

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3203

May 29, 2020

Dear Colleague,

In a stunningly short amount of time, the coronavirus has affected every corner of American life: schools have closed, travel has been suspended, businesses have shuttered, and tens of millions of Americans are suddenly without work—many whom were already struggling to make ends meet. Another 2.1 million Americans filed unemployment claims this week, bringing the total to over 40 million Americans since mid-March, nearly a quarter of the workforce.

More than one and half million Americans have tested positive for COVID-19. When the Senate gavels back into session next week, it will be the first time we meet after the United States has lost over 100,000 lives to this pandemic. It is a harrowing number that cannot reflect the heartbreak of millions of American families, many of whom could not even comfort their loved ones in their final hours.

With empathy, sadness and understanding in our hearts for this staggering loss of life, Senate Democrats prepare for another period of legislative business with a laser-focus on helping those Americans most in need: American workers and American families. As always, we will put workers and families first.

During the early phase of this crisis, the Senate reacted quickly and in a bipartisan manner by passing several pieces of legislation—including the CARES Act—that have helped keep our health care system, small businesses, and our workers afloat. But we have always known that the CARES Act could not be the final word, and we are fast approaching the point where much of the aid provided will begin to phase out. The popular and bipartisan Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), which has helped countless small businesses, must be reformed and extended. Just this week the House of Representatives passed such an extension with several other crucial reforms (which many of our colleagues collaborated to develop with the House) by an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote of 417-1. The Senate should quickly take up and pass the House bill. Senate Democrats will seek the chamber's consent to pass this urgently needed small business extension next week.

The country's needs, however, go far beyond the scope of past legislation. State and local governments continue to plead for federal support; their budgets—and the jobs of teachers, firefighters, police officers, bus drivers and more—hang in the balance. This Monday, another rent payment will come due for millions of Americans who barely managed to scrape by last month. Our testing capacity and frequency is still leagues behind what most experts believe our nation requires in order to re-open safely and allow workers to feel safe returning to work. Time is short for Congress to address these problems and pass another round of urgent and necessary relief.

Recently, the House of Representatives passed legislation that meets the urgency and necessity of this moment, including premium pay and a safety standard for our essential workers, aid to state and local governments, crucial support for our hospitals and medical centers, and extending much of the support that was offered through the CARES Act. We urge our Republican colleagues in the upper chamber to join Democrats at the negotiating table, immediately.


Watching our Republican colleagues over the last few weeks, you'd never know that the nation is in the midst of crisis. As unemployment claims reach their highest levels since the Great Depression, Senate Republicans have decided to "hit the pause button." In Leader McConnell's own words, Senate Republicans "have not yet felt the urgency of acting immediately." Rather than having the Senate work on COVID-related business, Leader McConnell has wasted precious time on right-wing judges and nominations completely unrelated to the crisis at hand. The Republican-led Judiciary and Homeland Security Committees—two powerful committees with broad jurisdiction over issues related to the coronavirus—have instead used their majority to chase wild conspiracy theories to appease President Trump.

With our country in crisis, Senate Republicans have become a conspiracy caucus. They have failed the American people by turning the institutions of the Senate into an extension of the President's re-election campaign. For the moment, they show no signs of turning back. The Majority Leader has yet to schedule any legislative business related to COVID-19 for the next work period. And next week, the Republican Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee will hold yet another hearing, not on the pandemic, but on baseless conspiracy theories related to the 2016 election. Leader McConnell should instruct these committees to cancel these conspiracy hearings.

As we begin the June work period, Senate Democrats will forcefully and relentlessly pressure our Republican colleagues to focus on helping the country, not the president's re-election campaign. There are many issues that demand our attention, from helping our essential workers on the ground, to continuing the assistance for unemployed Americans, to fixing our still-broken testing regime, and improving the programs that aid our small businesses. On Wednesday, Senate Democrats will dedicate a "Day of Action" to essential workers, led by Senator Stabenow and the DPCC. I urge you to participate and lift up the stories of essential workers from your state.

In closing, I wish to thank you all once again for everything you have done to help your constituents. By working together, I am confident that our country will ultimately beat back this evil disease and come back stronger than before.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator