

Iran has actively stated they are going to continue to pursue their nuclear ambitions. They have actively stated they are going to pursue weapons deals. They have actively stated they want to continue to break the arms embargo.

Some of our allies have stood silent, but Iran has discussed purchasing weapons of all types from all places. We used to be united—regardless whether it was nuclear or not—that Iran should not continue to accelerate that. As the largest exporter of terrorism in the world, we should confront what Iran is trying to do—continue to provide heavy arms.

As of Monday, the United States will move into a different mode with Iran. As of midnight Sunday night, snap back sanctions begin on Iran on Monday. And that is a different moment for us as a nation, to say we have stated as a country, now through multiple Presidencies, that we will not allow Iran to be a nuclear power or to continue to arm itself in such a way to do its neighbors harm.

When snap back sanctions occur on Monday, all of our allies should be aware that the United States is steadfast in that commitment. We would ask you to join us in that as well.

Over the past few months, thousands of troops have come back home from the Middle East—from Syria, from Iraq, from Afghanistan. By the end of this year, we will have 4,500 troops still in Afghanistan; that is from a high just a few years ago of 100,000 boots on the ground.

Ongoing negotiations for peace continue between Afghan leadership and the Taliban. Those are problems that have existed for decades and in some areas, generations.

While I don't believe Afghanistan will suddenly break out and be a bastion of peace for the world, we do have a responsibility to help them where we can but also an obligation to protect our sons and daughters. Our blood and our treasures spilled in Afghanistan for decades. We shouldn't lose the investment of that blood and treasure. But it is good to see so many people coming home.

In Europe, a free-trade agreement is actively being negotiated with the UK. We are pleased to be able to partner with such a special-relationship country like the United Kingdom. We have had a long-lasting friendship with them since we settled a little conflict in 1776 and another dustup in 1812. That special relationship with the UK should continue on with a very good trade agreement.

I am pleased that the administration continues to push forward in the area of trade—an area that it is amazing to me how many people didn't even notice was the powder keg of Europe that just recently was resolved.

For generations, the area around Serbia, Kosovo have been a hotbed area for conflict.

In the past few weeks, the Trump administration has negotiated a peace

deal between Serbia and Kosovo that leaves Serbia to actually officially recognize Kosovo. Again, that may not seem like a big deal to many other people, but to Oklahomans—many of whom have served in our 45th and who have served there in Kosovo, helping to protect and stabilize that country and provide security there in that region—it is very significant to us to be able to see peace breaking out between Serbia and Kosovo.

I am pleased that, while many people in the world don't even pay attention to what is happening in Serbia and Kosovo, the Trump administration has, and their diplomatic team has been very engaged in negotiating that and bringing to them some stability.

Interestingly enough, in the negotiations both Serbia and Kosovo also agreed to designate Hezbollah as a foreign terrorist organization and to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to be able to move their embassies to Jerusalem, which is another affirmation of what is happening in the Middle East in the string of what is ongoing.

One last comment that many people may have missed, we all grieve for what is happening in Lebanon. That experiment in multiracial, multifair, and cooperative government has been a struggle, but they have been a stronghold for religious tolerance in Lebanon. Watching the hundreds of people who were killed and thousands who were injured in the explosion at their docks in Beirut was painful for the entire world. The United States has stepped up as being the top donor to humanitarian aid to Lebanon during this time period, and we are engaging in multiple ways.

At the end of the day, if we are going to help Lebanon be stable, we have to help that experiment in democracy there in the Middle East to be able to thrive with transparency.

I partnered with Senator MURPHY and several other colleagues to help set our Nation's priority to help Lebanon rebuild, including to utilize the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, called the DFC, to help them in their infrastructure projects; to push out China, which is trying to work their way into the Middle East and dominate there; to allow the people of Lebanon to decide their own future; to leverage leadership in the International Monetary Fund to prevent multilateral bailouts that don't allow for real reforms in their banking system; and to push out corruption and push out Hezbollah.

There are things we can do that are not of a partisan nature on which Senator MURPHY and I cooperate together to be able to help push for Lebanon. It is important that they continue to be a stable force in the region. This is a real time of testing for them as a country. I am proud the administration has pushed our diplomats in Lebanon to be able to find ways where we can practically help now and long term for real reforms for them. There is a lot going on around the world.

While we are focused on COVID, rightfully so for our own health, while we focus on our economy, rightfully so, and while we focus on the issues of racial inequality, rightfully so, we cannot lose track of the issues we also need to be engaged in around the world. It is important that America continue to be a leader in diplomacy and a leader in bringing religious liberty and freedom and opportunity for all people.

Whether you are in Hong Kong, as we discussed before, or whether you are in Abu Dhabi, all people deserve the recognition of their humanity and respect and an opportunity to be able to live their lives with freedom. Let's continue to stand for the values that define us and define us together.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I am sure you and I and all the Members of this body remember that night in late March. It was late at night. I remember standing in the back of the Chamber to see one of the truly historic votes. It was a unanimous vote of the U.S. Senate to pass the CARES Act. It was an amazing achievement to see the Senate and the Congress come together in that way with the White House, with the President, to help meet the needs of the American people.

When we passed that bill back in March, September seemed a long way away. We thought we had provided enough aid for small businesses. It turns out we didn't. We thought we had provided enough aid for people, unfortunately, who have fallen into unemployment through no fault of their own but the fault of this dreaded COVID, but we didn't provide enough.

We hoped that we had provided enough for first responders, for schools, for healthcare professionals, for testing, and for all the things that were necessary to get us out of this terrible pandemic. It turns out that wasn't the case. Here we are in September facing a renewed version of this virus that is now spreading in parts of the country that weren't affected back in March.

I want to address, No. 1, that we must do something. We have to respond to the needs of the American people just as we did in March. I don't understand why this time it seems to be a partisan issue; why this time we can't have the same spirit that we had then of negotiation, of give and take, of compromise to reach a bill that all realize now was a really significant accomplishment.

For some reason, now it just seems to be much harder. I understand the concern about the debt and the deficit. I used to be a Governor. I know about balancing budgets. States have to balance their budgets, but now is not the time. If we don't take further action to shore up the economy and protect the

people who are being impacted by this, the fiscal cost in the long run will be worse. The revival of the economy will take longer. The cost to the Treasury will be greater than what we are proposing to spend now.

I believe and I hope that we are moving slowly toward some kind of agreement that will allow us to provide the support to the American people and the American economy that will make such a difference in how we are able to cope with this terrible disease over the next several months—at least through the end of the year. That is really the mission that is before us.

The Democrats made a proposal back in May. They passed the Heroes Act of over \$3 trillion. They have moved. The Speaker and the minority leader here have moved \$1 trillion. They made a counteroffer a few weeks ago of about \$2 trillion. The White House apparently, over the last couple of days, has said we are now talking about something at \$1.5 trillion to \$2 trillion as a solution. The parties are moving, and I hope today that they will continue to discuss and that the table will have people sitting at it trying to find a solution. I think there is hope that we can do that.

I deeply hope that we can come to an agreement. Schools across the country are seeing, unbelievably, additional expenditures in all areas to try to get back to normal, to try to get back into the classroom. If they are going to do that, they need more buses. They are going to need more teachers. They are going to need more people. They are going to need more cleaning materials. They are going to need all kinds of additional expenditures they weren't anticipating.

Small businesses are continuing to teeter. I hear awful stories about small businesses that between now and the end of the year are in danger of closing their doors forever. That would be a tragedy for our country.

We are continuing to see people lose their jobs. We are continuing to see people on unemployment. We are continuing to see people who can't put food on the table because the aid that we provided in the CARES Act in March ran out at the end of July.

I am urging, No. 1, discussions. That is pretty obvious. I hope that the representatives of the two parties and representatives of the White House can come together and reach an agreement. Part of this agreement has to contain within it support for States, towns, and cities. They are suffering, too, and they are providing the very services that the people need in this pandemic.

States can't borrow money the way we can. They have to balance their budget on a year-to-year basis. If they are being clobbered by the effects of this disease, not only in expenditures but in loss of revenues, they only have two choices. I have been there. They only have two choices. One is drastic cuts, and the other is raising taxes, neither of which is an acceptable alter-

native in the midst of a recession, and neither of which makes any sense for the American people. They have either to cut or raise taxes. Those aren't good options.

By the way, I can only speak for the Maine budget. I don't know how other State budgets work. But in Maine about one-third of our budget—between 25 percent and 35 percent of our State budget—goes back to our communities. It goes to the capital city of Augusta, makes a U-turn, and goes back into the towns and cities across Maine, mostly in the form of general-purpose aid to education, also in the form of revenue sharing, and in other kinds of grants and contracts.

When we talk about the State, it sounds like we are talking about these big, impersonal entities, but we are really talking about towns—small towns—and school districts. That is where a lot of this impact is going to fall.

It is a double-edged sword that cuts both ways. It is hurting people—the people who are being laid off, the people who are going to have to be laid off, whether they are in a town or city, a county or the State. That hurts the economy. Those are people who are buying things in the stores, going to restaurants, and going to grocery stores. They are going to places to buy clothes, and if they can't do that, then, the entire economy is pulled down.

If we don't help the States and the cities and towns in this situation, the estimates are that it is going to hit GDP by 2 to 3 percent. That is huge. That is a huge economic loss that is going to translate into a fiscal loss for us and a tragic loss for the American people.

The estimate in Maine is a \$1.4 billion shortfall of our State budget over the next 3 years—a half-billion dollars in this fiscal year that we are in right now.

Towns and cities across Maine are already starting to furlough first responders. Who is it that works for the towns? Who is it that works for the cities? Police and fire are the biggest components. They are not hiring people. I think we need to face the fact that those who are opposing aid to our cities and towns are the people who are defunding the police. That is who is defunding the police because their budgets are going to be cut if they don't get some assistance from this body and this government.

Let's be real. Let's talk about facts. Let's talk about the real impact of our lack of attention to this issue. This is a personal tragedy for these families, and it is one more blow to the economy.

By the way, this is not a blue State issue. Here are some States whose budgets have been hit by more than 10 percent by the loss of revenues caused by the COVID: Alaska, which is not much of a blue State; Indiana; Kansas; Kentucky; Montana; Oklahoma; and Iowa. Those States are hurting, too.

This blue State-red State stuff bothers me.

I don't know how many emergency appropriations for natural disasters, wildfires, floods, and hurricanes I have voted for. It never occurred to me to ask what color the State was. It never occurred to me. We are a community. This is one country. I don't ask how Florida voted if there is a hurricane that strikes that State or Georgia or Alabama, which is being hit right now. If they need help, we should provide it.

But what we are seeing now is a slow-motion fiscal hurricane that is hitting many, if not all, of the States of the United States. We should come together and help them. As for this business about that, well, we don't want to bail out somebody's pension program, look, this is an easy calculation. The Treasury Department is capable of making the calculation. What were your revenues last year? What were your projections before COVID? What is the difference? That is what we are talking about.

Make no mistake, we are talking about real, concrete, on-the-ground losses of jobs and losses of the services that those jobs provide. Whether they are public health workers, first responders, firefighters, or police—yes, police—they are who are being impacted here, and it is we as citizens who are the customers of those services who need the protection and who need the services they provide. They are who are being hurt.

I hope that we can come to an agreement and that we can get over this nonsense that this is somehow a blue State-red State thing and that we are bailing out States that were not prudent. I am tired of hearing that. We are talking about people's lives here. We are talking about the protection of public services. We are talking about teaching our kids. We are talking about people who are providing the basic protections that we all take for granted in our daily lives.

Really, I have two simple messages: One, let's make a deal. Two, that deal should include support for those people and institutions in our States, in our cities, and in our smallest towns so that they will have the wherewithal to be able to help us all get through this thing together. That is what this is all about, and those are the people on the ground who are helping us get through this together.

We can do this. We proved in March that we could do it. I think we must and can and will do it again.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

(The remarks of Mr. LEE pertaining to the introduction of S. 4608 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. LEE. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF
DEMOCRACY

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today I rise to commemorate the International Day of Democracy. Since 2007, September 15 has offered an opportunity each year to reflect on the democratic values that we cherish and to recommend ourselves to promoting them around the world.

The democratic project is especially important at this moment. Although some communities are experiencing greater rights and freedoms than ever before, there is also an alarming trend of democratic backsliding in many corners of the globe.

Countries that were becoming increasingly open and egalitarian are moving back toward authoritarianism under unlawful, oppressive leaders.

Meanwhile, countries that were already unfree are suffering even more disturbing civil and human rights abuses.

If we turn a blind eye to these developments, it will embolden bad actors to continue undermining freedom, peace, and equality. The United States must lead all democracy-loving people in calling out subversions of democratic rights wherever they exist and holding those responsible to account.

One country that requires our urgent attention is China. The Government of China has not adhered to democratic norms for a long time, but we should never allow that failure to normalize ongoing human rights abuses such as the vicious opposition to the Uighurs.

International nongovernmental organizations have documented China's mass surveillance, arbitrary detention, torture, and political indoctrination of these communities for no reason other than their religious and cultural differences.

We must do everything possible to fight for the freedom and equality of the Uighurs to help end this atrocity.

We also need to stand up for the rights of the people of Hong Kong. Beijing's attempt to circumvent Hong Kong's independent legal system with a far-reaching, oppressive national security law is dangerous and in complete disregard of the one-country, two-system principle. I am likewise disturbed that the Hong Kong government inexplicably postponed the September regional elections for another year. The people of Hong Kong deserve to see their democratic aspirations realized and protected. I am pleased that there is bipartisan, strong support in the U.S. Senate and in the House for the people of Hong Kong, and I joined with Senator RUBIO in introducing legislation to make that clear.

China is certainly not the only place where democratic rights are threatened. We need to look closer to home, as well, to countries like Venezuela. In Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro's illegal regime has produced one of the worst humanitarian crises by plundering the country's resources for personal gain and using the distribution of food as a

tool for social control. Maduro has completely ignored the Venezuelan people's call to return to democracy and is using the current global pandemic as an opportunity to consolidate his own power.

In addition to addressing quasi-dictatorships in the Western Hemisphere, we must maintain pressure on the so-called "last dictator" of Europe, Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko. While Lukashenko's near three-decade rule has been full of corrupt power grabs and crackdowns and dissent, his behavior surrounding the recent Presidential election demonstrates a new level of lawlessness. Lukashenko refused to certify opposing candidates and then imprisoned them. He claimed victory through clearly fraudulent election results. He restricted the free flow of information by shutting down the internet and targeting journalists. And he oversaw the brutal repression of protesters, including many instances of Belarusian security forces repeatedly torturing detained civilians. Lukashenko knows that the Belarusian people are ready for a new democratic chapter that does not include him. Instead of stepping aside to serve the interests of his country, he has abandoned the rule of law in order to protect his own power.

It is no surprise that Lukashenko has appealed to Vladimir Putin to endorse this tyrannical approach. President Putin is, after all, a veteran when it comes to destabilizing democracies. He has done so not only in his own country of Russia, where he overcomes dissent by changing the constitution to secure his rule and poisoning political opponents, but also in other parts of the world. That includes his continuous attempts to undermine our democracy here in the United States.

President Trump has completely failed to hold Vladimir Putin accountable for abusing his own people's human rights and attacking the United States. Even worse, President Trump appears to have taken a page out of Putin's book, suggesting that if he were not reelected this November, he may not accept the results of that election. It is a sad commentary on the state of our domestic affairs that we have to take such a ludicrous statement seriously. We know that global democracy is in trouble when the leader of the United States is copying undemocratic heads of state instead of condemning them.

These are but a few snapshots of what is happening in many countries around the world. If there is anything that I have learned in my many years of public service, it is that we can never take democracy—and all the freedoms, rights, and opportunities it entails—for granted. My work in the House and the Senate on the Helsinki Commission really embodies that commitment to stand up for human rights. The Helsinki Final Act made it clear that all States in Europe, the former Soviet Union, United States, and Can-

ada embraced not only democratic principles and human rights of good governance but also the principle that we have a right to challenge the compliance with those commitments in any other member state. It is not interfering in their internal matters; it is holding them to the commitments they made in the Helsinki Final Act.

Democracy is fragile. It must be constantly tended to and protected to survive and flourish. Therefore, while we have a responsibility to monitor the status of democracy in other parts of the world, we have a parallel duty to safeguard and tend to our democracy here at home. I cannot remember a more dangerous time for American democracy since the Civil War.

To protect our democracy, we must protect the ability of every individual to exercise her or his right to vote. In the middle of a pandemic, that means expanding the ability to vote by mail so that we do not force people to choose between participating in our democracy or protecting their health.

We need to make sure that State and local election boards get the resources they need to cover the costs of mail-in voting, and we need to defend the strength, integrity, and impartiality of the U.S. Postal Service.

Our President also openly invites foreign powers to interfere in our election, and his encouragement has been effective. The same external factors that we know influenced the elections in 2016 are once again actively planning to interfere in the upcoming election. Regardless of party affiliation, we should all be able to unite in pursuit of a healthy, functioning democracy. That requires us to take action against the foreign actors seeking to spread misinformation and divide Americans for their own benefit.

When we fail to protect democracy in the United States, it has consequences all over the world. After he was confronted about his recent brutal crackdown on protesters, journalists, and opposition members, Belarus President Lukashenko said that the United States "should sort out their own affairs" before attempting to interfere in Belarus. His statements made clear that President Trump and his administration and supporters' undemocratic behavior is eroding our credibility on the global stage as a voice for human rights. Let today, International Day for Democracy, be a reminder for us to stand up in defense of democracy, whether we are talking about China, Venezuela, Belarus, or here in our own backyard. The world is counting on us.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BRAUN). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to use, during my remarks, two