



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 166

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, AUGUST 13, 2020

No. 145

House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, August 14, 2020, at 2 p.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, AUGUST 13, 2020

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN BOOZMAN, a Senator from the State of Arkansas.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Our Father, we wait in reverence before Your throne. Turn and answer us. Cleanse us from sins, creating in us clean hearts, while renewing a right spirit within us.

Lord, help our lawmakers to discern Your voice and do Your will. Give them the ability to accomplish Your purposes on Earth. Speak to them Your wisdom, guide them with Your spirit, and sustain them with Your might.

Lord, restore joy to our hearts, for we trust Your unfailing love.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, August 13, 2020.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN BOOZMAN, a Senator from the State of Arkansas, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BOOZMAN thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the Senate was supposed to spend this week finalizing another bipartisan rescue package for the American people. Millions of laid-off workers needed more Federal assistance to weather the storm. Small businesses needed more support to make payroll. Schools and families need more funding, tools, and certainty with reopening dates fast approaching. Doctors, nurses, and healthcare workers need more backup as they hold the line against this disease. We all need more gas for the race toward more testing, better treatments, and the vaccine that will finish this fight. So last week I canceled the

first week of our August State work period in the hope that the Speaker of the House and the Democratic leader would put aside their ideological demands with no relation to this pandemic and finally let Congress legislate.

Unfortunately, the Democrats have continued to let working families down. They are still rejecting any more relief for anyone unless they get a flood of demands with no relationship to COVID-19.

It has been more than 2 weeks since Senate Republicans put out a trillion-dollar plan to help America reopen, recover, and stay on offense against this virus. Republicans did the same thing that worked back in March. We set up the same process that built the unanimous CARES Act in a matter of days. We laid out a strong marker built by our chairmen and our committees, fitted to real, fact-based needs of our Nation and then invited the Democrats to negotiate.

We want another round of direct cash payments for American families. We want to send \$105 billion to help schools and universities safely reopen and billions more to help working parents with childcare. We want to create new incentives for retaining and rehiring America's workers and for businesses to improve workplace safety. We want to create the smart legal protections that small businesses and university presidents are pleading for, so they can reopen safely for students and workers without paying a ransom to the trial lawyers.

These are the strong policies we proposed because these are the policies our

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

S5403

Nation actually needs. We want to take second runs at the best and most successful parts of the bipartisan CARES Act while adding in bold new steps for this new phase of our Nation's battle.

But as I said right from the outset, Republicans had no illusion that our initial marker would become law. That isn't how divided government operates. There was never any question that bipartisan compromise would be needed to get an outcome. So I expected that, just like in March, the Democratic ranking members would sit down with our chairmen, bring some of their own serious ideas to the table, and work together to build a bipartisan bill. That is what happened back then. But, instead, the country got something else entirely.

Instead of working with our serious framework, the Speaker of the House and the Senate Democratic leader spent weeks insisting on a completely—completely—unrealistic, far-left proposal that even their own Democratic Members mocked as a nowhere messaging stunt the instant it was first released.

Instead of letting their committees and their Members discuss substantive issues across the aisle, they said nobody could negotiate but them. And instead of staying focused on the real needs of our Nation, these two Democratic leaders have held the talks hostage for weeks now—weeks—over nonCOVID-related ideological items, which the political left has wanted since well before this virus hit our shores.

You know what I am talking about. By now, the whole country knows what I am talking about: the absurd issues the Democrats have turned into sticking points; the bizarre, parochial left-wing favors that Democrats have put ahead of the help that working families need right now, like the massive tax cuts for the highest earners in the bluest States—an idea that even supposedly progressive economists have said is “not a good idea”; the trillion-dollar slush fund for State and local governments that have only spent 25 percent—25 percent—of the billions that we sent them back in March, totally out of proportion to any estimate of urgent pandemic shortfalls; the socialist insistence on the Federal Government paying people more not to work—not to work—than essential workers earn when they are on the job.

Go to any kitchen table in America, outside of a few skyscraper penthouses, and put these bizarre demands up against the trillion dollars of real, practical relief that Republicans wanted to get out the door weeks ago. No family in Middle America is saying: Thank goodness. Thank goodness the Democrats are blocking cash payments to me, money for my kids' schools, and money for vaccines until Manhattan millionaires get a tax cut.

No working people are saying: Thank goodness the Democrats are blocking the next small business rescue plan,

money for testing, and rehiring incentives until Malibu, CA, gets Federal money to keep buying more electric cars, which they wrote to the Congress demanding.

Families aren't saying this. Outside of Speaker PELOSI and Leader SCHUMER, even Washington Democrats aren't saying this.

While the press tries its hardest to praise Speaker PELOSI for “playing hardball,” her own House Democrats are rebelling. They say they are “frustrated” and “angry” that relief is being held up over what they themselves acknowledge is a “political wish list.”

“[T]he HEROES Act went too far,” is another quote.

These are Democrats talking about the Heroes Act.

Even the Speaker's own members are not buying their political spin. They want what Republicans want, what the administration wants, what America's families everywhere want. We need to get an outcome.

The Secretary of the Treasury and the White House chief of staff have given ground. They have put new issues on the table that Democrats wanted. They have worked to find commonality. But the Democrats are barely even pretending to negotiate—barely even pretending. The Speaker's latest spin is that it is some heroic sacrifice to lower her demands from a made-up \$3.5 trillion marker that was never going to become law to an equally made-up \$2.5 trillion marker. She calls this meeting in the middle.

That is not negotiating; that is throwing spaghetti at the wall to see what sticks. People who have serious policy proposals that are fitted to actual needs cannot breezily knock off a trillion here and add a trillion there.

Heck, by the Speaker's logic, they should have just opened with their entire \$93 trillion Green New Deal. Then they could have blamed the President for not meeting them halfway at the cut-rate bargain sum of \$45 trillion.

Come on. In point of fact, the Speaker and the leader have not conceded anything at all. They haven't budged on their absurd demands. They just moved the expiration date a few weeks on the exact same crazy wish list, so the pricetag comes down without moving an inch on the merits.

They have refused Republicans' offer to pass everything that we can agree on. The administration has said: Let's pass things we can agree on right now.

The Republicans don't think that a disputed issue should hold up the most urgent aid for working families, but the answer so far from the Democratic leadership is no. The partisan games continue, so the Nation's pain continues as well.

Laid-off workers and kids and parents and doctors and nurses are waiting for help. Our people are waiting for help. Republicans have been at the table for weeks. We just need seriousness on the other side. American fami-

lies' livelihoods are at stake. American lives are at stake. Democrats must rerun their political calculations and finally—finally—let Congress act.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING 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.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Virginia.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. Kaine. Mr. President, here we go again. Another day has passed. Nothing has happened—no incremental progress, no compromise. To some it might just be one day, but for too many Americans, another day fighting for your health or how you will pay your rent or how you will feed your kids is a brutal and terrifying thing.

What is one more day to an average American? It might be a day closer to the rent being due without having money to pay it. It might be another day with insufficient unemployment benefits while bills pile up. It might be another day closer to possibly needing SNAP assistance or help from a food bank.

One more day could mean constrained testing supplies don't pick up as many cases of COVID-19, so the carriers can isolate and protect others. One day today means for one of my staffers—it was move-in day for his oldest daughter at college, but because she couldn't get her test result back quickly enough, that experience, which is an exciting one for a young person, could not happen.

These are not simple legislative days while we follow a negotiation strategy. These are days when Americans are struggling and suffering, and we are not responding.

Democrats are here. We are ready to compromise any day. In fact, we have already offered to meet the White House halfway on the size of the relief effort. Our meet-in-the-middle offer was rebuffed Friday, and it was rejected by the White House again yesterday.

I have heard the majority leader today and on other days characterize the Heroes Act in his remarks as a Democratic wish list. So what I would like to do is walk through the Democratic and Republican proposals side by side. At every step I hope listeners will ask themselves: Which of these agendas is oriented to helping Americans through hard times?

The Democratic proposal includes this: continuing expanded unemployment benefits for the duration of this