

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 30) to amend S. Res. 458 of the Ninety-eighth Congress, as amended.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be 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 resolution (S. Res. 30) was agreed to.

(The resolution is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Madam President.

I thank my good friend, the Senator from Pennsylvania.

I yield the floor.

SETTING FORTH THE CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET FOR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

S. CON. RES. 5

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I will continue with the brief discussion about home and community-based services.

It is so critical, as I mentioned earlier, to have these services available for seniors and for people with disabilities, and it is also relevant in the life of a child. We know—and as the Presiding Officer knows well in her efforts to provide these services to those in the disability community and among seniors—that it is important to children as well. Medicaid home and community-based services provide over \$4 billion right now in support so that children can receive therapy and other necessary services to participate in school, and as I mentioned earlier, we know the impact upon seniors and people with disabilities. So that is the reason we are emphasizing, among many reasons, the investment in this bill for home and community-based services in the context of the pandemic and the devastation of the virus and more broadly.

The second issue I will raise—I know we are short on time—is an issue that I mentioned earlier. In addition to home and community-based services, this is an issue that relates to the family's ability to pay for childcare. So it affects the parents as well as the children. It is the child and dependent care tax credit. Obviously, it is an existing tax credit, a credit that parents have been able to rely on, but it is nowhere near robust enough to make it possible for more parents to afford childcare.

Here is the reality when it comes to what happens in the midst of this pandemic: We know that families have many reasons they can't make ends meet, but, also, many families have members of their families who want to get back to work. We are told that about 20 percent of working adults say the reason they are not working is that COVID-19 has disrupted their childcare arrangements. So it is both a childcare access and affordability question.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics tells us that women accounted for all jobs lost in December of 2020—not most jobs, not some jobs. All jobs lost in the United States were among women. Women lost 156,000 jobs. Their labor force participation rate is at its lowest point in a third of a century. One of the big reasons is childcare. We need to expand the child and dependent care tax credit to give parents the ability to recoup thousands—not hundreds but thousands—of dollars in childcare expenses.

That is what my legislation will do. That is what the new administration wants to do, and that is what we should do in this next COVID bill, and there are a lot of reasons for it.

I will end with this. Last year, the National Academy of Sciences released a roadmap to reduce child poverty. We have heard of the good provisions in this legislation on the child tax credit and the earned income tax credit and of the substantial impacts they have had on lowering child poverty—one estimate, by half.

Also contributing to this and to lower child poverty even more would be to enhance the child and dependent care tax credit. Here are the numbers: 9.2, 9.2, and 518. What do I mean? The National Academy of Sciences says that, if you have a robust child and dependent care tax credit, you can reduce child poverty by 9.2 percent. Guess what happens to wages. There are raised aggregate earnings across the country also by 9.2, but it just happens to be billions—\$9.2 billion. Then the 518 refers to the jobs—increased net employment by more than 518,000 jobs according to the National Academy of Sciences.

So, among the many, many things we are doing in this bill, we need to invest in home and community-based services and also invest in a much more robust child and dependent care tax credit.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 75

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration of S. 75 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. Further, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, reserving the right to object, this measure, essentially, is a pretextual, ideological, and extreme step that really detracts from what should be our primary purpose at this moment in our history.

Literally, we are fast approaching 450,000 deaths in this country, and people continue to die at the rate of more than 3,000 per day. Our economic progress continues to be stalled. In fact, it is declining, with joblessness increasing across Connecticut and the country. People are struggling to stay in their homes, put food on their tables, and pay for the medicine they need. Our goal should be making sure people have vaccines and the economic support that they need. Instead, we are here on a measure that would, essentially, take away rights, burden rights, for people—women—who need that right.

We ought to be focusing our energy and attention on winning our fight against this pandemic, but, instead, we are here, debating a pretextual and ideological bill, another anti-choice bill—yet another attempt to restrict a woman's right to choose about when and whether to have a child. This bill purports to be about protecting individuals with Down syndrome, but it is merely a pretext for requiring healthcare providers to scrutinize women for their decisions to seek an abortion. The pretext is to take away those individual rights.

As a matter of fact, this bill has nothing to do with protecting people with Down syndrome, and it has nothing to do with addressing discrimination. If my colleague would like to genuinely help people with Down syndrome, he would ask for unanimous consent on legislation that the disability community actually has supported. The National Down Syndrome Society wants increased funding for medical research at the National Institutes of Health. It wants better educational opportunities and settings for people with Down syndrome. It wants laws and policies that ensure economic self-sufficiency and better workplaces and a fight against discrimination.

Those are the legislative priorities of this disability community, but what this bill actually does is it essentially requires healthcare providers to interrogate women about their decisions to seek an abortion. Healthcare providers who might violate this bill, if it ever became law, would incur fines, imprisonment, or both.

In conclusion, people have a right to make these kinds of deeply personal decisions. Those rights are protected under our Constitution. We should be protecting people with Down syndrome, and we should be expanding their opportunities and fighting discrimination, not using them as a pretext for restricting and burdening a woman's right to choose.

Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I have a hard time with that, I say to my friend from Connecticut.

Somehow, in protecting those with Down syndrome, you are killing those with Down syndrome.

Right now, I am really shocked that people would talk about protecting children. The previous speaker was from Pennsylvania. He had a bill on childcare and taking care of kids. Yet now we are talking about the fact that a baby, in having been diagnosed with having Down syndrome, somehow should be aborted. I can't think of how anyone could oppose this bill, especially because the American people overwhelmingly—70 percent of them—oppose aborting a child on the basis that the child would be born with Down syndrome. That includes 56 percent of the people who consider themselves to be pro-abortion people. Fifty-six percent of the people who support abortion oppose this on the basis of a Down syndrome diagnosis.

In the United States, over two-thirds of the unborn babies diagnosed with Down syndrome are aborted right now. Why? Instead of receiving information, resources, and support, mothers often resort to feeling pressure to abort.

Justice Clarence Thomas put it a little bit more directly. He said: "I am deeply concerned that for babies with Down syndrome, abortion has become 'a tool of modern day eugenics.'" That was from a U.S. Supreme Court Justice.

My bill would protect these innocent lives from systematic discrimination through abortion. We say that we support equality in the United States. Yet countless babies' lives have been stolen because of their chromosome counts. So I am surprised that my colleagues can object to this commonsense bill and that they reject protecting the most vulnerable among us, and, certainly, those who are born with Down syndrome are among the most vulnerable among us.

I just want the people to know out there, our friends in the Down syndrome community—and there is a community—that a lot of people are concerned about this. I am going to keep fighting for you even though some are using any kind of excuse that they can think of from protecting these babies.

Before I yield the floor, I will respond to any comments from the Senator from Connecticut.

Hearing none, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 137

Mr. LEE. Madam President, the whole point of American foreign aid is to assist countries in times of need and in support of a common interest between us and them. Yet, for many years, our foreign aid dollars have been used to impose violent, cultural imperialism by promoting and providing for the practice of abortion.

Tragically, instead of helping to preserve, strengthen, and sustain the lives of women and children abroad, our taxpayer dollars have been used to harm women's lives and to end the lives of their unborn children, especially baby girls.

In some of these countries, girls are disproportionately aborted, precisely because they are female. U.S. aid is used not to affirm the equal dignity of girls and women but to violently deny it. And in some of these countries, abortion has been forced on women who don't even want abortions—women in countries like Vietnam or Peru, for instance, who were forced to endure the coercive abortion and sterilization campaigns of the 1990s, just to name a few examples.

What kind of aid does violence to women and girls? What kind of help is it to impose U.S. abortion extremism on countries that culturally and democratically reject it or contribute to international organizations that allow regimes to use abortion as a tool of oppression? And what kind of progress is it to encourage sex-selective abortion and the denigration of human dignity for both the baby and the mother?

This cultural imperialism is not pro-woman. It is not pro-child. And it is not pro-healthcare. It is pro-sexism and pro-violence, and we must end it.

According to the latest Marist poll, the American people overwhelmingly agree. Nearly 60 percent of Americans oppose using tax dollars to pay for abortions, and more than 75 percent of Americans oppose using tax dollars to support abortions in other countries—75 percent.

Now, thankfully, President Ronald Reagan first took steps to reverse this kind of support in 1984, instituting what became known as the Mexico City policy to prohibit foreign aid from going to organizations that provide for or promote abortions or that advocate to change abortion laws within a foreign country.

Since then, the policy has, unfortunately, been rescinded and reinstated again and again between changing administrations. Between Republicans and Democrats, it has been moved as a sort of political football.

But the lives of babies and the dignity of women—these are not political footballs. Women and children everywhere have immeasurable, innate, inherent dignity and worth, regardless of where they are from, and they ought to be entitled to the right to life and protection from harm, regardless of who happens to be in office at any given moment.

The Protecting Life in Foreign Assistance Act affirms this very truth. This bill would permanently stop the use of our foreign aid money from funding or promoting abortions overseas.

I also defend the women and babies everywhere and value the women and babies everywhere by supporting two other measures introduced by my friends Senator INHOFE and Senator

BLACKBURN. Senator INHOFE's bill, the Protecting Individuals with Down Syndrome Act, would affirm that disability does not determine or demean the dignity and worth of a human life. And Senator BLACKBURN's bill would ensure that taxpayer funds under the Title X Family Planning Program do not go to any facility that performs or provides referrals for abortions.

In our laws and throughout our lives, we ought to uphold the dignity of each and every human person, regardless of the race, sex, appearance, abilities, or age of the person in question. The measures before us today do just that, and we should support them.

And now I would like to yield time to my friend and distinguished colleague, the Senator from Montana.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. DAINES. Madam President, I want to thank my colleague from Utah, Senator MIKE LEE, for his remarks.

Last week, with the stroke of a pen, President Biden eliminated critical pro-life protections. He reversed the Mexico City policy and began the process of dismantling title X protections against abortion.

I am glad to join Senator LEE, Senator BLACKBURN, along with several other pro-life Senators fighting back and calling on the Senate to pass the important bills today to reverse President Biden's pro-abortion actions.

The bottom line is, President Biden's actions were basically a handout to Planned Parenthood. It is no surprise, as Planned Parenthood spent millions to get the President elected. Now they are simply cashing in—this time, on the taxpayer's dime.

The United States should not spend taxpayer dollars to support a radical abortion agenda throughout the world, and we should absolutely not allow a slush fund of taxpayer dollars to line the pockets of Planned Parenthood.

I also want to thank my colleague Senator INHOFE, who urged the Senate to pass his bill today to protect babies with Down syndrome from being targeted for abortion.

Now, I watched what happened here just minutes ago. The Democrats objected. It is truly astounding. This bill should have passed unanimously, and it really exposes a terrible hypocrisy.

Most Republicans and Democrats today in Congress are unified in support for the Special Olympics. We are unified in supporting protecting those individuals with disabilities. Yet my colleagues across the aisle today opposed this commonsense legislation that would stop the most lethal kind of discrimination—the most lethal kind of discrimination imaginable—and that is being singled out and brutally killed simply because of a Down syndrome diagnosis.

Last week, I stood right here to bring attention to this very chilling issue. Today, babies with Down syndrome are the most endangered on Earth. In fact,

sadly, in the United States, 67 percent of babies diagnosed with Down syndrome are aborted. That is two out of three.

And, for me, this is personal. Last week, I shared the story of a sweet baby boy named Andrew. He is the son of some of my very good friends. Andrew has Down's. He brings light and joy to his family's life every day. He has an older brother, an older sister. I can tell you, this world, their family would not be the same without him.

I am deeply concerned that for babies with Down syndrome, abortion has become a tool of eugenics. It is the duty of this body to end this lethal discrimination. It is our duty to protect every innocent life, no matter how small, no matter how many chromosomes they may have.

I believe every human being is created with God-given dignity and God-given protection. No court, no legislature, no law can take that away.

I will not give up this fight, and I know many of my colleagues standing here today will not give up as well.

I want to thank Senator LEE.

I yield the floor back to Senator LEE.

Mr. LEE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be discharged from further consideration of S. 137 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, my colleague from Utah tells a nice story, but it is not accurate. He is not being honest about what is going on with the global gag rule, and I am really disappointed that he is once again trying to push this dangerous legislation.

As I pointed out when I objected to the same bill less than a year ago, the policy in question closes health clinics, decreases care, and needlessly puts the lives of women, children, and families at risk. In fact, instead of protecting life, the global gag rule erects new barriers to critical health services, including reproductive health services for people and communities that already have limited access to affordable, quality healthcare.

And let's be clear: America's taxpayer dollars do not go to fund abortions overseas.

What my colleague is objecting to is funding for family planning services to help women protect their families. And the policy that he wants to codify into law is dangerous in the best of times, but during a global pandemic, when care is already stretched, it is downright deadly.

The Guttmacher Institute estimates that a 10-percent—just a 10-percent decline in family planning services, including reduced access to reversible

contraception and pregnancy and newborn healthcare, results in 49 million more women with unmet contraceptive needs; 15 million additional unintended pregnancies; 1.7 million women and 2.6 million newborns who will experience major complications due to not receiving the care they need; and most unfortunately and sad, 28,000 more maternal deaths and 168,000 more newborn deaths because of this policy. And that is just a modest 10-percent reduction in family planning access.

So if you really care about families and newborns, you will ensure that they have access to the critical services that they need so they don't have those unintended pregnancies.

It is safe to say that the COVID-19 pandemic, which has diverted care and shut down access to family planning clinics across the globe, is greatly exacerbating the situation. So now is not the time to place draconian limits on family planning dollars.

In fact, we need a renewed commitment to comprehensive family planning. That is why last week, along with 47 of our colleagues, we reintroduced the bipartisan Global Health Empowerment and Rights Act. The bill, also known as Global HER, would ensure that care is not limited based on the President in the White House because if we are going to actually get serious about improving the lives of women and girls, we should be working to end the global gag rule, not to expand it.

So for all of these reasons, I object to my colleague's request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Madam President, 75 percent of Americans, regardless of how they feel on other issues—I understand my colleagues take different positions on issues related to the sanctity of human life. I understand that. As much as I disagree with them, I respect that it is their right to hold that opinion.

This bill is about something much narrower, something upon which Americans—75 percent of them—overwhelmingly agree, and that is that we shouldn't be using U.S. foreign aid money to fund or promote abortions overseas.

If we can't accept that, it is terribly disappointing and would be news to most Americans.

Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, again, I would just like to correct what my colleague is saying. We do not use foreign aid money to perform abortions overseas. In fact, a poll conducted by CHANGE, Center for Health and Gender Equity, demonstrates that 59 percent of likely voters—if we want to talk about polls—59 percent of likely voters in America oppose banning U.S. global health assistance going to organizations in other countries that provide legal and safe abortions or abortion referrals. Only 30 percent support this policy.

Research published in the *Lancet* medical journal last July found that the global gag rule under President George W. Bush—which was implemented on an exponentially smaller scale than what was done by President Trump and what is proposed in the law that my colleague from Utah is asking for unanimous consent to put forward, that kind of reduction in access to services increases a country's typical abortion rate by 40 percent while reducing the use of modern contraceptives by 3.5 percent.

See, this is what happens when you don't base policy decisions on scientific data. You get these kinds of narratives that are absolutely inaccurate. What we know and what is repeatedly evident through the research is that the global gag rule or, as my colleague calls it, protecting life in global health assistance, actually increases abortions.

It is, unfortunately, simple logic. Decreasing access to family planning methods like modern contraception, counseling, and the health spacing and timing of pregnancies, directly leads to more unwanted pregnancies. But because this policy also limits abortion services that organizations provide with other non-U.S. funds, women with unwanted pregnancies are forced to seek out unsafe abortions. That is why we see the abortion numbers increase. So it is a lose-lose policy, and, of course, it is women and children who pay the price.

The Foundation for AIDS Research found that one-third of 286 PEPFAR Programs implementing partners who were surveyed had altered their services or organizational operations in response to the global gag rule under former President Trump—a great program, PEPFAR, under George W. Bush, that has saved millions of lives, and yet what we saw under the Trump implementation of the global gag rule is that they had to alter the services that they provided, including reducing sexual and reproductive health and pregnancy counseling, youth outreach, contraception services, and HIV counseling, testing, and treatment.

The policies that my colleague is advocating for makes the situation worse for women and families, and if he would look at the scientific data, he would understand that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 88

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, since 1976, Federal law has prohibited the use of Federal funds—taxpayer dollars—for abortion.

Section 1008 of the Public Health Service Act explicitly States that title X funds “shall not be used in programs where abortion is a method of family planning.”

But, as often happens in Federal law, there is a loophole: Federal regulations do allow abortion facilities to be co-located within clinics that are following the title X rules, and those

rules are providing healthcare to women.

The Title X Abortion Provider Prohibition Act would close that loophole by prohibiting the awarding of these funds to entities that perform abortions or that provide funds to entities that perform abortions.

The bill allows for exceptions to be made in cases of rape or incest or to save the life of the mother. It would also require HHS to provide an annual report to Congress listing entities receiving grant funds, and specifying which of those grantees performed abortions under the exceptions.

This is not a big change. As I said, this is a simple change. It is one that would add to the protections of women and their unborn children. It is a statutory fix that will redirect tens of millions of dollars in funding to providers, our community care clinics that are offering comprehensive healthcare services for women.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be discharged from further consideration of S. 88, and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, reserving the right to object. We are in the middle of a pandemic. Families are struggling, and we should be doing everything we can to make it easier for them to get the care they need from providers that they trust.

The title X program has been incredibly helpful to people seeking all kinds of healthcare, from cancer screenings to STI screenings, to birth control, and more. And before the Trump administration's gag rule slashed the capacity of the title X network in half by cutting out trusted healthcare providers, over 4 million patients a year turned to title X-funded providers for their healthcare.

These patients are disproportionately young people, women who have low incomes, and women of color. An overwhelming majority of them have historically turned to providers like Planned Parenthood, which would be permanently kicked out of the program by this bill.

We need to be tearing down barriers, like former President Trump's title X gag rule, that are jeopardizing access to care for patients, not reinforcing them. And we need to be focused on addressing the pain of this pandemic and on taking steps to finally end it, not wasting time with blatantly ideological bills that appeal to the far-right base at the expense of our families.

While Republicans seem intent on keeping patients from getting the healthcare they need, I am glad we finally have a President who is listening

to women and men across the country. He has made clear that he wants healthcare to be a right, not a privilege, and he has already directed his administration to review the damage of title X gag rules that have been so harmful to so many people—an important step toward rescinding the rule, as I continue to push for.

So I urge my Republican colleagues to stop these attacks on women's healthcare and turn their attention to something families actually want, which is serious action to end this pandemic.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to much of what my colleague had to say about we are in the middle of a pandemic. Families are struggling. Yes, indeed, that is very true. And if you want to talk about making healthcare services more available to more women, then, yes, indeed, what you want to do is make certain that these taxpayer funds are not used to provide abortion services, that these funds are going to the community clinics that are the ones that are providing the screenings.

Many of the Planned Parenthood clinics do abortions. They refer women to the community clinic around the corner for the cancer screenings, for the breast exams, for the Pap smears. So there should be agreement that, yes, individuals should have access to this healthcare. And if you say: If you perform abortions, you cannot have these title X dollars, then the hundreds of community clinics that are access points to healthcare for women in underserved communities, these funds would be made available to them.

I think we also have to talk about rights and privileges and touch on that for just a moment. I fully appreciate, we all have different opinions, and it is wonderful that we live in a country that allows freedom of speech, where we can express our difference of opinions.

What we do have to realize is this, that we have in this country 1,700 lives lost every day to abortion—1,700 voiceless and vulnerable—and to me that is just an absolutely heartbreaking stat that these unborn children do not have the opportunity to enjoy that right to life. I find that very sad.

As I said, this legislation would make certain that all of this money goes to these health clinics but not to a clinic that provides abortion service.

This is the kind of access that, yes, indeed, many families would appreciate having more access and more services available to women at their community clinics.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

S. CON. RES. 5

Mr. GRASSLEY. Thank you. The actions of my Democratic colleagues this

week make it clear that they do not have any intention of working with Republicans on a bipartisan COVID package. There is no other explanation for the budget resolution that was introduced this week.

We are not considering this budget resolution for the usual purpose of establishing overall spending and revenue levels for the fiscal year. That has already been done. The sole purpose, then, of this budget is to establish reconciliation instructions whereby the majority can pass a partisan COVID package on a party-line vote, quite contrary to the inaugural address of President Biden where he said he was going to be reaching out to Republicans.

I know there has been some discussion with Republicans but not a serious effort to compromise. Embarking down this inherently partisan path of going the budgetary reconciliation route now poisons the well for any fruitful bipartisan negotiation. And you can't say it too many times that it is completely at odds with President Biden's call for unity and bipartisanship during the campaign and told to the people of the United States in the inaugural address.

It doesn't have to be this way. My Republican colleagues and I stand ready to engage in bipartisan discussions to reach an agreement to provide targeted COVID relief. A consensus package could be done very quickly, just as happened with the bipartisan CARES package back in March of last year. The relief package Congress passed in December came together very quickly once both sides agreed to set aside partisan poison pills. Republicans did that for things we wanted, and Democrats did that for things they wanted.

Now, hardly 6 weeks later, here we are back on a partisan approach to helping the needy people because of the pandemic and helping the healthcare crisis because of the pandemic. In the past year or so, we have done a lot. We have been able to come together in a bipartisan way to pass around \$4 trillion in COVID-focused relief, and we did that all—you can't say it too many times—with strong bipartisan support. Why not now? There is no reason we can't come together for the American people and do it once more and probably have to do it again after something would be passed the early part of this year.

Instead of wasting our time with a weeklong partisan exercise, we could be working together today to forge a bipartisan compromise. If this was the course that the majority were to take, I think there is much that we could agree to with near universal support and do it in short order. Everyone recognizes we need to get control of the virus as a first priority. That is necessary to save lives and get back to anything close to resembling a normally functioning economy.

Rapid deployment of the vaccine is our best hope for our getting there to

get the economy functioning. I doubt a single Member of this Senate body would object to additional funds for vaccine distribution if it will get more people vaccinated sooner. I am also confident that many on my side could agree to additional relief for individuals and small businesses that have been hardest hit by the pandemic. I am sure of that because we have done it twice in the past. We can have a discussion on unemployment assistance, rental assistance, funds for reopening schools, and additional grants to small businesses to help them keep the lights on. I can say that very positively because we have done it twice in the past.

But any relief, from our point of view, ought to be targeted and focused on the task at hand. At \$1.9 trillion, the President's proposal is far from being targeted and far from being focused. It includes permanent, liberal, structural economic reforms. This is using a crisis to enact long-term Democratic policy priorities rather than addressing the immediate needs of the day.

It also includes a bailout of fiscally irresponsible States at the expense of States that have managed their budgets very wisely, like my home State of Iowa. This is fundamentally unfair to the taxpayers in responsibly governed States.

The President putting forward his proposal should have marked the beginning of the discussion, not the end. If my Democratic colleagues would abandon this partisan exercise, bipartisan discussions could start in earnest. In fact, 10 Republicans made an attempt to do that by spending 2 hours with President Biden at the Oval Office. They reached out, obviously, and President Biden listened and discussed in good faith, but it doesn't seem like anything can come of it. This may mean that you have to compromise on some priorities. That is a simple part of life here in the U.S. Senate if you want to get anything done.

The excuse that there isn't enough time or the need for relief is so urgent that bipartisan must go out the window is just that—nothing but a simple excuse. By following the current path, this entire week is being wasted on partisan theater, with no tangible benefit for the American people. At the end of this week, the Senate will be no closer to drafting actual relief legislation.

We should instead be working together to iron out our differences, to get bipartisan relief to the American people, and that can be done sooner than using the reconciliation process that turns out to be a partisan approach that is needless to do based on the fact that twice in the last 11 months, we have passed bipartisan virus relief packages to help fight the pandemic, to help people who are hurt by the economic consequences of that pandemic, and also to give confidence to the American people. Let's move in a bipartisan way.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I rise today to discuss the urgent challenge our Nation is facing and the urgent response that it requires.

I am always willing to work across the aisle to look for common ground and commonsense solutions. I think my colleagues know this and my record shows it. I am going to keep talking to my Republican colleagues in hopes that there are areas where we can find common ground to help our workers and our families and get our arms around this pandemic. But what we cannot do is allow the possibility of further delay or weaken our response efforts.

With the resources in this resolution, we will be able to reinforce our public health workforce, our community health centers, and our supply chain, all of which are stretched incredibly thin.

We will be able to scale up testing and tracing and vaccination and genomic sequencing and surveillance for new strains of virus and address harmful health inequities that continue to make this crisis so much more deadly for communities of color.

We will be able to provide needed support to our students, our educators, our public schools, and those in higher education as they grapple with this crisis and work towards safely reopening for in-person learning.

We will be able to provide to parents in need of quality, affordable childcare and to a childcare sector staring down mass closures and layoffs.

We need to help workers who are struggling today to make ends meet, who are unemployed, and who are worried about their retirement being thrown into jeopardy. We need to help families across the country who are struggling today to make ends meet, by providing them with direct financial assistance. We need to help States and Tribes and cities and communities whose budgets have been stretched dangerously thin, by providing needed funds.

I see no reason why pursuing this path has to be partisan. After all, if Republicans can use budget reconciliation to give huge tax breaks to the wealthiest corporations, surely they are willing to use it to give relief to communities and families who are struggling in this economic crisis. If they can try to use reconciliation to cause a healthcare crisis by taking health coverage and healthcare protections away from hundreds of millions of people, surely they can support this process, using it to fight the healthcare crisis that has claimed over 440,000 lives in our country and counting. But if they do not, if they insist that using this process to provide relief during a historic pandemic is a partisan vote or that the amount of the relief is too much, I think they are going to have a tough time explaining what and whom they stand for.

Democrats have no problem going on the record as the party that fought for people during the pandemic because, when your house is in flames, you do not argue about how much of the fire to put out or how much water to use or how many lives to save; you do whatever it takes until the crisis is over and everyone is safe, and you do it as fast as you can.

This crisis is not over. Everyone is not safe—not from this virus and not from this economic crisis. There are 440,000 people who have died. We are still averaging 140,000 new cases a day. New strains are presenting new challenges. Underlying disparities are growing deeper, and we are already seeing with vaccination rates that communities of color are being left behind.

We do have to take action, and that is exactly what Democrats are doing today.

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. MURPHY. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I am here today to speak in favor of the underlying resolution and urge my colleagues to support it. I will be very brief.

I would like to tackle three topics, amongst many, in this package. I would like to talk a bit about the crisis that stands ahead of us with respect to summer learning and summer programming for kids all across this country. I would like to talk a little bit about the importance of expediting the pace of vaccinations and then, lastly, about the global fight that lies ahead of us to make sure that we are building a pandemic response infrastructure around the world that makes sure this never, ever happens again.

Before delving into those three topics, let me just say that we have an opportunity to pass programming to meet this moment that is wildly popular. There was a poll out yesterday that suggests that many of the most important programming in this package enjoy 70 percent support amongst the public. The relief checks, which will total \$2,000—\$600 from last year, \$1,400 in this package—have 74 percent support among the American public. Only 13 percent of Americans oppose those checks. Increased Federal funding for vaccinations—69 percent favor that increased funding; 17 percent oppose it. Those are difficult numbers to get on any major area of policy in the United States today. To have 74 percent in favor of anything is pretty impressive.

But it speaks to the moment. It speaks to the expectations that Americans have. But it also speaks to the

fact that there is unity in the American public about what we need to do.

President Biden rightly talked about unifying the country around an agenda to build back this country better, and these polling numbers show that he has done that because you don't get to 74 percent support for an initiative without a whole bunch of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans supporting that measure.

So we hope—we want to get to a place where we have bipartisan support in the Senate, but we know we have bipartisan support for this agenda out in the American public. These polling numbers and polling numbers to come will prove that. The reason is that the crises we are trying to address don't really care what your politics are.

Let me talk about these three distinct areas.

First, I want to talk about what is happening in our schools. Others have done that in a far more articulate way, so I want to drill down specifically on what is going to happen this summer.

Schools are in crisis right now. I know that because I have two kids in public school—in a big, urban public school. They haven't been back in the classroom at all. They have continued to learn from home the entire time. But they have all the support that they need around them—two loving parents who are willing and able to help in any way that we can. Not every child has that. So schools have been scrambling just to make sure that they are doing instruction right, that they are opening schools safely, that they are building support systems around students.

But come this summer, you are going to have all sorts of kids who aren't going to have programming ready for them, aren't going to have a safe place to go, and are going to have tremendous amounts of learning loss.

You are also going to have kids who are in need of a really healthy, safe place to be this summer. Some kids will need deep academic experience, but others kids are just going to need some emotional growth, are going to need something fun to do so that they have the ability to restart and be ready to reenter what will, hopefully, be a much more normal-looking classroom.

In this bill is over \$100 billion for schools, to support the safe reopening of schools. And what we do in this plan that the President is proposing to us is to allow for some of that money to be used for summer programming.

I am going to make a pitch to have a set-aside, a portion of money dedicated to summer programming. But what we all agree on—those of us who support this package—is that the challenge ahead of us is not just how we keep schools open and open those that have had their doors closed, but what we do to support kids for 12 months of the year, not just 9 months of the year.

This is going to be a tough summer for a lot of kids, and we have to have a specific focus—as this plan does—on meaningful summer programming for

kids—programming that is emotionally healthy, that addresses some of this learning loss.

In a typical year, middle-class kids—kids with families that have some means—are five times as likely as those living in poverty to attend a summer camp, twice as likely to visit a museum or go to a performance. We can't allow for that disparity to be present this summer, not this summer. We have to have funding in this bill. We have to pass funding through Congress to make sure that every kid in this country, especially kids coming from limited-means backgrounds, can get into quality summer programming. This summer we have to make that promise to them.

Second, let me talk about vaccines. I know my colleague from Connecticut is going to talk about this as well.

We did well this past week. There were 1.36 million doses administered. I say “well” because that is 20 percent more than we did the following week, but it is not good enough.

In this plan from President Biden is \$10 billion to operationalize the Defense Production Act. Senator BALDWIN and I have been working on this issue for the better part of a year. If you want to produce more vaccine, if you want to produce more testing equipment, more PPE, then you have to organize America's industrial base better than what was happening under the Trump administration. You have to go out and find every potential manufacturing partner who can help Pfizer and Moderna and Johnson & Johnson and any vaccine maker that comes after them be able to make more and make it faster.

We are standing up capacity in Connecticut. We are doing well—No. 3 nationally in terms of the percentage of shots that we get into people's arms—but we can do a lot more. We just need that production to be ramped up. In this bill is specific money to operationalize the Defense Production Act so that we can make more vaccines. That is one of the most important parts of this bill.

Finally, I wanted to talk about the global challenge that we have ahead of us. This virus didn't start in the United States. But, man, it moved quick—from a wet market in China to the west coast of the United States to today, with 400,000 lives having been lost. And the question is: Why? Why was this virus able to move so quickly? Why weren't we able to contain it? Why didn't we learn more about it earlier? Why wasn't the world ready for this moment?

Now, China has a lot to answer for. But, frankly, the whole world has to understand that we didn't allocate resources properly. The United States didn't allocate resources properly. We spent, last year, \$740 billion on hardware for the Department of Defense and \$12 billion on global public health. Nobody today, living in the United States, would tell you that that was

the correct allocation. So inside President Biden's package is funding to start to rebuild the global pandemic prevention infrastructure.

I won't go into the details of how we do that today, but there are estimates suggesting that we are going to need over \$20 billion globally in order to stand up greater capacities. That means more resources at a reformed WHO. That means more U.S. diplomats who are working in the public health space. That means doing partnerships with developing nations in which we put some money on the table in exchange for public health reform so that they can strengthen their own systems of pandemic detection and prevention.

But even if you drive this thing down in the United States, so long as there are outbreaks that exist on the other side of the world, we are still at risk. And there may come along a virus down the road that is even more contagious, that spreads even faster than this one, so shame on us if we don't, at the same time, lock down this virus domestically and set up a system of defense internationally to make sure that we are ready for the next one.

We can walk and chew gum at the same time. And President Biden's focus on rebuilding our alliances comes at the right time because we are not going to be able to do this by ourselves.

We have to meet the moment. We can't go small right now. The problems are too big.

Senator BLUMENTHAL and I have spent lots of time at food banks in Connecticut. We have never, ever seen the desperate need that exists today in our State. Shame on us if we don't use the power that has been granted us to both take on this virus and deliver economic prosperity to people who have had it robbed from them through no fault of their own.

I urge my colleagues' support for the budget resolution.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am really pleased to follow my colleague Senator MURPHY after that very articulate case and to build on the case for keeping our promises to America. The Presiding Officer knows that promises made must be kept, including another \$1,400 in stimulus payments to every individual, bringing that total to \$2,000, which is what we promised; to make sure that vaccines are available broadly across this country and that schools become places of learning again, in person for students and teachers in a safe learning environment.

What we are doing in this package, which is big and bold—and it has to be—is to put money in people's pockets, put vaccinations in people's arms, and put children back in schools safely. And I emphasize “safely.”

Now, I was very excited over this past week or 10 days to travel throughout the State of Connecticut and visit clinics where vaccinations are being

provided to thousands of people in Connecticut, raising our rate to one of the highest in the country—about 10.3 percent.

I saw nurses and doctors at Danbury Hospital, led by John Murphy, making promises real for people.

I visited Rentschler Field, a former runway turned into a vaccination site for people receiving those shots in their arms from the Community Health Center, headed by Mark Masselli.

I saw vaccinations at Griffin Hospital, a wonderful team headed by Pat Charmel. But here is the story at Griffin Hospital. Last week they did 6,000 doses. This week it will be 2,000, not because of any lack of skilled vaccination person power, not because of any lack of determination—because of lack of vaccine.

Shortages in Connecticut and around the country are impeding and setting back our effort. They are lengthening the tunnel. There is light at the end of the tunnel, but it is longer as we delay the vaccine that is necessary to do the job.

There is not enough. It is not reaching the people who need it in enough supply, and it is not being delivered equitably. The numbers in Connecticut show that people in communities of color are nowhere near as likely to receive that vaccine—in fact, perhaps three times less likely.

We need to make sure that delivery is fair and effective in this country, or we will never conquer this pandemic and put America back to work. Using the national Defense Production Act is absolutely necessary, but so is the commitment of \$160 billion in this big and bold relief program.

It has to be big and bold. It also has to be done now. Time is not on our side. I have no tolerance for delay or dithering. I have no patience for cuts in this package; \$1.9 trillion ought to be our floor, not our ceiling. And if there is a need for targeting those stimulus payments, the money ought to be reallocated to vaccines and to creating safer environments to work and to learn.

Vaccines are important to our schools. Teachers are essential workers. They are on the frontlines. They are putting their lives at risk. They have been demonstrating the courage and conviction to come to school, but they should receive this vaccine.

A safe learning environment means also personal protective equipment, barriers such as we are seeing in restaurants and other public places—plexiglass and other kinds of dividers. These kinds of essential equipment are the reason that we are advocating \$130 billion for our schools.

There are many other steps that must be taken to ensure not only that our learning environments are safe but also that students have the connectivity they need remotely because for some period of time, that will be the way they learn.

More than a third of communities of color in the State of Connecticut,

which is thought to be a very sophisticated and advanced State, still lack that connectivity—a third of our seniors. Safe and fair learning environments mean broadband, and that is also another reason for that \$130 billion in this package.

Many of these students face serious gaps—1 to 3 months and even longer for some students who have lacked that connectivity—up to 6 months in basic skills: reading, writing, and arithmetic. These kinds of gaps have to be filled.

We need a major effort to focus on our students who have been left behind, and that is why this kind of package is a moral imperative. It is a social obligation. We will lose talents and skills, but students will also lose their future.

We should come together on a bipartisan basis. There is nothing wrong with cooperation, and I hope that my colleagues across the aisle will join with us as we move forward, but we will move forward. We cannot repeat the mistakes of the past when efforts to wait meant unconscionable delay. We have no such luxury in this humanitarian crisis. We must move forward, and we will.

I yield the floor to my colleague from Nevada.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. President, the American people need our help, and they need it now. Far too many families are struggling just to get by.

My home State of Nevada has been hit especially hard during this pandemic. Before COVID, Nevada was stable, and Nevada was thriving, but since the pandemic began, our industries—especially our travel and tourism, key economic pillars of our State—were devastated. In fact, countless Nevada businesses have struggled, and unfortunately many have had to close their doors permanently. This is forcing Nevadans out of work and putting their financial well-being in jeopardy. Now, during this public health and economic crisis, Nevada is close to having the highest rate of unemployment in the Nation.

Here in Congress, we have passed stopgap packages to try to help all those who are facing these tough times. The relief measures we have delivered for the American people have been a good start, but they are not enough to safely see our country through this pandemic.

Small business owners risk losing their businesses if they cannot access the full loans and grants that Congress promised them but that the last administration failed to deliver. Our State and local governments have exhausted their budgets responding to this public health crisis, and as a result, they face looming cuts to essential support and services that our communities are relying on.

This isn't something that is happening just in my State; this is the common experience across our country.

The people of Nevada, the American people—they are desperately calling out for a lifeline, and we must deliver a real one and as soon as possible.

COVID-19 is a global public health emergency, and it requires the full force of the U.S. Government. We must act boldly and efficiently as we work to overcome this crisis and meet the needs of this moment.

We need real relief—real relief for families who are struggling to pay their bills, for those who are struggling to afford basic necessities, for parents who are struggling just to feed their kids.

We need real relief. We need real relief for our travel and tourism industries. We need to ensure that they can make it through this turbulent time. We need a framework for ensuring that health and safety standards are met, and we need a path toward restoring consumer confidence.

We need real relief—real relief for our small businesses, including tax credits to help businesses get by and full EIDL loans and grants without arbitrary caps.

We need real relief—real relief for our workers, including increased unemployment benefits and proper IT infrastructure to get those benefits out faster to Americans in need.

We need real relief—real relief for State and local governments so that they can continue working tirelessly to save the lives of Americans in every corner of our Nation, so that they can continue testing and tracing in our communities, so that they can continue to provide childcare for essential workers, and so that they continue to provide PPE and things to limit the spread of COVID-19.

We need real relief—real relief that supports a greater vaccine distribution and accelerates vaccine deployment, including to our communities of color and rural areas where healthcare access is too frequently a challenge.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO and I have been working with our Governor. We have been working with our Governor and working with all of our local governments to get more shots in arms across the State of Nevada, but we need more.

When so many in our country are hurting and they are struggling, we must ask ourselves why American families, why members of our communities, why would they deserve any less? It is time for a comprehensive relief package that truly provides relief to the American people.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in this effort to help see our Nation through this challenge. Lives are depending on us. Our States are counting on us. The whole country is looking to us—looking to us to show leadership, to stand up, to save lives and livelihoods. So let's ensure that we don't let them down. Let's pass that real relief, thoughtful and targeted relief, and do it now.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. LUJAN. Mr. President, more than 3,000 of my fellow New Mexicans have lost their lives to COVID-19. They were New Mexicans like Teresa, an essential medical worker from Springer, NM. She bravely went to work to test Haitians for COVID-19 and to stop the spread of the disease. Tragically, Teresa contracted COVID-19 and passed away over the Christmas holiday, leaving behind her husband Roger and their three children.

But Congress has another chance to spare other families the pain that Teresa's family is experiencing, the very thing that drove Teresa every day to go and save others. This resolution will allow Congress to mount an aggressive public health response and prioritize resources where they are needed most—for vaccines, testing, and public health programs that fight COVID.

Funding included in this package will be aimed at dramatically increasing rates of testing, bolstering the supply chain to increase the availability of testing supplies and personal protective equipment, hiring and training public health workers to administer the vaccine, and increasing vaccine production.

As Congress focuses on getting vaccinations into every arm as quickly as possible, strong Federal funding is especially critical for States like New Mexico, where vaccines and medical supplies must travel longer distances to reach the communities that need them.

We know we have the capacity to get these vaccines in people's arms. We need more vaccine. Vaccines are essential to the priorities I have heard from many of my constituents—safely opening schools as soon as possible because this pandemic is widening the achievement gap that already existed. To meet this goal, Congress must invest in safely reopening schools and make facility improvements to ensure every educator, the people who prepare the food, drive the buses, keep the schools looking clean, social workers and nurses, and every student is safe to return.

America must provide quality distance learning to those who are not yet ready to return and work to address widespread learning loss that exacerbates the achievement gap. It is also clear that the toll of COVID-19 on students' learning and mental health will last for years, meaning investments are necessary well beyond this academic year.

The Senate must act for the families who have lost loved ones, for Roger and Teresa and their three kids, and for parents struggling to keep their students safe and healthy.

The Senate must act to defeat this virus and to rebuild our Nation's economy. It must pass this budget resolution.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, as the new chairman of the Budget Committee, I wanted to take a few moments to talk about the \$1.9 trillion budget resolution that I hope will be passed late tomorrow night.

I think sometimes our friends in the media make the political process much more complicated than it is. Real politics in a democracy is not that complicated. What it is about is assessing the problems facing the Nation and coming up with solutions to those problems.

One of the great tragedies that has occurred, in my view, in recent years is that for working-class people, middle-class people, lower-income people, these are folks who in a variety of ways are hurting and have hurt for many, many years. Wages in this country have been stagnant for decades. Young people are finding it increasingly difficult to go to college. Ninety million Americans are uninsured or underinsured. We have a political system which is significantly corrupt because big money can buy elections. And people look around them and they say: Who cares about me? Who is worried about me or my parents or my kids?

When that happens—when that kind of political alienation happens—people can become prone to conspiracy theories and all kinds of big lies and everything else. Here is the simple truth, not complicated. Right now in this year 2021, we face more crises than this country has faced certainly since the Great Depression and maybe going back to the Civil War, when the very existence of this country was at stake.

As we speak right now, whether it is in the State of Georgia or my State of Vermont and all over this country, there are tens of millions of working families who have lost their jobs, lost their incomes, and they are worried tonight as to how they are going to be able to feed their families. They are worried about the back rent they owe.

We have a moratorium on evictions, but that moratorium some day is going to end. People say: How am I going to pay thousands of dollars in back rent? I am going to be evicted. I am going to be out on the street.

People are in the midst of this terrible, terrible pandemic, where we have lost over 400,000 lives—well over 400,000 lives. There are over 90 million people who are uninsured or underinsured and are having difficulty affording going to the doctor, and on and on it goes.

Kids. I have seven grandchildren. Kids all over this country have had their education disrupted.

As a result of the pandemic, people have become isolated from their

friends and their families. Mental illness is soaring with increased numbers of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation.

This country faces just terrible, terrible problems. I think we can agree that the year 2020 was the worst year in so many ways in our lifetime, maybe in the history of this country. And now, right now, it is absolutely imperative that the Congress of the United States understands that reality and keeps faith with the American people.

One of the reasons, by the way—and I say this to the Presiding Officer today, who is from Georgia and recently won his election—it is doubly important that we keep faith with the American people is because promises were made in this election in Georgia, which was not just a Senate race. It was more of a national race. President Biden was involved. Majority Leader SCHUMER was involved. I was involved. A lot of leading Democrats were involved.

We said to the people in Georgia and we said to the people in America: If we gain the majority, we are going to significantly improve lives for working people all over this country. Those are promises made that must be kept.

I want to just spend a few moments to talk about what is in this bill. We throw out numbers—\$1.9 trillion. Who knows what \$1.9 trillion is? It is such an unfathomable number. It is such a huge number. What does it mean? Who knows? Who understands that?

I want you to understand what is in this bill. For a start, what I believe and I know you believe is that when people are hurting, when they owe back rent, when they can't afford to feed their kids, when they can't afford to go to the doctor, we need to get cash into the pockets of those people as soon as we possibly can.

I was one of the people here a month ago when a whole lot of people were talking about it. I said we need direct payments. We need to get cash into the hands of people. I fought very hard. We ended up with just \$600 in the last bill. It wasn't enough. It is a start, but not enough. We said our goal was \$2,000. And in this bill, there will be an additional \$1,400 for every working-class man, woman, and child.

So if you are an individual, a single person making \$75,000 or less, when we pass this legislation you are going to get a check for \$1,400. If you are a couple earning less than \$150,000, and let's just say you have two kids, each person in the family, the husband, the wife, and the two kids get \$1,400 apiece. That is \$5,600.

Let me tell you something. For a struggling working-class family, that \$5,600 is going to mean an enormous amount. It will allow people to pay the rent, allow people to pay off their debts, allow people to go to the doctor. That is what this legislation is about.

We made a promise. Some of us made that promise—I did—that we would make sure that in working-class families, each individual gets \$2,000 and we

will keep that promise: \$600 then, \$1,400 now.

As a result of this pandemic, we have seen a horrific increase in unemployment. Unemployment is soaring all over this country. Millions of workers have lost their jobs. They have no income coming in. The extended unemployment benefits that were previously passed are going to expire in mid-March. What this legislation does—very importantly—if you are unemployed right now and you are worried you are going to lose your employment, when we pass this legislation, your unemployment is going to be extended through the end of September. And on top of the normal unemployment benefits you get from your State—and they vary State to State—you are going to get an additional \$400 a week. We will not turn our backs on the millions of unemployed workers in this country.

Included in the legislation that we are fighting for is the need to raise the minimum wage in this country from the starvation wage that currently exists of \$7.25 an hour to a living wage of \$15 an hour. Now, we understand that restaurants and small businesses are hurting, and in this legislation, there will be a significant amount of money to make sure that small businesses will be able to afford that wage increase.

You know, when we talk about the economy, the media very often focuses on the stock market. That is important. We can focus on unemployment—terribly important. Yet what we don't focus on enough is that half of our workers in this country are living paycheck to paycheck. They have nothing in the bank, and they have to live off the paychecks they make. If they have an automobile problem—the car breaks down—or somebody in the family gets sick, they are in deep financial trouble. It seems to me that, in the richest country in the history of the world, it is not too much to demand that, if you work 40 hours a week, you don't live in poverty. Fifteen bucks an hour is not going to make anybody rich, but I have seen workers and talked to workers all over this country who are trying to raise their kids on \$10, \$12 an hour, and you can't do it. So \$15 an hour is an important start in making sure that all working people in this country can live with dignity.

This legislation will expand the child tax credit from \$2,000 to \$3,000 and to \$3,600 for families with kids under the age of 6. Now, what is not talked about very much in America—not by politicians, not by the media—is the fact that we have one of the highest rates of childhood poverty of almost any major country on Earth, and that is a terrible, terrible thing. You know, politicians give speeches of “the future of this country is with our children,” so forth and so on, but they have millions of kids living in poverty. Millions of families can't afford to send their kids to decent quality childcare. So expanding the child tax credit will go a very

long way to reducing child poverty in America, and that is something that we must do.

It is no great secret that, as a result of the pandemic, our revenues going into State and local governments are in significant decline. The result of that is that, in the last year, well over a million State and local employees have been laid off. We are talking about teachers. We are talking about firemen. We are talking about police officers and other municipal and State employees. When you have those layoffs, not only is that a crisis unto itself for those workers, it means that State and local governments cannot provide the services that need to be provided in the midst of this terrible crisis. So this legislation would provide \$350 billion to State and local governments, many of which are facing bankruptcy.

Now, obviously, the crisis that we are facing today is not only an economic crisis, it is clearly a health crisis. The good news is that, in a relatively short period of time, at least two manufacturers in this country—and more, I think, are coming on board—have introduced and created vaccines, which are now being distributed. That is the good news. The bad news is that we need to significantly increase the production of those vaccines. We don't have enough. Even more importantly, we have to do a heck of a lot better job in distributing those vaccines and getting those vaccines into the arms of people, and this legislation will provide billions and billions of dollars to do just that.

At a time when we are looking at the highest level of hunger in this country in decades, many billions of dollars are going to make sure that our children and our families do not go hungry. Clearly, one of the major crises facing this country is that schools in every State are either not open or they are open with irregular hours. Kids are trying to get an education online. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't, but our goal is to make sure that we can reopen schools and expand after-school and childcare programs for working families and do it in a way that is safe. We want parents to feel good and know that the facilities they are sending their children to are safe, and we have a whole lot of money in this bill to do just that.

In this bill, in order to protect workers, there is a sizable sum of money to prevent the pensions of millions of workers and retirees from being slashed by 30, 40, or even 65 percent. A number of years ago, in the middle of night, in some big omnibus bill, language was put in that would destroy the promises made to millions of workers in terms of the pensions that they were guaranteed, and we rectify that in this bill.

Right now, in America, as I mentioned earlier, some 90 million of our people are either uninsured or underinsured, which speaks to the need, in my view, of major healthcare reform.

My own view is that we need to put in a Medicare for All, single-payer program so that we are not spending twice as much per capita on healthcare as any other country on Earth despite so many people being uninsured or underinsured. Well, Medicare for All is not in this bill, but what is in this bill is a significant amount of money to expand healthcare, and we are still looking at the best ways to do that. One of the ways will probably be by expanding Medicaid and also investing significantly in community health centers and the National Health Service Corps. We have a crisis in terms of the number of doctors and nurses that we need, and the National Health Service Corps is a program which will forgive debt for doctors and nurses if they practice in underserved areas.

I know sometimes we get consumed by numbers. It is going to be \$2.1 trillion, \$1.9 trillion, \$1.7 trillion. That is not the issue. The issue is whether we are prepared to address the crises facing the American people. Will this bill solve all of the problems that we face? No, it will not. Will it go a long way to addressing many of the crises and easing the anxiety of so many working families? Yes, it will, but this should not be the end of the process. As soon as we pass this, we are going to come back with another major piece of legislation, and that will deal with some of the long-term structural problems our country faces in terms of a crumbling infrastructure and in terms of the need to deal with the existential threat of climate change. We need to create millions of good-paying jobs. That is something that this Congress has got to address. Too many of our people are unemployed, and too many of our people are underemployed. This we will be dealing with in the next COVID reconciliation bill.

Now, there has been some discussion on—and the media seems fixated on—the issue of partisanship. Oh, my God. We are being so partisan here. Let me remind everybody that, under the Trump administration, massive tax breaks were passed that went to the top 1 percent and large corporations. Eighty-three percent of the benefits in the Trump tax plan went to the 1 percent and large corporations. Do you know how bipartisan that bill was that passed in reconciliation? There was not one Democrat who voted for that bill. It was voted just with Republican votes.

Then, outrageously, as part of the reconciliation, the Republicans came forward and said: Hey, we think it is a brilliant idea to repeal the Affordable Care Act and throw up to 32 million people off the healthcare that they have. I don't know what people are thinking about when they propose to throw tens of millions of people off the healthcare that they have, but that was their idea to repeal the Affordable Care Act. By one vote by the late John McCain, that did not happen, but not one Democrat voted for that bill.

My point is that it is one thing for my Republican friends here to be talking about the need for bipartisanship, which all of us support, but the reality is they used exactly the same process to pass or at least try to pass major, major pieces of legislation.

So all that I want to say is that we are living in an unprecedented moment in American history. Again, it is quite likely that this Congress today and President Biden are facing more serious crises than any President—certainly, since FDR and maybe going back to Abraham Lincoln—has faced. We have a healthcare crisis. We have a pandemic. We have an economic meltdown. We have an education crisis. We have an infrastructure crisis. We have a criminal justice crisis. We have an immigration crisis. You name it, we got it. Either we are going to have the courage to address those problems or we are not, and I think now is the time to do it. We certainly look forward to the support from our Republican colleagues, but what is most important is that, at a time of massive pain and anxiety, this Congress acts boldly on behalf of working families.

For too long, we have seen the Congress give tax breaks to billionaires. We have seen lobbyists work to get hundreds of billions of dollars in corporate welfare for people who don't need it. We have seen a tax system in which major corporations like Amazon—maybe the most profitable corporation in America or one of the most profitable corporations and owned by the wealthiest guy in America—pay zero in Federal taxes, and, right now, the very rich have an effective tax rate which is lower than that of working families.

So I know it may sound like a radical idea, but the time is now for the U.S. Congress to begin to represent the vast majority of the people—the working class of this country, the middle class of this country, and lower income people—who are struggling. Let us work together. Let us crush this terrible pandemic. Let us get our kids back to school. Let us reopen our economy. Let us create a government that works for all of us and not just the very few.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KELLY). The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, it is wonderful to see you in the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. My first time.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, one thing you can say about Americans, we know how to meet the moment.

When the world was upended by a Great Depression and a quarter of our people were out of work, we took bold action. A brandnew President, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and large majorities in Congress ushered in a New Deal that put folks back to work, stabilized our economy, and invested in America's future.

When freedom abroad was threatened by fascism, we again took bold action

as a country. We used American ingenuity to build an arsenal of democracy, which, by the middle of 1944, was churning out B-24 bombers every 60 minutes at Ford's Willow Run plant in Michigan.

Now is the time again to take bold action on behalf of the American people. We are now a year into a pandemic that has claimed the lives of nearly 450,000 Americans—450,000 Americans—parents and grandparents and friends and neighbors and cousins and coworkers and community leaders. Almost 15,000 lives have already been lost in Michigan—dear souls lost to us.

And it is not just lives that have been lost. Businesses have closed, workers have been laid off, folks have been without paychecks for months and months.

Parents are struggling to keep food on the table and the heat on while troubleshooting the spotty internet their children depend on to keep their classes going on Zoom.

And grandmas and grandpas are missing out on seeing their families grow up. Babies born last March are already learning to walk and talk, and too many have not had a chance to be with them in person.

Americans know how to meet the moment, and it is time for us to do it again. It is time to pass a rescue plan bold enough to stamp out this pandemic, get families the immediate help they need to weather the economic crisis, and get our children safely back in school.

That is just what our American Rescue Plan will do, and we need to get it done as soon as possible. American families have waited long enough.

There are a lot of good things happening right now. A home COVID-19 test was just approved. Soon we will have three effective vaccines available. We know that we can't get back to normal, though, or revive our battered economy unless we get vaccine off shelves and into American arms.

That is why our plan will increase the number of people being vaccinated, boost our testing capacity, and ensure that our healthcare professionals and other frontline workers have adequate protective equipment.

The plan will also provide additional funding for rural health infrastructure through the agriculture portion of our bill, which I am so pleased to lead.

Our rural hospitals are struggling to survive right now like places where I grew up in Northern Michigan. This funding will help them keep their doors open, purchase necessary supplies, vaccinate more people, and treat more patients via telehealth, which has become so important.

In the meantime, we know that American families need help to survive during this pandemic. They need help. They need to know we have got their backs. They have got to know that, in all of this, somebody has got their back.

The American Rescue Plan will give working families direct checks, extend

crucial unemployment programs, boost the child tax credit and earned-income tax credit, which will lift half of American children out of poverty this year.

Can you imagine? We have an opportunity here in Congress, working with our wonderful new President and Vice President, to pass a policy that will lift half the children in poverty out of poverty—not 10 years from now, not 5 years from now—this year. What an exciting prospect. And we need to get it done.

This means struggling families will, with all of this help, be able to cover the rent or the mortgage, pay their bills, keep food on the table. And keeping food on the table is especially crucial in a time when so many of our neighbors are going hungry.

In fact, we know that 50 million Americans across the country—moms and dads and children—right now are facing hunger every day. We are better than this as a country.

We have all heard stories about seniors waiting hours in lines for a box of food or parents skipping meals so their children can have a little more to eat.

The agriculture and nutrition funding in this American Rescue Plan will tackle hunger head-on by extending pandemic EBT for the duration of the pandemic. What does that mean? This is about children. This is about feeding children—children who otherwise may get fed at school but aren't able to do that to be able to have the resources they need from moms and dads to feed them while they are not in school, as well as in the summer.

It will also provide more fruits and vegetables for moms and babies and make sure that families who are eligible for help are getting it. People who need help in this country need to get that help. They need to know we have their back.

We know that two-thirds of SNAP benefits—the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—two-thirds of it goes to families with children. By extending the bump-up in SNAP funding through the end of September, we can make sure families aren't running out of food and going hungry at the end of the month.

That is especially important for children because it is hard to learn—it is hard to learn how to read and write, and it is hard to focus when your stomach is rumbling, when you have got a headache because you haven't eaten. Our children need to be fed, and they need to be back in class as well.

We can't get our economy moving again if parents can't return to work, and parents can't return to work if they are worried that their children aren't safe at school or one of the parents or the only parent has to be home with the children. What do they do?

So all of this fits together, and this American Rescue Plan will provide the support needed to safely reopen the majority of K-12 schools within President Biden's first 100 days.

How important is that? What a great goal for us to have, and we can do that.

We are just days away from working together and being able to get that done, and it will serve all students, no matter how, no matter where they learn.

And for our farmers, speaking as the incoming chair of the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee, our farmers who have been directly affected by the ups and downs of the pandemic, the plan addresses the break in the food supply chain, and it enables us to buy and donate their products to food banks.

You know, we had so many selling to restaurants and big enterprises, the food supply chain stopped. They have excess food. I know dairy farmers in Michigan; it breaks their hearts to think of the idea of dumping milk when we need that.

So the efforts that are in this bill will help them be able to move from a bulk supply chain to be able to get gallon jugs, put the milk into the hands of families, and stop the wasting of precious, valuable food that our families need. This is going to help farmers' bottom lines, and it feeds families in need.

Our agriculture provisions also provide critical funding for PPE for farmworkers and workers who labor every day in food processing plants so we have the food that we need—protective equipment that they need and that they deserve.

The plan also targets help for farmers of color who have been hit especially hard by the pandemic, on top of the historical challenges and discrimination they have faced in accessing land and capital. The plan provides critical debt relief to help them weather the storm and keep their operations going until the next growing season.

Vaccinating Americans, providing economic help for families, getting our children back to school safely, those are the three main goals of this plan.

All of these goals have one thing in common: It is about investing in people. It is about putting people first—the American people first. Over our Nation's history, the policies that have truly been lifting people out of poverty and moved them forward have invested in people, from our land grant universities to social security and Medicare and Medicaid, to the Civil Rights Act, to the Children's Health Insurance Program, to increasing the minimum wage. And these are all policies, I am proud to say, created and supported by Democrats.

Investing in our people helps American families, and it helps our economy too. We have seen these Democratic policies create more jobs when you look at the numbers. When we look at the numbers, under which policies and which Presidents have we seen more good-paying jobs? And over and over again it is Democratic Presidents because of the way that we invest. It is what we do, how we invest, to create opportunity to give everybody a fair shot to succeed, to invest in people and

opportunity. Those things have created better economies and more jobs.

So, broadly, we are committed to making sure everyone shares in the prosperity of our country, and these policies create the conditions necessary to help people dream big dreams and actually achieve them.

It is a new year. It is a new Congress. It is time to act. It is time to end this pandemic, give families the economic support they need, and get our children safely back to school. This is the moment. This is the moment we need to think big. We need to be bold. We need to lean in on policies that we know work—because they have worked before.

Americans know how to meet the moment, and our moment is now.

I yield the floor.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. LUJÁN. Mr. President, 50 million Americans, including 17 million children, are facing food insecurity because of this public health and economic crisis, with Black and Latino families more likely to go hungry. In New Mexico, one in three children and one in five adults are at risk of hunger. In the wealthiest country in the world, this is simply unacceptable.

The budget resolution focuses on getting relief to the people who need it most, beginning with an extension of the 15-percent increase in supplemental nutrition assistance benefits through September of 2021. Increasing SNAP benefits has proven to be one of the most effective forms of economic stimulus, and it has the dual benefit of allowing families to purchase the food that they need to stay healthy, as well as supporting businesses that accept SNAP dollars.

The budget resolution also bolsters the WIC Program to ensure that children and their mothers have access to a nutritious diet necessary for healthy development, an important investment in the future of our country. This funding increase is especially significant for States like New Mexico, where nearly a quarter of children are born into families with incomes that fall below the Federal poverty line.

In addition to addressing hunger, this resolution includes critical support for the people who grow our food, produce our food—our farmers and ranchers. In New Mexico, farmers and ranchers, who were already struggling due to drought conditions, face new challenges due to COVID-19. Shuttered restaurants left chile growers and dairy farmers without their customer base and scrambling to find new markets. Ranchers

experienced long delays at meat packing plants where workers were hard hit by COVID-19. Those workers need help too. The pandemic also made it harder to find workers to cultivate the land and tend to the animals.

This resolution also supports a provision I advocated for to provide debt relief for minority and disadvantaged farmers and ranchers who did not receive their fair share of COVID relief under the last administration.

It is said that societies are judged by how they treat their most vulnerable. It is sad because not everybody opens their eyes to see how this should be measured.

The Senate must act for the families and children facing hunger and for our hard-working farmers and ranchers—those that are producing food, picking food, preparing food, and getting it to market and stocking the shelves.

We must pass this budget resolution.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING ARKANSAS PBS

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate Arkansas Public Broadcasting Service, PBS, for its tremendous work to provide educational resources throughout the COVID-19 health crisis.

Arkansas PBS was recently recognized with five national Public Media Awards from the National Education Telecommunications Association, NETA, including honors for overall excellence for the programming it provided to children, parents, and teachers through Arkansas AMI, Alternative Methods of Instructions.

As the COVID-19 emergency progressed in March 2020, Arkansas PBS upended its weekday schedule and began broadcasting streamlined, curriculum-based programming for children from Pre-K through eighth grade.

When schools first closed in Arkansas, educators were immediately challenged by the lack of internet access in many rural areas of the State. This made the Arkansas AMI project even more important. For many without