

they are helping to conduct clinical trials on a potential COVID vaccine being developed by a number of companies, including Janssen, J & J. That is Janssen, Johnson & Johnson.

I was impressed with the progress they had made in their phase 1 and phase 2 trials for the J & J vaccine, as well as the precautions they are taking with regard to safety and privacy of participants in the trial. In fact, the previous trial of this vaccine found 99 percent of participants developed antibodies to COVID-19, and 98 percent still had these antibodies in their system after 29 days. These are encouraging figures that suggest that this J & J vaccine could prove to be another useful tool in our toolkit to fight COVID-19, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

CTI explained to me that they were focused on encouraging more people to join their trials. I asked if it would help if I signed up, and they said yes. Along with tens of thousands of other participants, I am now joining this trial for this promising new vaccine. Like other participants in the program, I don't know if I got the vaccine or if I got a placebo.

I enrolled in this vaccine trial for really three reasons. One is because I think it is so important to get this vaccine moving, and these trials are really important to having that be successful. In my view, again, the vaccine is the most effective way for us to defeat this coronavirus.

Second, I enrolled because I want to encourage others to join these trials around the country. If you are interested, go online. Look at the vaccine trials and join one in your community.

And, third, I hope it will convince my fellow Ohioans and others that getting vaccinated makes sense.

There is a concerning Gallup poll from last month that found that only half of Americans are comfortable getting a COVID-19 vaccine, and 50 percent of us are not comfortable at this point getting vaccinated. Actually, that is down from August, when two-thirds of Americans said they would be willing to be vaccinated. This concerns me a lot.

I suspect in part this is happening because of the rhetoric we have heard from some public officials casting doubt on a vaccine solely because it may be approved by the Trump administration's FDA. We need to stop playing politics with people's health and let the science and the data determine which vaccines get approved. The FDA is being very cautious, and they are being driven by science. Casting doubt on the efficacy of a vaccine to try to score political points is dangerous and needs to stop.

Public confidence in vaccines is declining at exactly the time that we need these vaccines the most, and we need to do what we can to reverse that trend. My hope is that being involved firsthand I can use my platform as a Senator to help give people confidence

that these new vaccines being developed are safe and effective. The more folks participate in these trials, the sooner they will have the complete data to finalize this phase of the trial and move on to the FDA approval process.

But just as important as participating in these vaccine trials is what we do here as legislators in Congress to ensure that these vaccines can continue to be developed and deployed safely and rapidly. As I mentioned earlier, the CARES Act provided \$27 billion for the development of vaccines and other countermeasures—an unprecedented show of support from Congress in our fight to defeat the underlying healthcare challenges of this pandemic.

Unfortunately, since that bill was passed—the CARES bill—way back in March, 8 months ago, we have been unable to focus on following up with more funding to help this effort. Twenty-seven billion dollars is a lot of money, but it only gets us so far in an effort like this.

What is also missing from the uses for this \$27 billion is the ability to fund a campaign to explain to Americans that there is a safe and effective vaccine out there that they can use, that the science has been followed. As I mentioned, there is a lot of vaccine hesitancy right now. It existed before this pandemic. Unfortunately, it has been made worse by some elected officials trying to politicize this science-driven effort.

That is why I am working on bipartisan legislation to support a national awareness campaign that would empower HHS to cut through the politics and promote the scientific advancements we have made in order to increase public confidence.

We don't have a vaccine yet, and we are still facing another round of shutdowns, with little help to support those who will be impacted by it. That is the reason we need to do more here in Washington right now to ensure that the healthcare response to this pandemic does not falter, because this crisis is getting worse, not better. In my home State of Ohio and around the country, we are seeing this, and we can make a difference here.

In Ohio, the number of daily cases has risen every day for the past month. We are seeing double what we saw just a few weeks ago.

In the United States, we are now averaging more than 100,000 new cases per day, double the rate from just a month ago. As was predicted, it got colder, people are inside more, and the third wave has arrived.

Unfortunately, we have also seen an increase in Ohio in hospitalizations, in ICU patients, and, sadly, in fatalities along with these new cases.

We need to do more to help the economy, too, and that is another reason we need a COVID-19 package—a stimulus package—because as the pandemic has worsened, the impressive economic growth we were seeing has slowed down

at a time when the economy is still down 10 million jobs since February. What we really don't want is for those ten million people, in a slowdown of the economy, to become long-term unemployed and who may never reenter the workforce. And, of course, certain sectors—like hospitality, restaurants, hotels, travel, and entertainment—are still struggling badly, with no end in sight, as some States are beginning to re-implement stricter social distancing measures and even to close down these facilities in order to counter the spread of the virus.

I am pleased that Leader McCONNELL has called on Congress to work together to pass another coronavirus response package before the end of the year. We can't afford to wait any longer. It is my hope that my Democratic colleagues recognize the urgency as well. And I have talked to a number of them who do. We have to refrain from making this political at this point. We have to figure out how to work together to find common ground.

If we can come together and get a bipartisan coronavirus bill passed before the end of this year that takes a commonsense approach targeting the healthcare challenges of this pandemic, targeting the economic consequences, we will not only help the men and women working tirelessly in labs around the country to fight this disease, but we will send a clear message to the American people that we are with them in this fight.

And as we continue this critical national effort, let's be sure we are doing our part here in Congress to pass legislation that provides additional funding for treatments and therapies for the coronavirus so that we can be sure we have the resources necessary to treat the virus as people get it.

The time is now for us to put the partisanship aside and figure out how we can work together to give the American people a little hope, to address the healthcare crisis that is in all of our States, and to ensure that the economic consequences are not devastating for the people we represent.

I urge my colleagues to come together and to do that before we recess for the holidays.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

INTERNET OF THINGS CYBERSECURITY IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2020

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 1668, which was received from the House and is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1668) to establish minimum security standards for Internet of Things devices owned or controlled by the Federal Government, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to proceeding?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. PORTMAN. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read three times and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 1668) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MODERNIZATION CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAM ACT

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 5901, which was received from the House and is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5901) to establish a program to facilitate the adoption of modern technology by executive agencies, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. PORTMAN. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read three times and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 5901) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

TEAM VETERAN CAREGIVERS ACT

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 540, S. 2216.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2216) to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to formally recognize caregivers of veterans, notify veterans and caregivers of clinical determinations relating to eligibility for caregiver programs, and temporarily extend benefits for veterans who are determined ineligible for the family caregiver program, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to proceeding to the measure?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Transparency and Effective Accountability Measures for Veteran Caregivers Act" or the "TEAM Veteran Caregivers Act".

SEC. 2. MODIFICATION OF ADMINISTRATION OF CAREGIVER PROGRAMS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) OFFICIAL DESIGNATION OF CAREGIVERS.—
(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, when determined feasible by the Secretary, shall formally recognize all caregivers of veterans by identifying any caregiver of a veteran in the electronic health record of the veteran.

(2) INCLUSION.—Caregivers recognized under paragraph (1) shall include—

(A) any family caregiver who is approved as a provider of personal care services for an eligible veteran under the program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers under subsection (a) of section 1720G of title 38, United States Code; and

(B) any caregiver of a covered veteran participating in the program of support services for caregivers under subsection (b) of such section.

(b) STANDARDIZED LETTERS REGARDING CERTAIN DETERMINATIONS UNDER FAMILY CAREGIVER PROGRAM.—

Section 1720G(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(12)(A) The Secretary shall notify the individuals described in subparagraph (B) regarding decisions affecting the furnishing of assistance under this subsection using standardized letters, as the Secretary determines such notifications and letters to be appropriate.

"(B) The individuals described in this subparagraph shall include—

"(i) an individual who submits an application for the program required by paragraph (1);

"(ii) an individual determined by the Secretary to be an eligible veteran pursuant to such an application; and

"(iii) a family caregiver of an eligible veteran who is—

"(I) approved as a provider of personal care services under paragraph (6)(B); or

"(II) designated as a primary provider of personal care services under paragraph (7)(A)."

(c) TEMPORARY EXTENSION OF BENEFITS FOR FAMILY CAREGIVER PROGRAM.—Upon determining that a veteran who was receiving services under the program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers under section 1720G(a) of title 38, United States Code, is no longer clinically eligible for purposes of such program, the Secretary shall extend benefits under such program, including stipends under paragraph (3)(A)(ii)(V) of such section, for a period of time determined by the Secretary if such an extension is determined appropriate by the Secretary.

Mr. PORTMAN. I further ask that the committee-reported substitute amendment be withdrawn; that the Peters substitute amendment, which is at the desk, be considered and agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; that the committee-reported title amendment be considered and agreed to; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was withdrawn.

The amendment (No. 2688) in the nature of a substitute was agreed to as follows:

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Transparency and Effective Accountability Measures for Veteran Caregivers Act".

ures for Veteran Caregivers Act" or the "TEAM Veteran Caregivers Act".

SEC. 2. MODIFICATION OF ADMINISTRATION OF CAREGIVER PROGRAMS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) FORMAL RECOGNITION OF CAREGIVERS.—

(1) REPORT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report regarding the feasibility and advisability of formally recognizing all caregivers of veterans by identifying any caregiver of a veteran in the electronic health record of the veteran.

(B) CAREGIVERS RECOGNIZED.—The recognition of caregivers described in subparagraph (A) shall include recognition of—

(i) any family caregiver who is approved as a provider of personal care services for an eligible veteran under the program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers under subsection (a) of section 1720G of title 38, United States Code; and

(ii) any caregiver of a covered veteran participating in the program of general caregiver support services under subsection (b) of such section.

(C) TIMELINE.—If the Secretary determines that formally recognizing all caregivers of veterans as described in subparagraph (A) is feasible and advisable, the report required by such subparagraph shall include a timeline for implementing such recognition.

(2) IMPLEMENTATION.—If the Secretary determines that formally recognizing all caregivers of veterans as described in paragraph (1)(A) is feasible and advisable, the Secretary shall implement such recognition in accordance with the timeline included in the report required by such paragraph.

(b) NOTIFICATIONS, EXTENSION OF BENEFITS, AND DISCHARGE FROM FAMILY CAREGIVER PROGRAM.—Section 1720G(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

"(12)(A) The Secretary shall notify the individuals described in subparagraph (C) regarding decisions affecting the furnishing of assistance under this subsection using standardized letters, as the Secretary determines such notifications and letters to be appropriate.

"(B) A notification provided under subparagraph (A) shall include the elements required for notices of decisions under section 5104(b) of this title to the extent that those elements apply to such notification, unless, not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of the Transparency and Effective Accountability Measures for Veteran Caregivers Act, the Secretary determines that it would not be feasible to include such elements in such notifications and submits to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report setting forth the reasons for such determination.

"(C) The individuals described in this subparagraph shall include—

"(i) an individual who submits an application for the program established under paragraph (1);

"(ii) an individual determined by the Secretary to be an eligible veteran pursuant to such an application; and

"(iii) a family caregiver of an eligible veteran who is—

"(I) approved as a provider of personal care services under paragraph (6)(B); or

"(II) designated as a primary provider of personal care services under paragraph (7)(A).

"(13)(A) If the Secretary determines that a veteran receiving services under the program