

Here is another one of those dead-on-arrival demands: Democrats insist that working families, small businesses, and healthcare providers will not get any more help unless a new trillion-dollar slush fund for poorly managed States tags along. Bear in mind that States and localities have only spent about a fourth—a fourth—of the money we already sent them last spring.

Even Senate Democrats seem to acknowledge this, for example, by sponsoring legislation that would extend the deadline for the States to spend down their CARES Act aid. The States need extra time to spend what we have already sent them, and the serious estimates of the COVID shortfall that State and local governments may face are a fraction—a fraction—of the Democrats' trillion-dollar demand. Their demands aren't based on math. They aren't based on the pandemic. They want a massive slush fund to make up for decades of mismanagement.

It is just how the Speaker explained her view of the crisis. This is what she said:

This is an opportunity. Every crisis is.

That same opportunism leads them to another absurd demand. Democrats say nobody should get any more help unless—unless—the Federal Government sends out jobless benefits that pay more than what people made working. Republicans support extending a Federal supplement for unemployment—make no mistake about that—but we share the view of Democrats like the House Democratic majority, the senior Senator from Maryland, the Democratic Governor of Connecticut, all of whom indicated it should be doable to land somewhere smarter than a flat \$600.

This is not complicated. Both sides want to help unemployed people. Republicans never wanted the Federal benefit to lapse to zero and tried to extend the money. But as our economy tries to reopen, there is no reason Uncle Sam should take taxes out of essential workers' paychecks to pay other people more to stay home.

This is just a flavor of the Democratic demands. The two parties should have been able to agree on a huge sweep of subjects—from testing to school money, legal protection to direct payments and more. Republicans wanted to reach an agreement everywhere we could and then continue to fight over the contested questions later. Democrats said no because they know their unrelated wish-list items would have no prayer—no prayer—of standing on their own merit.

Only these hostage tactics could possibly get their bad ideas across the finish line. So struggling people have waited and waited and gotten nothing. That has been the Democrats' decision. Reporters can call it "hardball," like this was some ordinary standstill, but families are suffering. Americans are dying. This is not a Washington game; it is a national crisis. It would serve

the Nation better if the Democratic leaders would act like it is a crisis.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Mr. President, America is living through a crisis that exceeds anything we have seen in generations. Other countries were able to test their populations, isolate cases, and contain the spread of the disease, but here the failure of the Trump administration to develop or implement a national strategy to defeat COVID on the health front and economically has meant that the disease has raged through our country for 7 months, is still spreading, and the economy is in very bad shape.

We have over 5 million confirmed cases of COVID-19. It just took 17 days to go from 4 million Americans with COVID to 5 million. Unemployment is higher than it ever was during the great recession. More than 150,000 Americans have died. Small businesses every day are closing, and those that are still open are struggling. Families can't afford to feed their children. Americans can't pay the rent and will be thrown out of their homes. Millions are out of work, and many more worry that they will be out of work in the month or two to come. This is a huge crisis.

In this time of national emergency, Democrats believe we must focus on the health and economic security of the American people. If we don't address the health crisis, nothing else will matter, but we have to focus on economic security as well.

We have to keep Americans in their homes, put food on the table, prevent them from slipping into further hardship and poverty. That is what ani-

mated Democrats to develop a \$3.4 trillion plan to finally crush the virus and rescue American families. It was based on the needs of our country, both health and economic, the needs of our schools and businesses and workers and our healthcare system. We Democrats tell America, We have your back. Unfortunately, our Republican friends do not.

In our negotiations with the White House, Chief of Staff Meadows and Secretary Mnuchin were unable to go above \$1 trillion, and their \$1 trillion was far short of the country's needs. Democrats offered to come down by \$1 trillion. We asked our counterparts—Secretary Mnuchin, Mr. Meadows—to come up by \$1 trillion, meet us in the middle. They said no.

So last Friday, after our negotiating session with the White House, I made it clear that the reasons our talks had stalled was that the White House had basically declared "my way or the highway." They were unwilling to meet us in the middle. They said that in the room. I guess imitation is the sincerest form of flattery because now Leader MCCONNELL is blaming Democrats for the breakdown in negotiations, using the exact same language. He said Democrats are the ones saying "my way or the highway." Seriously, that is what the Republican leader, who wasn't even in the room and will not dare go in the room, claims.

Let's go over the facts—the facts. We said to the White House: We are willing to come down by \$1 trillion. Will you come up by \$1 trillion and meet us in the middle? The White House said: No, we are not budging. So to whom does this logic apply? Who is intransigent? Who is really saying "my way or the highway?" The answer is obvious. This is not a "both sides to blame" situation.

Democrats are willing to compromise. Republicans are being intransigent and will not move from their position, which is totally inadequate for the needs of America during the greatest economic crisis we have had in 75 years and the greatest health crisis in 100. That is where we are: Democrats willing to move and meet in the middle, Republicans intransigent. Republicans declared "my way or the highway," and rather than defend their position, they falsely accuse Democrats of doing the same.

Now, rather than trying to break the logjam, as a true Presidential leader should, President Trump sits on the sidelines and just issued a bunch of weak and unworkable Executive orders. He slashed the enhanced unemployment benefits, asked the Americans who are out of work, through no fault of their own, to take a pay cut. He deferred the payroll tax, which even Republicans admit will do nothing to help our workers and the economy and would undermine Social Security and Medicare to boot. And the President's Executive order on evictions is more like an Executive suggestion. It doesn't

even guarantee a moratorium on evictions. It merely instructs Federal agencies to “review” or “consider” one and does nothing to help renters actually afford the rent.

Here in Congress, the Senate Republican majority delayed for 4 long months, failed to come up with a proposal that had the support of their own caucus, and then gave up and left it for someone else to figure it out. That is why MCCONNELL is not in the room. Facing the greatest domestic crisis in the 21st century, where Americans are hurting healthwise and economically, the Senate Republican majority ran down the clock, tossed up an air ball, and then subbed themselves out of the game.

Even now, as Leader MCCONNELL claims that Democrats are blocking relief, there are 20 Members of the Republican caucus, according to their own leader, who will not vote for anything—no more relief. A group of Republican Senators came to the floor last week to warn America about the national debt, not the health crisis, not the economic crisis, not the looming housing crisis but the national debt. It is something that concerned those same Members very little when adding nearly \$2 trillion to the debt in order to give big corporations a giant tax cut in 2017.

Listen to this one: The Senator from Wisconsin, Mr. JOHNSON, said yesterday:

From my standpoint, the breakdown in talks is very good news. I hope the talks remain broke down.

Let me repeat that. Senator JOHNSON said:

From my standpoint—

Reflecting the views of many Republican Senators—

the breakdown in talks is very good news. I hope the talks remain broke down.

Why did he say that? Because he doesn't want to spend one more nickel. Despite the huge health crisis, the huge economic crisis, people losing their jobs, small businesses closing, we shouldn't spend a nickel. This is not both sides. This is one side only.

When President Trump called COVID-19 a hoax and told the country to go take bleach and other quack medicines, some of my friends here made disappointed noises. But when the President said the virus would just disappear, it seems the Republican Senate bought it.

After we came together to pass the CARES Act, Republican Senators pushed all their chips to the middle to bet with President Trump that the virus was going to miraculously disappear. The Republican leader said: I am going to put the Senate on “pause” and see what happens. Last week, he actually defended that position, saying that his delay “allowed us to learn the coronavirus didn't mysteriously disappear.” Millions more people out of work, hundreds of thousands of small businesses closing, many more people

getting COVID and some more people dying, and, now, after all that, the Republican leader says his delay “allowed us to learn the coronavirus didn't mysteriously disappear.”

So while President Trump and his aides have certainly been an impediment—an awful impediment to an agreement, the Republican Senate is equally culpable, and the American people know it. They know that Democrats have their back, healthwise and economically. Republicans, so many of them, are saying: Don't do a thing. Don't do a thing. They are glad the negotiations have broken down. We are not.

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, one final matter, millions of Americans rely on the U.S. Postal Service to deliver their mail reliably and on time. For decades, the hard-working people of the Postal Service have been doing just that. During this pandemic, USPS has been providing these critical services day in and day out, up until the new Postmaster General, Mr. DeJoy, a top Republican donor and Trump ally with no experience in the Postal Service, was installed at the helm.

Administering a national election is difficult in normal times. In the time of COVID, it will undoubtedly be an even greater challenge. We need to institute policies and devote resources to make sure every American can both safely and confidently vote in person and by mail. By the way, even just as important, we need to make sure Americans get their medicines on time, that the elderly and those with pre-existing conditions who are staying in their homes and not going out are able to get their necessities by mail. Your pills are a week late—I know what that is like. It has happened to me. Fortunately, I don't have medicines that my life depends on. It causes you huge anxiety about your health. This Postmaster is cutting overtime, cutting employees, when, at a time of COVID, we need more help, not less. But elections should certainly concern Americans as well.

The current issues of the post office should alarm every American. The new Postmaster General has instituted policies that have contributed to inexcusable delays in mail delivery. But now, topping the cake, the Postal Service has informed some States that they may need to pay a first-class rate to deliver ballots rather than the normal rate, nearly tripling the cost. At a time when people will have to vote by mail in record numbers because they can't or will not go vote in person, the Postmaster General is saying we should triple the rate of costs to vote by mail? What a despicable derogation of democracy.

What is his rationale? It is a small amount of money. Ballots are a small percentage of the mail that is delivered. It is to discourage people from

voting. He ought to be ashamed of himself to even consider this, tripling—tripling what it costs to vote by mail at a time when more people will vote by mail than ever before. If anyone had any thought that this Postmaster General was on the level, it is now dispensed.

To triple the cost of voting by mail would be an outrageous and insidious policy that would make it even harder and more expensive for States, already struggling with depleted budgets from COVID-19, to conduct our elections safely. Democrats will fight this policy with every tool at our disposal. If our Republican colleagues care about a free and fair election this November, they should as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I so appreciate the comments of the minority leader.

HOUSING

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, oftentimes, when I am home and I am talking to constituents in Nevada, they look at Washington as a bubble. They don't really think that things happen here unless they see it on the news or they have no trust in us really coming together to work on behalf of our constituents.

I think it is time we focus on what needs to be done in the best interest of our country than focusing on political gain or gamesmanship.

The reason why I say that is, I don't know about the President pro tempore, but I know every single Senator comes from a State, and they care about their constituents. They get emails from their constituents and letters from their constituents. When we go home, we claim to be in a recess, but it is not really a recess. We are home working. We are talking to our constituents and businesses and the individuals who are there. And if we are really listening to our constituents, particularly at a time like now, when this pandemic has created the worst health crisis we have seen not just in this country but around the world and has contributed to an economic crisis, then we are hearing from our constituents that they are struggling right now.

The reason they are struggling is because we have asked them to stay at home and shelter in place to stem the spread of this virus. We have said: Listen, we don't have a vaccine. We are working on it, but we don't have it right away. We need to ramp up our tests so we can make sure you can get it, and quickly, to determine whether you have this virus or the antibodies so we can then quarantine you and shelter you. But until we even get to that point, we have asked everybody to stay home. And they have done it.

I know in my State of Nevada, we have the highest unemployment rate in this country right now—25 percent.