

our children are getting the very best education possible, which is full-time, in-person instruction. They are intent on jamming through this partisan \$1.9 trillion COVID package, which does include billions of dollars for schools.

Incidentally, in working together, we have passed five bipartisan COVID relief packages. Yes, it is harder to work in a bipartisan fashion, but that is why we were sent back here to Washington—to work together. Yet President Biden and the Democrats are saying: We are going to do this one alone. It is going to be their way or the high-way.

The sad reality is, the more the American people hear what is in this \$1.9 trillion package, the more they are not going to like it. Most of the money in this package is not to be spent now. In fact, 95 percent of it will be spent over the next 7 years, after the crisis. We should not use this COVID crisis as a liberal wish list of items here wherein 95 percent of it gets spent in the out-years. How does this help our students and our schools now? The answer is, it doesn't.

This is not how we solve the problems that our students are facing. Fortunately, there is a pretty simple solution. It is this: Listen to the experts. Listen to the science. Reopen our schools, and let's get our students back in the classroom.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

TEXAS

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, we have had some bizarre weather in my State in the last week or so. We are still reeling from a deadly winter storm that hit all 254 counties in the State of Texas last week.

The snowstorm brought snow, ice, and prolonged subfreezing temperatures. We don't have temperatures below zero in Texas—or at least we haven't for a long, long time, but we did last week. As a result, it paralyzed much of our critical infrastructure, leaving millions without electricity, leaving them without heat, and leaving them without running water for days on end.

The good news is that power has now been restored for the vast majority of Texans, and cities are slowly lifting water boil notices as water filtration systems come back online.

But a number of families are still facing outages, and as we have seen during previous disasters, low-income and minority communities are the hardest hit. Our top priority is to restore power and clean water to every single Texan.

Throughout this episode—this tragedy, really—my staff and I have been in contact with local, State, and, of course, Federal officials to determine what kinds of things we can do to help and how we can mobilize resources as soon as possible. As recovery efforts continue in the coming days and weeks, I will continue to try to do that.

This is not unlike what we have to do periodically for hurricanes that seem to find their way to the State of Texas. But in this case we know that some of the problem was not an act of nature; it was a failure to anticipate these subfreezing, subzero cold temperatures. So we have got to ask not only "What happened?" but "How can we prevent it from happening again in the future?"

As I said, we experience, from time to time, hurricanes, occasionally tornadoes and tropical storms or record-low temperatures, but we cannot allow our infrastructure to go offline for days on end.

I want to thank the countless Texans who supported each other during this crisis. There are those that have gone above and beyond the call of duty in their official capacities, whether it is as first responders, emergency dispatchers, utility and energy workers, healthcare workers—the list goes on and on.

But there are also the unsung heroes—those who invited neighbors into their homes, delivered hot meals to those in need, checked on an elderly neighbor, those who towed vehicles stuck in the snow, and so much more.

I just want to assure all of my constituents that we are in this together, and we will do everything we can not only to find out how this happened but what we can do to make sure it never happens again.

CORONAVIRUS

Madam President, on another matter, as you know, this week our Democratic colleagues in the House are continuing to take action on President Biden's relief bill, using the budget reconciliation process.

It is really not so much an issue in the House, where you can do anything you want, basically, with a majority vote. But if all goes their way, our Democratic colleagues will write a \$1.9 trillion check, funded by taxpayers—future taxpayers because it will be borrowed money—without the input of a single Republican in Congress, either in the House or in the Senate.

We know that there are 10 Republicans who went over to the White House, had a very pleasant meeting with President Biden, but were essentially told: My way or the highway. Any effort to try to come up with a bipartisan compromise was rejected.

Regardless of your political affiliation or views on this particular bill, that fact alone should trouble every single American. After all, there was no need for partisan maneuvering to pass a coronavirus relief bill last year. As a matter of fact, we passed five of them. All of them were signed into law with overwhelming bipartisan support. No bill received fewer than 90 votes here in the Senate. One even passed unanimously.

Of course, the reason for the widespread support wasn't because Members thought these relief packages were perfect. There were things I would have changed if I had had a chance, and I am

sure others would have made other changes.

But each bill was a clear response to the crisis at hand and free from any unrelated partisan priorities. In other words, it was focused on COVID-19 relief.

Suffice it to say that the same cannot be said about this latest piece of legislation, this \$1.9 trillion bill being rammed through Congress by our Democratic colleagues.

Overall, I have three concerns with this legislation. First, it would dramatically overspend in areas that aren't even in need of additional funding.

In the early days of the pandemic, we had no real expectation about how long the crisis would last or how big a blow it would deal to our economy. After the CARES Act was signed into law in March, late March, it made sense to hit the pause button so we could see how what we did was working—what was working well and what was not working so well. Where was more assistance needed? Where was it sufficient?

These needs became obvious pretty quickly. One example was the Paycheck Protection Program. Within 2 weeks of passage of \$350 billion worth of relief, it ran dry—in 2 weeks. So we quickly came together on a bipartisan basis to replenish the fund with additional money, and we did so again at the end of the year.

This sort of bipartisan, step-by-step approach is the most effective way to get funding where it is needed without wasting money on already well-funded programs.

But, unfortunately, our friends across the aisle didn't apply that same logic to this \$1.9 trillion piece of legislation, which sends hundreds of billions of dollars to areas that are nowhere near running out of money.

One example is public education. So far, Congress has provided more than \$110 billion to support K-12 education, including \$68 billion in the relief bill passed just in December. Schools in Texas have used this money to update their ventilation systems, purchase masks and personal protective equipment, and make other investments in classroom safety. But the vast majority of the funding that was provided in December is still waiting to be used. In other words, there is no current need for any more money from Congress.

As a matter of fact, as of February 9, States have spent just under \$5 billion of the \$68 billion we have already provided for K-12 education. They have spent just \$5 billion out of the \$68 billion.

As a reminder, in December, the CDC—the Centers for Disease Control—estimated schools would need only about \$22 billion to reopen safely, meaning there is already more than enough money to support safe school reopenings. But that data-driven estimate from the experts doesn't seem to matter to our Democratic colleagues or the administration, who are preparing