

request. Leader McCONNELL and Senate Republicans must drop the cynical and political games and instead work with Democrats to find common ground and reach a compromise.

If Republican leadership lets the 20 Members of their caucus who barely want to provide any more relief and allows them to dictate their party's agenda, it will block the path to a compromise, and Republicans will have to answer to the American people.

Our country still does not have a strong grasp on COVID-19. America continues to lead the world in the number of confirmed cases by far—over 6.5 million. Nearly 200,000 Americans have died. Yet, unthinkable, it was reported that in one of his interviews with Bob Woodward, President Trump said that “nothing more could have been done” to combat the coronavirus. “Nothing more could have been done”—that is what President Trump said. Of the many lies the President has told about COVID-19, this is one of the most monumental and one of the most galling.

There were so many vital things the President could have done to fight COVID-19 and protect our country. In the early days of the virus, hospitals, medical centers, and essential workers were short on PPE, ventilators, swabs, masks, and gloves. President Trump never mobilized the resources of the Federal Government, never fully invoked the Defense Production Act, and never set up a national clearing house to get resources where they needed to go.

It has been 7 months and President Trump still doesn't have a national testing strategy. There has never been a national plan for contact tracing. The President took months before he even encouraged Americans to wear a mask. This is an entire universe of actions that President Trump could have taken to help slow the spread of the virus and save American lives and American jobs, but he didn't. He never took strong action, never took responsibility. It is what it is.

In many cases, it would have been better, actually, if the President did nothing instead of what he did. It would have been better if the President never downplayed the virus, never called it a hoax, never pushed quack medicines, never speculated about injecting bleach, and never held rallies.

Every week—every week—brings new evidence that his administration is totally unequipped to right the ship, especially the Department of Health and Human Services. Over the weekend, there were numerous reports that political appointees at HHS have been interfering with CDC's report on COVID-19, trying to delay, edit out, or halt the release of facts that would have been politically embarrassing to the President. This is not the first time the administration has tried to hide reports and facts that would better inform the American people.

Meanwhile, as that is happening, President Trump has pressured HHS to

“slow the testing down.” He has overstated the benefits of certain treatments and pressured the FDA to approve them and accused FDA officials of holding back a vaccine, and too many people within HHS are trying to suppress the science.

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, Alex Azar, has not only failed to push back against these outrageous moves by President Trump, but he has been almost entirely silent about the chaos and mismanagement in his own agency.

In Trump's administration, the most important skill is the ability to stand up to the President and resist political influence—more so in an agency like HHS than others, where the health of Americans is at stake.

It has become abundantly clear that the leadership of the Department of Health and Human Services has allowed perhaps the most important Federal agency right now to become subservient to the President's daily whims.

So, today, I am calling on Secretary Azar to resign immediately. We need a Secretary of Health and Human Services who will look out for the American people, not President Trump's political interests.

WILDFIRES

Madam President, now on another topic, wildfires: For the last several weeks, much of the American West has been ravaged by a historic wave of wildfires. At least 35 people have been killed. Thousands of homes have been destroyed. Over 5 million acres of land have been incinerated, roughly the size of Rhode Island and Connecticut combined. The sky glows with ghastly shades of red and orange.

It is impossible to have a serious conversation about these wildfires without talking about climate change. We know that climate change contributes to the frequency of these fires. We know it accelerates their destructive power. Six of the 20 largest fires in California history have happened this year alone. Heat waves and dry air make these disasters more likely.

These past few years have been some of the hottest and driest on record, but at a press conference yesterday with FEMA and California State officials, President Trump brushed aside any possibility that climate change had an effect, suggesting idiotically that the planet will “start getting cooler; you just watch.”

This is just like what he did with COVID. He tries to deny it, and he makes it worse. He encourages people to ignore it, and the problem grows.

When the head of the California Natural Resources Agency told the President that science disagreed with him, the President said: “I don't think science knows.” This exchange where the President said “It'll start getting cooler; you just watch,” when he was upbraided by a scientific expert and says “I don't think science knows” captures everything you need to know

about President Trump's grasp of basic scientific facts—and especially the science of climate change.

Without a shred of evidence or knowledge, President Trump said that our planet will just “start getting cooler.” It is just like his attitude toward this pandemic, which he promised would magically disappear.

You would think the situation would be better here in Congress, but, regrettably, the Republican Senate doesn't seem to take the threat of climate change seriously either. The Republican majority has had 6 years in charge of the Senate to show that they want to make progress on climate change but have done next to nothing—next to nothing—to curb emissions or protect our environment from the damaging effects of a warming planet.

The only time Republicans even brought up climate change legislation was when Leader McCONNELL scheduled a sham vote on a climate bill so his own Members could vote against it. That is right. The only climate bill Leader McCONNELL has brought to the floor is a bill he wanted his Members to vote against.

Democrats, on the other hand, believe protecting our planet is a moral obligation. Senate Democrats created the first-ever Senate special committee to study the climate crisis. We have committed to creating clean energy jobs and building resiliency in any infrastructure bill.

I have introduced legislation called Clean Cars for America that would make all vehicles on the road carbon-neutral by 2040, and we have committed to creating at least 10 million new clean energy jobs and dedicating 40 percent of climate funding to environmental justice and the disadvantaged and communities of color.

Just last week, I joined with Senator MARKEY and many grassroots organizations to introduce the THRIVE resolution, calling for millions of new jobs in renewable energy and making new investments in Black, Hispanic, and indigenous communities so that clean air, clean water, and clean energy are not privileges for the wealthy few but abundant for all.

This is about protecting our planet so that our kids and grandkids can live in a world with clean air, clean water, and the same kinds of opportunities we grew up with.

Republicans have had 6 years in the Senate to show they are serious about the defining crisis of our time, something that, over the years, will be even worse than COVID—much worse—and they have failed to take any action, just like they did on COVID: no action. Democrats would not make the same mistake again. We will not delay on climate the way Republicans have delayed on COVID and not done what is needed.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON SCARSI NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all postcloture time has expired.