats and Republicans have come together to strengthen our national security by passing the National Defense Authorization Act. I hope we can carry this same spirit of courtesy and cooperation as we craft the next fiscal relief package. Indeed, our national security also depends on the critical pillar of a strong and vibrant economy. We need to act sooner rather than later on a comprehensive and robust fiscal package.

With that, I yield the floor in the hopes that we will move quickly to legislation that will satisfy the needs of our cities and towns of all Americans so we can move forward together.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

TRIBUTE TO GEORGE KAROS

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I rise today to honor and thank a very good friend of mine, Mayor George Karos of the city of Martinsburg—I said his name wrong, and I don't want to do that because he is a good friend of mine—for his great service to the city of Martinsburg and the entire State of West Virginia.

He was always really great to work with and always gave credit to staff, and he did it with such good humor.

George is the son of Greek immigrants who did not speak English when they came to this country. They moved to Martinsburg before he was born. George was born in the early 1930s. George has called Martinsburg his home his entire life.

Growing up, he worked at Patterson's Drug Store on Queens Street, where he swept the floors and rode his bike to deliver prescriptions. Over time, he worked his way up in the ranks, taking over the soda fountain and eventually worked as an assistant in the pharmacy section of the drugstore.

George did leave Martinsburg briefly when he served his country in the U.S. Naval Hospital Corps, where he was stationed at both Bethesda Naval Hospital and Quantico Marine Corps Base in Virginia. He eventually returned to his home that he loved—Martinsburg—and he returned to Patterson's Drug Store, which he later bought in 1980 and operated until his retirement in 2015. He then began a career as a public servant.

George was first elected to the city council as a councilperson-at-large in June of 1974, where he served for 26 years.

Following this, he decided to run for mayor of Martinsburg, and he served as the mayor for about 20 years and will retire this year at the age of 88.

George and I started our careers together. I started as his Congresswoman in the year 2000, and George started as mayor.

I know I speak for all of those from the Martinsburg community when I say that Mayor Karos truly made Martinsburg a better place to work and live.

I have had the honor and privilege of working closely with Mayor Karos during his entire time serving as the mayor of Martinsburg. We had a field hearing out in Martinsburg, and I remember the mayor being there and welcoming us. I see him at many ribbon cuttings and openings. I have been to his drugstore to be served at the counter. He is just a wonderful, wonderful man.

One of my proudest moments with Mayor Karos was when we successfully secured the funds for infrastructure improvement, such as the Big Spring water plan and the Raleigh Street expansion project. George also helped create The Martinsburg Initiative most recently, which is a program I have spoken about before many times on the Senate floor.

This initiative is spearheaded by the Martinsburg Police Department, the Berkeley County Schools, and Shepherd University, as well as a wide array of local partners, such as the Boys and Girls Club of the Eastern Panhandle.

The goal of the program is to stem the horrible opioid addiction problem by identifying and trying to eliminate the basic causes of drug abuse in at-risk families. The mayor has been dedicated to this. The program is extremely successful and has made a tremendous impact in the Martinsburg community.

It is also a perfect example of how a community can come together at different levels and work together to create a lasting and impactful solution to a big, big problem.

Through the actions taken under Mayor Karos's administration, countless children in the Martinsburg area have now seen that there is a life away from illicit drugs and opioid addiction.

George exemplified hard work, dedication, and loyalty. He still does. This is evident in the length of time he served his community and also through the results that came from his vision and his collaboration with so many others in Martinsburg.

The rest of the State agreed with this because George was named "Mayor of the Year" and "Public Official of the Year." This came as no surprise to me and many, many others.

George's favorite motto is "Plan your work and work your plan." That is what the mayor did. His second motto was something I think we could probably use around here: "A closed mouth catches no flies." These were the words George followed every day when he was working as mayor. They helped to keep progress moving, and they perfectly describe how George conducted himself each and every day, which is why he was reelected many times but also so beloved in his community.

After 46 years of devoted service to his city and the community, Mayor Karos is retiring. While I am sad that this chapter is coming to a close, I am grateful for the opportunity to work together with him to better the city of Martinsburg. His leadership, successes, and his life mottos will serve as an example to follow.

I really thank Mayor Karos for being a good friend and for letting me get to know him. I really thank him for his service and wish him the very best in his retirement.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I had the chance to at least hear the end of Senator CAPITO's speech. I thank her for the work she has done on the opioid issue that she was talking about. It is one of the very productive areas of bipartisanship going all the way back to CARA with Senator PORTMAN and myself. I know West Virginia, like Rhode Island, had a terrible situation. I appreciate very much her comments.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am here today for a different topic. I am here for the 269th time with my increasingly battered "Time to Wake Up" poster to try to alert this Chamber to the threat of climate change—something, obviously, Louisiana knows very well—and to the forces that are blocking action on climate.

In these climate speeches, I have talked often about the insidious encroachment on American Government of special interest power, which is what is behind all this climate denial and obstruction.

It didn't happen on its own. The fossil fuel industry's political forces used the cover of anonymous funding—what we call dark money—and they used phony front groups and clever propaganda to accomplish their aims.

In effect, these fossil fuel political forces have run a covert operation against our own government. We observe the disturbances; we hear the rustling in the leaves; we see strange sites, but many of us haven't connected the dots. Those who are familiar with some of the elements may not put the whole story together. Some are so accustomed to this sinister behavior that they think it is normal. Some folks are like a city dweller in the jungle, needing a field biologist to identify the behaviors going on around them.

Let me give you this field biologist's overview. We understand pretty well the crew of bad actors lurking behind climate denial. Democrats in the Senate have repeatedly called out and reported on this web of denial funded by the fossil fuel industry. Investigative journalists like Jane Mayer and scholars like Naomi Oreskes have dug into this scheme. There is actually a robust academic subspecialty that analyzes this web of denial as a novel socioeconomic and political phenomenon.

The covert special interest machinery behind that effort is not just dedicated to opposing climate legislation. Another covert operation it runs is chronicled in our recent Senate Democrats' report here that examines the bad actors behind the special interest Court capture operation. This operation has crept forward over years, even decades. The Republican Party is more the tool of this effort than its principal. Big donors are behind it. The goal here is to fashion for the donors a Supreme Court that will not just rule for but reset society's ground rules to favor the big donors behind the scheme.

On yet another front, there has been recent public reporting revealing the bad actors rushing to stand up a new and improved Republican voter suppression apparatus as they start to panic about the November election.

Earlier this year, longtime partisan court fixer Leonard Leo stepped down from his formal role as executive vice president of the Court capture command center at the Federalist Society. At the same time, a mysterious new project called the Honest Elections Project began voter suppression work in swing States like Florida, Nevada, Wisconsin, and Michigan. It ran ads accusing Democrats of cheating with mail-in ballots; it sent threatening letters to election officials challenging voter rolls; and it filed legal proceedings—lots of legal proceedings—arguing for more voting restrictions ahead of November.

But in their hurry, they did a weak job of covering their tracks. Reporters quickly uncovered that the Honest Elections Project is a rebrand of the Judicial Education Project—a key cog in that same Leonard Leo's machine.

As the Guardian reporters who broke the story observed, "By having a hand in both voting litigation and the judges on the Federal bench, [Leo's] network could create a system where conservative donors have an avenue to both oppose voting rights and appoint judges who would back at that effort."

Last, we pretty well know who funds the massive and often anonymous political operation that props up the Republican Party. Take 2016, for instance, when the fossil fuel billionaire Koch brothers' political operation spent \$2 million on ads targeting viable Democratic candidates in just two Senate races—Ohio and Wisconsin.

Over a year before the election, they were already at work bombing those candidates. They didn't use their names. They hid behind phony front groups. It took years to dig this out, but that is what happened.

The anonymously funded U.S. Chamber of Commerce spent nearly \$40 million in 2016 and 2018 supporting Republican House and Senate candidates.

Dark waves of untraceable dark money pour everywhere into Republican elections. From slips and leaks and investigative reporting, we can see enough overlap across these four efforts to state the general proposition: It is the same crew.

If you look at it as a covert operation run by special interests against their own country, it has at least these four programs, but it has one set of interests behind it: They run the climate denial covert op. They run the Court capture covert op. They rushed out the voter suppression op. And, with their money, they captured the Republican Party to use as their front.

If this operation were not covert, if it were obvious, if the press and the public could readily connect the dots, it wouldn't work. People would know it was fossil fuel polluter money. They