

and countless others about how the resources that we have been providing them have helped them through this pandemic. From the Rio Grande Valley to Amarillo—opposite ends of our State—from Tyler to Orange in the eastern part of the State and all points in between, I masked up and met with Texans who are working overtime to keep their communities safe and to provide for their families. All the while, I continue to hold virtual conversations and telephone townhalls to hear from my constituents and share information about what we are doing to be helpful to them.

These conversations, as I said a moment ago, always help me better understand the effectiveness of the legislation we passed and provide valuable feedback about what is needed in the next coronavirus relief bill.

With the school year now officially underway in most of Texas, additional support for our students and teachers is one of my top priorities. I have had the chance to speak with K–12 students and teachers in Odessa, Lubbock, and Canyon, and college students and administrators in Angelo State University in San Angelo, as well as Texas Tech University and Texas Tech Health Science Center in Amarillo. Some joined us socially distanced on campus and others connected virtually.

I was able to hear from both students and teachers about this unprecedented school year and the challenges—the extra challenges—brought on by COVID–19. Whether in person, online, or some combination of the two, education looks a lot different this year, and we need to provide schools with the funding to keep kids in the classrooms safe and those at home on track for a great education.

Congress has already passed \$30 billion in emergency relief for education, including more than \$2.6 billion for Texas. This funding has helped our school districts, colleges, and universities prepare for the fall, but, to be honest, more is needed.

For those learning in person, additional funding can cover cleaning services and equipment to prevent children from catching and spreading the virus. For those learning virtually, it could provide additional hardware and internet hotspots so they can do their studies online.

I visited one high school in Ector County—that is Odessa, TX—where they are using a blended or hybrid in-person and online instruction model. Ector County ISD began this year with online instruction for students who have internet access at home and in-person instruction for those who did not. Of the roughly 33,000 students in the district, about 4,200 were in the classroom on the first day. And I can assure you, it is not the only school district in Texas whose students have difficulty accessing the technology needed to learn from home.

More than 2 million Texas households don't have reliable internet ac-

cess, and it is leaving our students on the wrong side of the digital divide. Internet access is no longer a luxury or just a convenience; it has become a necessity, and we need to do more to ensure that students across Texas and across the Nation have access to reliable broadband.

The CARES Act, which we passed in March, provides some relief on this front. It gave libraries \$50 million in grants for digital connection. The demand for these funds was much higher than was available, and it became obvious we need to do more to help those who are on the wrong side of the digital divide.

The Senator from West Virginia, Mr. MANCHIN, and I teamed up to include and introduce the ACCESS the Internet Act, which will provide funding to both the Department of Education and libraries to make reliable internet a reality.

In addition to supporting virtual learning, this would also make access to telehealth more available to families. This has really been one of the most surprising positive developments out of this pandemic, and that is actually greater access to healthcare through telehealth, both physical and Mental Health Services on online.

Our bill includes funding for healthcare providers, including the Department of Veterans Affairs, to get more patients connected so they can utilize these telehealth services. As we make a push for progress on the next relief bill, I will continue fighting for resources for our students and teachers, and that includes reliable access to the internet.

Despite this August work period looking much different from years prior, I was still able to connect with tens of thousands of Texans virtually and over the phone and safely meet many of them in person. As I traveled, I was able to see how schools, our healthcare facilities, our food banks, local governments, and more have been able to use the Federal coronavirus funding provided for in the CARES Act. The feedback and insight I received was invaluable to my work in the Senate, and it is more important than ever as we continue negotiations on the next coronavirus relief bill.

This is going to be a busy month in the Senate. We need to pass legislation to bolster our response to this virus, support our students and teachers, help those in need of financial assistance, and ensure that our healthcare response remains robust.

We are just 3 weeks away from the end of the fiscal year, including a government shutdown unless we can reach an agreement on a funding bill. Complicating matters even further, we are at the peak of hurricane season, which may not seem like as big a deal in DC, but I guarantee, we have our eyes on these tropical storms in the Gulf of Mexico that could well end up onshore. Hurricane Hanna, for example, struck South Texas in July and hit our farm-

ers and producers hard, as well as flooding out many, many homes and displacing families. A couple of weeks ago, Hurricane Laura tore through the Gulf of Mexico.

Though the brunt of Laura hit other neighbors in Louisiana, for which we are very sorry, we are very glad that it did little damage in Southeast Texas, but it still did some significant damage. I was able to join the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Senator CRUZ for a visit to Orange to survey the damage and speak with local officials about the impact of the storm. I am committed to providing my constituents in Texas with the resources needed to recover from whatever this hurricane season may bring. I will be keeping a close eye on the weather forecast as we move through what has already been an active hurricane season.

We have a lot of work to do in the next few weeks. Though we weren't able to make progress on a coronavirus bill in July, I was on almost virtually daily conference calls with the White House and Secretary Mnuchin talking about the way forward. I am more optimistic today than I have been to this point that we will, ultimately, reach an agreement. I hope my colleagues have also heard from their constituents about how important relief is and that we can come together at such a critical point in our fight against COVID–19.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill 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 Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, in the 3 weeks since the Senate last met, America eclipsed 6 million confirmed cases of COVID–19. Nearly 190,000 Americans have died, and those totals climb by tragic amounts each day. Too many businesses remain closed, schools begin the year under a dark cloud of uncertainty, and our economy faces the greatest crisis since the Great Depression.

The United States is 11.5 million jobs short of where we were at the start of February, and the number of jobs that have been permanently lost is rising at an alarming rate. All of this reflects a tragic reality: President Trump has led the worst response to COVID–19 of any nation on Earth. It is what it is.

The economic pain of the pandemic was mitigated by our action in March when Democrats insisted on a robust stimulus bill that became the CARES Act. One of our policies included in that bill, enhanced unemployment benefits, has kept nearly 12 million Americans from poverty. Those benefits have