

‘Just like in March, with the CARES Act, Senate Republicans have authored another bold framework to help our nation... Health, Economic Assistance, Liability, and Schools. Another historic package for the next phase of this historic national fight.’

July 27, 2020

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) delivered the following remarks today on the Senate floor regarding the HEALS Act:*

“COVID-19 has killed nearly 150,000 Americans.

“It has caused mass layoffs on an historic scale and left 17 million people out of work.

“It has thrown the lives and the trajectories of our nation’s children and young adults into uncertainty.

“Our nation stands now at an important crossroads in this battle.

“American families’ historic sacrifices brought our medical system through the springtime intact. The very early stages of our economic recovery have been promising. And our nation needs to continue to proceed with a smart and safe re-opening.

“But at the same time, the virus is still with us. It is still spreading. And it does not care about our fragile economic progress, or our frustration with restrictions, or anything else besides infecting as many people as possible.

“So we have one foot in the pandemic and one foot in the recovery. The American people need more help. They need it to be comprehensive. And they need it to be carefully tailored to this crossroads.

“That is what this Senate majority has assembled. And that is what Chairmen Alexander, Blunt, Collins, Graham, Grassley, Rubio, and Shelby, and Senators Cornyn and Romney, are introducing today. They’ll be coming to the floor shortly to introduce their components.

“Together, their bills make up the HEALS Act -- Health; economic assistance; liability protection; and schools.

“Just like in March, with the CARES Act, Senate Republicans have authored another bold framework to help our nation.

“So now, we need our Democratic colleagues to reprise their part as well. They need to put aside the partisan stonewalling we saw on police reform, rediscover the spirit of

urgency that got the CARES Act across the finish line, and quickly join us around the negotiating table.

“It will take bipartisan cooperation to make the HEALS Act into law for the American people.

“The Senate will not waste time with pointless partisanship. There is a reason why even Speaker Pelosi and Leader Schumer themselves have publicly downplayed the multi-trillion-dollar socialist manifesto they published some weeks back, and have suggested the real, serious discussion would begin when Republicans released our outline.

“We have produced a tailored and targeted draft that will cut right to the heart of three distinct crises facing our country — getting kids back in school, getting workers back to work, and winning the healthcare fight against the virus.

“Kids, jobs, and healthcare.

“First — our nation’s kids. Chairmen Alexander, Blunt, and Shelby will be introducing a sweeping package to help schools and universities reopen safely.

“We are talking about more than \$100 billion — more for an education fund than House Democrats put aside in a bill that spent multiple trillions. And there are policies to help childcare providers and schools have the flexibility they need to function.

“Second — jobs. Since our nation has one foot in the pandemic and one foot in the recovery, our economic policies have to acknowledge both sides of that coin.

“Chairman Grassley will introduce another round of direct checks for households, at the same amount as before, with even more support for families who care for vulnerable adult dependents.

“Chairmen Collins and Rubio have designed a sequel to their historic PPP to help prevent more layoffs of American workers.

“And Republicans want to continue a federal supplement to state unemployment insurance.

“In fact, we’ll propose a weekly dollar amount that is eight times what Democrats put in place when they controlled the White House and Congress during the Great Recession. But we have to do it in a way that does not slow down re-opening.

“We’re also going to help this country pivot into recovery. The American people don’t just want relief, they want opportunity, so long as the re-openings can be safe.

“So Chairman Grassley will walk through strong economic incentives to boost worker retention, get Americans re-hired, and help small businesses buy the PPE, testing, and supplies that will protect employees and customers alike.

“Senator Romney has legislation to help a future Congress ensure our critical national trust funds remain strong.

“And looking to our long-term jobs future, there is no question this pandemic has America and our allies reexamining our degree of dependence on China.

“Chairman Graham is introducing a package of legislation that will incentivize PPE manufacturing here at home. It will ensure that our efforts to rebuild our national stockpile of protective gear actually benefit American workers instead of just stimulating China.

“And it will bring a heightened focus to other key concerns such as high-tech semiconductor manufacturing, critical minerals, and intellectual property theft so the lessons of this pandemic do not go unlearned.

“And finally — healthcare. Chairmen Alexander, Grassley, and others I’ve already named have legislation to keep America on offense against this virus.

“Diagnostics. Treatments. Vaccines.

“Hospitals and healthcare workers. Protecting seniors who rely on Medicare from premium spikes.

“Our legislation supports all of it, at continued historic levels.

“And, tying kids, jobs, and healthcare all together, Senator Cornyn has authored strong legal liability protections so that nurses, doctors, charities, school districts, colleges, and employers can spend their next months actually reopening rather than fighting for their lives against frivolous lawsuits.

“We’ll preserve accountability in the event of gross negligence or intentional misconduct, but we are not going to let trial lawyers throw a party on the backs of the front-line workers and institutions who fought this new enemy on the front lines.

“Health, Economic Assistance, Liability, and Schools. Another historic package for the next phase of this historic national fight.

“To make a law, bipartisan talks need to come next. So there’s one big question facing the country now: Which version of our distinguished Democratic colleagues are the American people about to get?

“Are we going to get the Democratic Party we got in March, when our colleagues met us in good-faith negotiations and worked with us to turn our framework into a bipartisan product? The Democrats who helped us pass the largest rescue package in American history without one dissenting vote?

“Or will the country get the Democratic Party we saw in June, when our colleagues refused to suggest amendments or improvements to Senator Tim Scott’s police reform bill, and chose to block the issue altogether?

“Their actions last month left some observers wondering whether Democrats had made the cynical choice to give up on bipartisan legislation altogether through November.

“Whether Democrats had determined that strengthening our nation with bipartisan action might hurt their political odds, and therefore it might suit their fortunes better if pain and chaos simply continued.

“I hope that is completely off-base.

“I know our Democratic colleagues know this crisis is still urgent. I know they know American families need more help.

“So I hope this strong proposal will occasion a real response. Not partisan cheap shots. Not the predictable, tired, old rhetoric as though these were ordinary times and the nation could afford ordinary politics. We cannot have a Senate minority decide in June it is done legislating until November.

“The pandemic is not finished. The economic pain is not finished. So Congress cannot be finished either.”