

in the middle of a pandemic and becoming homeless, having to skip meals because their family can't afford enough food each month, going to school in a district that laid off teachers and staff due to the coronavirus recession, which means packing too many kids into classrooms, which can be dangerous.

Let's forget about all of that same old Republican deficit talk. It is the same old routine from a decade ago and a decade before that and a decade before that. The Republican deficit talk was nowhere to be found when they passed—over the opposition of Democrats on the Finance Committee—a \$2 trillion tax handout overwhelmingly benefiting multinational corporations and the wealthy.

Americans struggle with the pandemic and the joblessness crisis right now. The Senate needs to deal with it right now.

As Senator STABENOW said—she eloquently launched this important discussion, and I know my friend from Oregon is here to be part of it—it is certainly not another Thursday in the Senate, not another garden-variety, end of the week when you have enhanced unemployment benefits expiring, and 160,000 Americans dying. It is unthinkable—unthinkable—that anybody could be going home when there are so many challenges right in front of us.

I hope the majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, and my Republican colleagues understand the power of what Senator STABENOW has basically outlined, because there are times on a Thursday afternoon in the Senate where I think you could say you wouldn't have the kinds of challenges we are talking about. This is not one of them. This is one where, on issue after issue, there are crises: the COVID crisis, the joblessness crisis, and now we have a legislative malpractice crisis by Senator MCCONNELL leading his Senators.

I urge him to come back, work with us, bring about the negotiations we need, as I said again and again, on unemployment.

I am not going anywhere—not anywhere. This is one of the most important causes I have ever had the opportunity to be a part of. Even with all of the challenges with unemployment, I can only imagine, Senator STABENOW, how much more hurt there would be in America without those millions of people getting the money for groceries and rent and paying medical bills and car insurance and keeping the lights on.

We need the majority leader and Republican colleagues in the U.S. Senate to work with us. There is no time to waste. They ought to be recognizing the power of what Senators have said here today. That negotiating needs to take place now rather than having yet another break for Senators to pursue other kinds of matters.

I thank my colleagues.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, is this just another Thursday? Are things going along well in America, with nothing to worry about, nothing to keep us up at night, nothing to keep mothers and fathers up worried about the health of their children? Is this just another Thursday with America doing well, or are we here in the midst of the worst pandemic in a century since the Spanish flu? You wouldn't know it from this Chamber. You wouldn't know it from the majority leader's shutting this place down.

Is it possible that we are in the worst economic implosion since the Great Depression? Is this just another Thursday?

You wouldn't know that we are in a terrible economic collapse based on the fact that the majority leader is treating this period of time like just another Thursday, when everything is fine and everything is good in America.

It is almost 3 months ago that the House passed a robust bill to address the pandemic and to address the economic implosion—3 months ago. Why didn't the Senate say immediately, we will act, as well, because we are having big issues in America? They didn't act after the first week after the House acted. They just treated it like another week, no concerns. They didn't act in the second week. We are now 11 weeks since the House acted and still the majority leader says: Don't worry, be happy. It is just another Thursday. All is good in America—no concerns, no anxiety, no worry. Just be happy.

I can tell you what I am hearing from Oregonians. They are saying it is not just another Thursday. They are saying our State government is estimated to lose \$10 billion in revenue over the next two bienniums—a little less than \$3 billion this biennium, a little more than \$4 billion in the next biennium, and about \$3 billion after that. That is \$10 billion of lost revenue for core programs, like healthcare, housing, education, and transportation. That is a pretty big deal in terms of the foundations for the programs Oregonians count on.

I am hearing from a whole lot of parents—moms and dads—and they are saying: This is not just another Thursday. We are worried about our children's education.

I recognize there are a lot of rich people in America paying for tutors for their children, maybe two tutors for a child—maybe a math tutor and a reading tutor, maybe a special education tutor, who knows—because they are rich.

You know what, most of America are ordinary Americans who count on the quality of our public schools. I can tell you, a lot of parents are worried about how are they going to be able to have an education for their children given

the challenge in the school if the school can't afford to convert the way it operates, either in the school, in a very altered manner, or providing workstations and computers and broadband so every child has the ability to work online.

Now, we know that even that is going to be far insufficient because so many children are in households where there isn't going to be the type of full-on, all-day assistance to help them utilize that online access. We know that. Shouldn't we be providing the resources to minimize the gap between the best-off and ordinary families? Shouldn't we be trying to do everything for our children?

My dad was a mechanic. A mechanic who works in the sawmill is called a millwright. He said it is the best job in the world. If he could keep the machinery humming, it meant that every worker had a job to come to, and it meant the company made money. Everybody was happy if he could keep the machinery running, and he did. He did a marvelous job.

He was pretty disappointed when the company was bought by an investor and the mill was shut down overnight and the timber that the company had was sold to another company, a bigger company. But, in that context of a father with a powerful ability to keep machinery humming that would benefit so many other people, he loved the fact that we had good public schools.

He told me: Son, because we live in America and have these public schools, if you go through the door of that schoolhouse and you study hard, you can do almost anything in our country.

What a glorious vision for an ordinary, working American to say to their child: Because we live in America, you can do almost anything, in our country. The horizons are boundless because we have good public schools.

But it is 11 weeks since the House acted. Have we acted to provide good public schools? All of our teachers and our administrators and our parents and our school boards are saying we are just around the corner from the ordinary start of school. It is either just before or just after Labor Day.

Where is the U.S. Senate? MITCH MCCONNELL sent us home. He shut this place down while our children's education, preparation for a very unusual and difficult year, goes untended because there aren't the resources.

I can tell you, I am hearing a lot from the medical community. My wife, Mary, is a nurse. She is a home hospice nurse, so she goes and coaches families as their loved one goes through the final chapter of their life here on our planet. A lot of these folks that she visits, because they are in hospice, it, by definition, means they are quite ill. Often, the families around them are elderly, and they are very concerned about any presence of COVID, coronavirus. What she hears is that we need to tackle this pandemic.

What do the scientists and healthcare experts say? They say a national investment in personal protective equipment; they say a national investment in a testing strategy to be able to do massive numbers of tests to help identify folks who are carrying the virus and spreading the virus but are asymptomatic, as well as those who actually have symptoms; and a massive national investment in tracing so that we can follow up when somebody is identified as carrying the virus—Who did they get it from? Who did they have contact with?—so those folks can go into quarantine and stop the chain of infection from person to person to person.

The House, 11 weeks ago, passed a bill that has massive resources for testing and tracing, and for 11 weeks, the leadership of this body has said: Not needed. Let's do nothing. Let's just treat this as just another Thursday. No concern.

Then I hear from folks who are really worried about the nutrition for our children—not just the education but nutrition. We worked hard to get the EBT program to help out because of school sites being shut down, but what about this coming year? Why aren't we helping with nutrition?

The House, 11 weeks ago, acted, but here, it is just another Thursday—no crisis, no concern when children across America are going hungry. The bill that the House passed had resources for State and local government to help address the hemorrhaging of funds. I noted that Oregon predicts, just in its State government, a loss of \$10 billion over next three biennium—or this biennium and the next two. For them to sustain their basic programs, they need help.

I heard today from the president of one of our public universities—our 4-year university, Oregon State University in Corvallis—and they were estimating a massive loss of revenue. They need this bill, which would direct support for our 4-year institutions. They know that the State, if it is going to be able to sustain its support for the universities, so that the money doesn't come in the front door and out the back door, we need to provide help to the State government. I know this isn't a blue-red issue. I know that blue and red Governors are saying the same thing. I know blue and red county commissioners are asking for the same help.

So I say to my colleagues, it is morally unacceptable to just say: This is another Thursday. All is well. We have waited 11 weeks to act after the House. What is another week? What does it matter if a family that has been able to pay its rent or its mortgage or its utilities or put food on the table because they got \$600 a week extra help in unemployment, what does it matter if they lose their home? What does it matter if they are evicted?

Well, I will tell you this: It matters a hell of a lot—a huge impact on that

family for a long time to come. I don't know how many of my colleagues have worked in the area of assisting homeless families, but when you are destabilized, when you are tossed out, when you experience homelessness, when you are living in your car with your kids or it is a basement this week and it is a van the next and who knows what shelter will let you in, it destabilizes and knocks you down for a long time. It makes it hard to get ready to go to a job interview. It makes it hard to present yourself effectively in a job interview. It puts all kinds of stresses on the family relationship.

Is it really OK that we shut the Senate down when families are going to be evicted because we shut off that \$600 per week and the moratorium on evictions expired?

This, colleagues, is not just another Thursday. This is a moment of national crisis, a pandemic crisis, an economic crisis, and we need to be in crisis mode. We need to be here day and night. We need to be working on each of these issues that were addressed 11 weeks ago in the House while this body sat on its hands.

Sitting on your hands when the people of America need us, that is not acceptable in the U.S. Senate. Let's act boldly. Let's act decisively. Let's recognize that we must rise to meet this national challenge and do so now.

I yield to my colleague from Michigan.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

CORONAVIRUS

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I want to thank both of my friends from Oregon. We are Oregon strong on the floor. We have great, powerful, effective Senators from Oregon, and I want to thank Senator MERKLEY for his words, as well as my colleagues and friends from Delaware and New Hampshire and Maryland.

We are on the floor today because we know this isn't just another regular Thursday where you can close up for the week and go home and do whatever is going to be done and then maybe come back Monday, maybe Tuesday, maybe Wednesday. We don't know because we don't know what is happening on negotiations. But, oh, well, there is no real sense of urgency anyway, right?

There is an incredible sense of urgency, and, as we have been saying this afternoon, this should not be treated like just another end of the Senate week on a Thursday afternoon. We have the largest health pandemic in a hundred years. As of today, it is about 160,000 deaths in this country. You can't even wrap your head around that: 160,000 people. Yet we are a little over 4 percent of the world's population. We have 25 percent of the deaths.

This did not have to happen. This should never have happened. It should never have happened. And to be in a situation where people are acting as if

we have got all the time in the world—how many people have to die before we wrap our arms around what is happening and have a national strategy on testing and on contact tracing and a national strategy to make sure we have all of the testing materials and the PPE and everything that our doctors and nurses and other professionals need and we are treating this with the seriousness that it deserves?

This is a health pandemic. We have to get our arms around this. We have to be able to manage it until we can get vaccines. We did come together and work together on a bipartisan basis in the beginning. That is what is just so frustrating and disheartening and maddening about this situation we are in now, as we go forward, because it is not done.

I wish it was, for my own family and everyone else's. It is not even close to being done, and we have a responsibility to continue to be there and to have people's backs to address the pandemic and all of the economic hardship that has happened as a result of that.

Now, in the CARES package, it was comprehensive. It was great that we were able to come together. One of the things was that the Treasury, the Fed, was able to basically have the capacity to have a safety net under the stock market, under our large businesses: Don't worry. Keep investing. We have got a safety net for you.

But for somebody on unemployment, somebody who is worrying about feeding their children tonight, tomorrow, the next day—somebody who is worried that the water is going to get shut off or they are going to lose their shelter right in the middle of a pandemic when we tell people, "stay home and, by the way, wash your hands frequently," and then the water gets turned off or you have no shelter and you are on the street or you can't feed the kids, or the additional money—the \$600 that was allowing you to pay those bills—goes away, which is about a 60-percent cut, in Michigan, for people getting help—no safety net for you. Unh-unh.

There are over 31 million people right now who are on unemployment insurance, and somehow, people want to have us believe that nobody wants to work, that there are over 31 million jobs out there and people just don't want to take them; they just don't want to work.

I can tell you that is not true in Michigan. People in Michigan work. We grow things. We make things. We innovate. We build things. People in Michigan work and work hard.

It is not their fault that we have a 100-year health pandemic that has pushed everybody back down and taken away the capacity for businesses to be safely open and for people to continue their jobs. People would expect that in the United States of America all of us would care about that and that it wouldn't just be another Thursday afternoon, closing up shop for the weekend or beyond.