

Meanwhile, after all their blustering that Congress should never do anything “piecemeal,” Speaker PELOSI came rushing back to Washington to pass the most piecemeal bill you could possibly imagine—legislation that solely helped out the U.S. Postal Service and did nothing at all for American families. When Republicans tried to help American workers keep their jobs, Speaker PELOSI and Leader SCHUMER said it was “piecemeal,” but when House Democrats’ fears about mail-in voting made them think maybe their own jobs would be in jeopardy, that argument suddenly disappeared.

That is the score. Democrats are all for piecemeal bills when they concern their own reelections, but when it comes to bipartisan aid for kids, jobs, and schools, Democrats say it is either their entire wish list—all of it—or nobody gets a dime.

Well, Republicans see this quite differently. We don’t think this crisis cares about partisan politics. We think people are hurting and Congress should do its job. We want to agree where a bipartisan agreement is possible, get more help out the door, and then keep arguing over the rest later.

That is how you legislate. That is how you make law. You find agreement where agreement is possible and keep arguing over the rest later.

So Republicans are making yet another overture. Today, we are releasing a targeted proposal that focuses on several of the most urgent aspects of this crisis—issues where bipartisanship should be especially possible. I am talking about policies such as extending the additional Federal unemployment benefit for jobless workers; providing a second round of the job-saving Paycheck Protection Program for the hardest hit small businesses to prevent layoffs; sending more than \$100 billion to help K-12 schools and universities open safely and educate our kids; dedicating billions more for testing, contact tracing, treatments, and vaccines; on-shoring manufacturing capacity for critical medical supplies and rebuilding our national stockpile; giving all kinds of families more choice and flexibility to navigate education and childcare during the crisis; providing legal protections for schools, churches, charities, nonprofits, and employers so they can reopen; providing more help for the Postal Service. Our proposal would do all this and more.

Now, here is what our bill is not. It is not a sweeping, multitrillion-dollar plan to rebuild the entire country in Republicans’ image. It does not even contain every single relief policy that Republicans ourselves think would help in the short term. I am confident the Democrats would feel the same way.

But the American people don’t need us to keep arguing over what might be perfect. They need us to actually make law.

So Democratic leaders are perfectly free to come out here and keep up their playbook from these past months. Just

blast away—blast away—in bad faith, call names, and complain about the infinite number of things this proposal does not do. Maybe they will bring back their “Goldilocks” act and say our multihundred-billion-dollar proposal is too small or too skinny, even though Democrats just passed a piecemeal bill for the Postal Service that ignored everything else—a piecemeal bill for the Postal Service that ignored everything else.

Democrats can do all that if they want to. I understand they have already been criticizing this bill today before they even read it, before it had even been put out. More of this would just reinforce that only one side of the aisle seems to want any bipartisan outcome at all.

It is easy to tell in Washington whether somebody’s end goal is political posturing or getting an outcome. One way or another, what Democrats do will be revealing.

The Senate is going to vote on this targeted proposal. We are going to get the stonewalling of Democratic leaders out from behind closed doors and put this to a vote out here on the floor. It is going to happen this week. Senators will not be voting on whether this targeted package satisfies every one of their legislative hopes and dreams. That is not what we will do in this Chamber. We vote on whether to make laws, whether to forge a compromise, whether to do a lot of good for the country and keep arguing over the remaining differences later.

A few weeks ago, more than 100 House Democrats spoke out publicly. They asked Speaker PELOSI to stop stonewalling and let the House vote on targeted COVID relief short of—short of—her entire wish list. The Speaker ignored them—ignored her rank and file, just like her piecemeal postal bill ignored American families.

Over here I will make sure our Democratic colleagues get a chance to walk the walk. Every Senator who has said they want a bipartisan outcome for the country will have a chance to vote for everyone to see. Senators will vote this week, and the American people will be watching.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I understand there are three bills at the desk due for a second reading en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bills by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3) to establish a fair price negotiation program, protect the Medicare program from excessive price increases, and establish an out-of-pocket maximum for Medicare part D enrollees, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 51) to provide for the admission of the State of Washington, D.C. into the Union.

A bill (H.R. 1425) to amend the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to pro-

vide for a Improve Health Insurance Affordability Fund to provide for certain reinsurance payments to lower premiums in the individual health insurance market.

Mr. McCONNELL. In order to place the bills on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar on the next legislative day en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read nomination of Brett H. Ludwig, of Wisconsin, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Wisconsin.

The Senator from Vermont.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, as we all know, we are in the middle of a public health crisis. The American people are hurting, from every State in our country. Nearly 190,000 people—our fellow citizens—have died. Millions have lost their jobs, and they are struggling to make ends meet. People are being evicted from their homes, and they are struggling to feed their families.

The virus is still not under control. We know there is a need for another emergency funding bill. The need to address the COVID crisis is clear. This is something, actually, we could have done in July if we had been willing to actually do our job and vote on the appropriations bills after the House of Representatives had already shown the way, but 4 weeks ago, the Trump administration and the Senate Republican leadership walked away from the negotiating table. Democrats had offered a compromise. Republicans said “My way or the highway” and left town. They just walked away from the Capitol when we had all these things that needed to be done.

Here we are. We are back 4 weeks later. Is the situation better? Of course not. Across the country, families are sending their children back to school without the necessary resources to ensure they are safe, and still more students are learning from home but often without reliable access to the internet. Evictions are rising. Families are struggling to find childcare. Unemployment is at the highest level I can remember—certainly unacceptable levels. States are preparing for November's elections without the resources they need to make sure people can safely vote. The Postal Service needs a serious injection of funding to deliver mail in a timely manner. It actually has consequences.

I am for the right to negotiate. I was 4 weeks ago. I have been throughout the time the Senate has been out of session. I have been prepared to come back and negotiate. But now we find that, no, Republican leadership will not negotiate.

Senator MCCONNELL says he has prepared a so-called skinny COVID bill to put before the Senate. He will put it before us on a take-it-or-leave-it basis—no amendments, no debate. This proposal is not skinny; it is anemic.

Why are they afraid to vote? Let's have amendments and vote them up or down. Is there any question as to why the American public wonders what is going on when the Republican leadership will not even allow a vote? What are they so afraid of? It is democracy. Vote up or down. The Republicans have a majority. If they don't like the amendments that come up, vote them down, but at least vote on them. Don't hide behind platitudes, tweets, and campaign ads, which you can do because you never actually have to take responsibility. You ought to vote.

The bill hasn't been made public, but details are beginning to emerge. The details that have emerged show it is woefully inadequate to meet the needs of the country. In fact, it provides even less relief than the smaller, trillion-dollar package the Trump administration put forward before the Senate adjourned a month ago.

I don't know where Republicans spent the last month, but I know where I was. I was all over the State of Vermont talking to Republicans, Democrats, and Independents, hearing what is on people's minds—not lobbyists, not special interests, but the people who have to pay the bills and who have to pay the consequences. I became even more convinced, not less, that we have dire needs in this country because of the coronavirus pandemic, and we have to address them, and soon. How any Senator went back to his or her home State and returned convinced that even less assistance is needed than when we left last month is baffling to me. That is why I am saying that every Senator can say where they stand, but the way they prove where they stand is to vote.

Let's have the courage to stand up and vote yes or no, not a take-it-or-

leave-it package that will be decided by one person, and nobody else would be able to vote anything differently. What are we? What are we—a bunch of ducks in a row, or are we U.S. Senators?

Adding insult to injury, we now find that the bill ultimately provides sweeping liability shields for corporate bad actors who fail to do their part to keep consumers, employees, and patients safe. It tells you everything you need to know about the priorities of this Republican package—big corporations come ahead of struggling American families.

Instead of the person who is trying to pay the bills and send their children back to school, who is making out in this bill? The lobbyists for multibillion-dollar insurance companies. They are already making billions of dollars. They don't have to worry about paying the bills. They don't have to worry about their children going back to school. They don't have to worry about jobs. And this bill gives them one more gift? How can we possibly say we support that and then go back home and say we are on the side of our people?

If the majority leader wants to put this so-called skinny bill—including a giveaway to the multibillion-dollar insurance companies—well, do it the right way. Bring it here. Set up a real debate on the bill—debate that the country deserves and that I think a majority of the Republicans and Democrats would want. Open it to amendment—no limits. Let the process work—not a process that only rewards highly paid lobbyists for multibillion-dollar corporations, but allow Senators on both sides of the aisle to say: Here is where I stand with the people in my State who have to pay the bills, who have to send their kids back to school, who are trying to keep their jobs or keep their farms going, or whatever it might be.

Let Members raise issues important to their constituents from any of the 50 States, and then vote on those issues: funding for State and local governments that are facing the brunt of the COVID response; money for schools so we can safely educate our Nation's children; rental assistance and eviction protections to help keep people in their homes; food assistance for hungry families so they don't go hungry in the wealthiest Nation on Earth; funding for our elections so we can ensure that people can safely vote and we can trust the results of the vote; big investments in testing and contact tracing because we know we can't begin to do the amount of testing and contact tracing we need to do today.

Our economy is only going to come back when the American people are confident the virus is no longer a threat. I know the President said last winter that of course the virus will go away in the spring. Everybody in this Chamber, Republican and Democrat, knows he wasn't telling the truth on that. Of course it didn't go away.

We are not going to have a recovery until we have confidence that the virus is no longer a threat. My friend Senator MCCONNELL's skinny bill doesn't provide that confidence.

So I say put these issues up for a vote. Take each one of these issues and vote it up or down. Let the American people see where each Member of this Chamber stands. I know where I stand. Do as Republican leaders in the past have done. Howard Baker, Bob Dole, and others are the great leaders. To my knowledge, with some of the amendments, they would say: OK, we will vote them up or we will vote them down. Why don't we do that? That is the way the Senate was designed. But this majority leader will not do what his predecessors have done. Why? Because on many of these issues, he knows he would lose. Not too many would be willing to vote for his giveaway to the lobbyists for the large insurance companies.

A vote simply to move to this bill is just for show. It doesn't provide us an opportunity for real debate. It doesn't solve the problems facing the country. Show votes do nothing to combat the virus or give the American people the confidence to reopen the economy. In fact, I suggest just the opposite. The American people, seeing us doing just political showboating votes here, are going to have even less confidence that things will come back.

Absent a real debate in the Senate, which clearly the other side of the aisle is afraid of, Republicans have to come back to the negotiating table. Restart bipartisan and bicameral talks on a comprehensive COVID relief package that can pass both Chambers.

I hear Senators say, well, we can't vote on this or we can't vote on that because it might not be popular at home. My response in a case like that is, why do you want to be here?

We have had nearly 2,000 Senators in this country. The Senator who voted the most in the Nation's history was Senator Bob Byrd, one of the longest serving Senators. He voted around 18,000 times. He was willing to stand for his vote. Out of those 2,000 Senators, the Senator who comes in second with the most votes is this Senator from Vermont. That is not just for longevity; that means I voted for things that I knew would hurt me politically, but I thought it was the right thing to do. I was willing to state to the people of Vermont: Here is where I stand. You can agree or disagree with me, but you know where I stand.

One of the reasons the Senate is held in such disfavor in this country is that we don't vote. We don't have real debate. It is all one way or that way alone.

Absent a real debate in the Senate, which clearly the Republican leader is afraid of, why don't the Republicans come back to the negotiating table and restart bipartisan, bicameral talks on a comprehensive COVID relief package that can pass both Chambers?

We actually were prepared to do this in July. I remember saying: Why don't we bring up all the appropriations bills? The Republicans have the majority. They can vote them down if they don't like them, but let's bring them up and have a vote on them, one way or the other. No, we couldn't do it.

Now Senator MCCONNELL says he wants to do this process piecemeal: Pass a little bit now, a little bit later. Trust me, we can do that.

Well, as Ronald Reagan would say, "Trust, but verify." Let's have a real vote. Let's vote on all of it because we know that the majority leader will adjourn the Senate later this month to go home and campaign. It appears all he wants is a show vote on a woefully inadequate bill that he knows can never become law and then to get out of here.

That is not a plan for action. That is not a real plan to pass a bill for the American people. It is unacceptable.

Why don't we admit that the most important thing before us is what is happening with COVID and how we address it? Now, I know a lot of Republicans who have some very good ideas, and I know a lot of Democrats who have some very good ideas to address it. Let's bring them up. Let's vote on them—vote for them or vote against them.

Don't say we are not going to allow a vote because we don't have time. We have plenty of time. We have plenty of time. Let's just stay here every day, go through weekends if need be, and just vote, vote up or down.

We are running out of time. Right now, the majority leader intends to adjourn the Senate in just a few weeks. Well, the American people don't have that luxury. They can't just go home for a few weeks knowing their bills are being paid, their salary is being paid. They need our help. Why don't we do our job and vote these things up or down?

Have the courage to say what you stand for. We could have, easily, 40 to 50 amendments—realistic amendments from both Republicans and Democrats—vote them up or down, and then have a bill that can go to conference. Every one of us knows we should have done that in July. We didn't. We could have done that in August. We didn't.

It is September. Let's at least now do our job, uphold our oath of office, and pass the bill. Let's not be afraid of how we vote. I know, in my own votes, those 16,000-plus, somebody can find votes they disagree with. So what. I have the courage to vote.

I call on my fellow Senators: Have the courage to vote. We are supposed to be the conscience of the Nation. Let's try to be. I see other Senators on the floor, eagerly awaiting their chance to give us their news.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I take to the floor of the Senate this

afternoon to call Senators' attention to the worsening crisis in intercountry adoptions. I must say, it saddens me to have to do this because much of the crisis in foreign adoptions—or intercountry adoptions—is happening as a result of policies of our own Federal Government.

I am fortunate to have had two loving parents and a loving family. My dad is 96 years old. I visited with him yesterday. My mom, sadly, passed away several years ago. But I was fortunate. I was among the fortunate people on the face of this planet to have two loving parents and a loving family. That is not the case all around the world.

Internationally, in particular, there are countless children who have no mom, no dad, no family, no extended family to care for them. They reside in the most deplorable conditions, in orphanages, and as wards of the state.

Americans have always been compassionate for these children without a forever family, and that compassion extends to children not only orphaned in the United States but also outside of our borders. For decades, Americans have led the world in welcoming children from around the globe to come to the United States and be part of a forever family. As a result, more than 150,000 children adopted from foreign countries are now growing up in the United States—150,000. These children and their adoptive families are examples of America at its best.

I am here to say to my colleagues today that intercountry adoption is in real trouble, and much of the reason that intercountry adoption is in trouble is coming from our own Federal policies, from unelected bureaucrats, particularly at our own Department of State.

The number of international children finding an American home has plummeted in recent years. Listen to this statistic. In the year 2004, Americans adopted 23,000 children from foreign countries—23,000. Last year, 2019, that number had fallen below 3,000, an 87-percent drop from 23,000 only 15 years before to 3,000 in 15 short years.

Now, people who have been looking into this issue are well aware of what is causing the decline, and one of the reasons is Russia. Because of foreign policy disagreements, Russia has shut its doors to intercountry adoption. We have pleaded with the Russian Government about this, and we have not made much progress. That is one of the factors—not the only factor and not even the principal factor, but that is on the Russian Government. It saddens me that they have done that.

The biggest reason for the decline in intercountry adoptions by Americans comes within our own government, our own State Department. For years, the State Department and its adoption accrediting entity have demonstrated a clear and consistent bias against intercountry adoption. It saddens me to say this. It is unbelievable that I have to

say this, but career bureaucrats in the State Department have deliberately obstructed the adoption process with new fees, new requirements that amount to redtape, and unrealistic standards on foreign governments. These bureaucrats have placed burdensome regulations on adoption provider agencies. These regulations make it nearly impossible for adoption-providing agencies to maintain accreditation.

This has been done by design, and the results are devastating. In the last year and a half, more than 30 adoption-providing agencies have left the intercountry adoption space, and we are losing more agencies every month. The bias of our Federal Government's State Department against intercountry adoptions is unmistakable.

In 2018, for example, the Department directly intervened to prevent three well-respected adoption agencies from being reaccredited. A Federal judge dismissed the Department's reasoning as "quite unconvincing" and "simply illogical." That is what a Federal judge had to say about the reasoning of this little part of the State Department that seems determined to end foreign adoptions.

During that same year, 2018, a journalist quoted a State Department insider who confirmed that the Office of Children's Issues, the OCI, in the State Department is biased against intercountry adoption. Why they would take this position is beyond me. Adoption advocates followed up by requesting Freedom of Information Act documents about this claim by the journalist who quoted the State Department insider, but the Department of State has resisted this Freedom of Information Act request and has still yet to produce any documents 2 years after the statutory FOIA deadline has passed.

There are plenty more examples. Last year, the State Department hosted an adoption symposium that may as well have been called the international anti-adoption symposium. This is funded at our State Department by our own taxpayer dollars. Our own tax funds funded a conference that featured radically anti-adoption speakers who openly denounced the practice of international adoptions. It is hard to believe, and it is hard to imagine a worse use of taxpayer dollars.

The adoption community has voiced concerns about the State Department's anti-adoption bias, but it seems that government has not listened. I will say that this has been a problem in State Departments headed by Republican Secretaries and by Democratic Secretaries. When adoption providers privately shared their concerns about the accrediting agency, the Department responded by issuing a public letter threatening the future of intercountry adoption.

The Office of Children's Issues, OCI, is slamming the door in the faces of thousands of orphans who need a family, and they are saying no to willing