

and the American people stand with them in their journey.

HEALS ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, on an entirely different matter, stop me if the story I am about to tell sounds familiar.

The Speaker of the House and the Democratic leader summon President Trump's representatives to the Capitol. They meet for a long while. The Democrats emerge, saying they have permitted a few millimeters of progress, but a deal is still far off, leaving millions of Americans in the lurch. Then they continue to push their \$3 trillion wish list that even their own Democratic colleagues brush off as absurd. We have had variations on this theme daily for more than a week now.

Yesterday, the Speaker of the House called their far-left proposal a "well-developed strategic plan," but even Members of her own caucus know that is not true.

Back when the Speaker's wish list was rammed through the House, one Democratic Member came right out and said that the so-called Heroes Act "isn't a plan. It's a wish list."

Another said that Members of her caucus had taken the bill as "an opportunity to make political statements . . . that goes far beyond pandemic relief and has no chance at becoming law."

Others said it was "not focused" and "partisan gamesmanship."

These are Democrats I am quoting.

Even the Speaker's own rank and file know it is comical to say your "strategic plan" for COVID-19 involves sending taxpayer checks to people who are here illegally, paying people more not to work than essential workers earn by working, soil health programs—so-called "environmental justice" grants—and a massive tax cut aimed directly at wealthy people in New York and California.

That last point needs special attention.

Now, in ordinary negotiations, Members of Congress like to bring things home for their core supporters, but it is a little too on the nose for the Speaker from San Francisco and the Democratic leader from New York City to be holding up \$1 trillion in emergency aid for the entire country unless they get big tax breaks for millionaires in their hometowns.

Economists across the political spectrum say this demand of theirs is a bad idea because 94 percent of the benefit would flow to people who make north of \$200,000.

In the words of one progressive economist, who ought to be on their side:

This is not a good idea. . . . It would not help the economy heal and would not benefit the people who need help.

Yet my friends in the Democratic leadership are not deterred. More than a week into these talks, they are still threatening to block any and all relief

for struggling people unless big city penthouses get these tax cuts. The Democratic leader said just yesterday that he is still holding out for this.

Now, this isn't the only bad policy they are hung up on. The Speaker and the Democratic leader continue to insist that Federal unemployment assistance should pay people more not to work than the essential workers who have kept working. Let me say that again. The Democratic position has been that these millions of laid-off people should get nothing unless they get a higher salary than the people who are still working. This isn't just bad economics if you are trying to reopen a country; it is also just simply unfair in the simplest terms.

The Republicans want to keep providing some supplemental Federal unemployment. We just don't think it is remotely fair for the Federal Government to tax essential workers who have kept working every day so Uncle Sam can pay their neighbors a higher salary to stay home. Let me say that again. We just don't think it is remotely fair for the Federal Government to tax essential workers who have kept working every day so Uncle Sam can pay their neighbors a higher salary to stay home.

Outside of the Democratic leader and the Speaker of the House, even Democrats concede it is a bit upside down to pay people more not to work.

Last week, the House Democratic majority leader said: "It's not \$600 or bust."

Our colleague, the senior Senator from Maryland, has said: "We certainly understand we don't want to have higher benefits than what someone can make working."

Just yesterday, the senior Senator from West Virginia stated plainly that Speaker PELOSI's position was untenable. "I don't think we're going to stay at the \$600."

Let's bear in mind, even \$200 would be eight times what the Democrats put in place with unified control of the government during the last crisis in 2009. It is unthinkable they will hold every bit of relief hostage unless we land back at \$600 and pay workers a bonus if they do not help to reopen our country. Maybe the Speaker and the Democratic leader will get the memo from their colleagues sometime soon.

Then there is the Democrats' demand for \$1 trillion more to hand out to State and local governments even though they have only spent a fourth of the money we sent them back in March.

Yesterday, I received an urgent letter from the city of Malibu, CA—and I promise I am not making this up—asking Congress for hundreds of billions of dollars for State and local governments because it has had to delay its "conversion to an all-electric city fleet."

I guess that is an emergency in Malibu when they can't keep buying brandnew electric cars as quickly as they would like. Well, this emergency

is hitting most of America very differently.

My constituents in Kentucky have bigger problems. They need actual relief to go straight to struggling families, and, frankly, they needed it yesterday, not a \$1 trillion slush fund for bureaucrats who haven't spent what we sent them back in March.

Those are just some of the fantasy items that are in the Democrats' demands. I haven't even gotten to all of the important things they left out. Their bill costs three times as much as the Senate Republicans' HEALS Act, but they skip over major, serious things that we took care of.

The Democrats proposed fewer resources than the Republicans for the fund to help schools reopen safely. The Democrats completely shortchanged the successful Collins-Rubio Paycheck Protection Program, wherein our bill would fund a whole second round. The Democrats have no real equivalent to our proposals to strengthen domestic supply chains for PPE and critical resources, and they propose no legal protections at all for the doctors and nurses who have fought this unknown enemy or for the schools, universities, churches, and businesses that are trying to reopen. Apparently, those soil health experiments and diversity initiatives didn't leave enough room for the critical policies that would actually help the country.

But, remember, our Democratic colleagues told us from the beginning their goal was never a targeted plan for COVID-19.

In March, one of the Speaker's top lieutenants said the Democrats should view this deadly disease and mass unemployment as a "tremendous opportunity to restructure things to fit our vision." Speaker PELOSI herself called this crisis a "wonderful opportunity." It is clear they view it that way because, while Americans are struggling, the Democratic leaders have moved about 1 inch in 8 days.

For the sake of the millions and millions who need more help, let's hope they decide to get serious soon.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY
LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, negotiations on the next round of COVID relief continued yesterday and will continue again today. Speaker PELOSI and I are making progress with the White House, but we remain far apart on a large number of issues.

As I mentioned yesterday, the fundamental disagreement between our two parties is the scope and severity of the problem. This is the greatest economic crisis America has faced in 75 years and the greatest health crisis in 100. There must be a relief package commensurate with the size of this historic challenge. A skinny package—a package that doesn't solve so many of the problems that America faces—would hurt the American people, and we cannot have it.

But our Republican friends are wedded ideologically to the idea that government shouldn't take forceful action; that we should leave the welfare of the American people to the whims of the private sector. It just doesn't work like that, especially in a time of national emergency. The private sector cannot do it.

While we have started to generate some forward momentum, we need our partners in the White House to go much further on a number of issues, let alone the Republican Senate, where 20 or so Republicans, by the majority leader's admission, don't want to do anything.

For example, the administration has finally come around to the view that we should extend the moratorium on evictions, but they continue to refuse to provide actual assistance to the renters themselves. What good does that do? We can prevent Americans from being kicked out of their apartments for another few months, but if they can't pay the rent, they will be right back at square one when the moratorium expires, with even more unpaid bills piled up. Extending the moratorium on evictions solves only one-half of the problem.

Republicans continue to stonewall support for State, local, and Tribal governments, which have already shed more than a million public service jobs this year and will continue to lay off teachers, firefighters, and more if Congress does nothing.

In the early days of the crisis, State and local governments fought this disease basically on their own. The Trump administration couldn't be bothered to coordinate a national response or supply them with the necessary resources. Now Leader MCCONNELL and others on the Republican side say our States

should just go bankrupt. They put zero into their proposal for State and local and would like Republican Senators to go home and tell their Governors, tell their mayors, and tell their county executives: We want zero for you. That is what our leader is for. Well, it is not acceptable.

On unemployment insurance, a few Senate Republicans have belatedly accepted the view we should extend the enhanced benefit of \$600 for an extended period of time, as Democrats have proposed and voted for in the House. Of course, many Senate Republicans—most Senate Republicans—still object to that, but at least a few have come around. At the moment, however, the White House is not there, and we are not going to strike a deal unless we extend the unemployment benefits, which have kept nearly 12 million Americans out of poverty.

The same goes for healthcare, testing, and tracing. How is it that everyone in the White House can get tested, everyone in the NFL can get tested, but average Americans still cannot access tests easily or get results back fast enough? More than 7 months into the crisis, this administration does not have a plan or adequate capacity for testing and contact tracing. It is a shocking failure on the part of the Trump administration and the Republican Senators.

So Democrats are insisting that we provide enough resources to finally slow the spread and defeat this disease—the single most important thing to our recovery. The American people know that the Trump administration and their Republican adherents in the Senate are to blame for this huge failure in testing and tracing. They demand we act and act fully now, not with some half-baked, poorly funded plan that won't do the job, which is where the administration seems to be at right now.

Democrats are insisting that every American should be able to vote this November safely and confidently in person or by mail. COVID has affected how we will vote. Many more will vote by mail. There will be a need for polling places—maybe more of them—and a need to space people out as they vote. We are not going to stop fighting until State election systems and the post office, which is part of getting the mail there on time, get the resources they need.

Elections are a wellspring of our democracy, and the only answer as to why neither the Republicans in the Senate nor the White House wants to do anything about it is they fear a free and fair election. That is inimicable to the core of this Republic.

We are going to keep fighting. There have been alarming reports about recent failures at the post office, about residents in Michigan and Pennsylvania not getting their medicines or their paychecks for 3 weeks or more. The Postal Service is vital—and not just for elections but every single day.

The new Postmaster, Mr. DeJoy, a big donor to President Trump—which many believe is his main qualification for being chosen—has enacted new guidelines in the post office that experts say will cause severe delays in mail delivery. Then he refused for weeks to even hold a phone call with Democrats, including myself, about this issue. I called three times. Mr. DeJoy evidently didn't have the time to call back when I was so concerned about mail delivery in New York and the rest of the country. So we have insisted to Mr. Mnuchin and Mr. Meadows on meeting with Mr. DeJoy, which will take place later today.

We need to resolve the problems at the post office—this lack of funding and the new regulations that get in the way of the timely delivery of the mail. We must resolve those issues in a way that allows mail to be delivered on time for the election and for the necessities that people need.

Each and every one of these issues is critical, and there are many more. We need answers and movement on all of them, not just on one or two, but some of our Republican friends seem content to pass a bill—any bill—so they can check the box and go home. We cannot do that. We cannot agree to an inadequate bill and then go home while the virus continues to spread, the economy continues to deteriorate, and the country gets worse. So we are going to keep slogging through, step by step, inch by inch, until we achieve the caliber, the extent, the depth and breadth of the legislation that the American people need, deserve, and want.

In stark contrast, the Republican leader has decided that he would rather lob partisan pot shots from the Senate floor each morning rather than join in productive negotiations. It is difficult to listen to the Republican leader spin such a malicious fiction about why Congress has yet to pass another round of relief when he can't even sit in the room with us and negotiate, when he can't even create a modicum of unity in his disturbingly divided caucus.

For 3 months, Leader MCCONNELL and Senate Republicans put the Senate on pause when it came to the coronavirus. As COVID threats spread throughout the South and West, as States hit daily records for new cases and hospitalizations, as 50 million Americans filed for unemployment, the Senate Republican majority merely hummed along as if it were living in a different universe.

Leader MCCONNELL scheduled confirmation votes on rightwing judges. The chairman of Judiciary and Homeland Security held hearings on the President's wild conspiracy theories about the 2016 election and conducted desperate fishing expeditions, hoping to dig up dirt on the family of the President's political rivals. When the Republican majority did put legislation on the floor, it wasn't even remotely related to COVID.

All through that time, Democrats came to the floor to practically beg our