If Congress is going to consider changes to make the bankruptcy process simpler and less painful for businesses, we ought to do the same for workers and families. That includes Americans who are currently being crushed by student loan debt and face their own economic recession even before this one. If we are talking about relieving debts that businesses and individuals cannot pay, for goodness' sake, how can we ignore the crushing student loan debt across America, which compromises the futures of the thousands of Americans? We need to take steps to forgive student debt, like for students who were defrauded by for-profit colleges—a measure we continue to fight Secretary DeVos over—and we need to restore dischargeability in bankruptcy for student loans once and for all.

In short, bold policy ideas to help families during this time are not exclusive to either political party. I look forward, as we have in the first two measures, to a bipartisan effort and a timely effort to respond. America is counting on us. Now is the time for us to produce.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

REMOTE VOTING

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I appreciate my colleague from South Dakota giving me a minute to respond to the comments of the Senator from Illinois about remote voting. I appreciate his joining me today on a bipartisan resolution to say that, during times of emergency and crisis, the U.S. Senate would be able to vote remotely in a secure manner. I think it is time for us to turn to this.

I actually supported such legislation back in the House when I was there almost two decades ago. At the time, we didn't have, frankly, the electronic communications we have today to be able to safely vote remotely; now we do. We have the ability to do it in a secure way, in an encrypted way—a way that would protect the fundamental right to vote. I think it is important that we move forward with this.

It is something that would be up to the majority leader and the minority leader to jointly agree upon. Once they agreed upon that, there would be 30 days. After 30 days, Congress would have the vote—the Senate would have the vote to continue it.

I think—not just because of COVID–19, where we have an obvious problem right now but the threat of terrorism, bioterrorism—these sorts of issues, unfortunately, are part of our 21st century life. We have to be aware of the fact that this is possible.

It is important to me and I think all my colleagues that article I be heard; that the legislative branch be heard; that we have the ability to convene for the continuity of government and not allow what we would normally do, which is perhaps to shift over to article II—to the executive branch—or not to be addressed at all.

I thank my colleague from South Dakota. I thank Senator DURBIN from Illinois for working with me on this project. My hope is we can see a change in our Senate rules coming out of this process so that we can have the ability to do our constitutional duties regardless of what is happening with regard to the National Capital or the crisis we are currently facing with COVID–19.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, yesterday the Senate passed the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which is bipartisan legislation that will provide critical relief to American workers, families, and small businesses.

Two weeks ago, the Senate passed the first phase of Congress's COVID–19 response, and that was $8.3 billion in funding for coronavirus research, testing, and medical care. Yesterday's bill was the second phase of that response. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act will ensure that all Americans can access coronavirus testing at no cost.

The bill also ensures expanded telehealth access for Medicare recipients during this outbreak, which I strongly support. As a resident of a rural State, I have long been a supporter of telehealth for the expanded healthcare access it can deliver for rural communities. The value of telehealth isn't limited to rural States. During an outbreak like this, for example, telehealth services can help keep patients—particularly vulnerable, elderly patients—out of doctors' offices and hospital waiting rooms. Patients can use a phone call or the internet to check in with their doctors for minor complaints or medication followups, instead of having to venture out and be exposed to possible coronavirus infection. I am very pleased that Medicare patients will have greater access to telehealth services during this outbreak.

The largest part of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act focuses on providing economic support for families during this difficult time. The bill makes provisions for paid sick leave and paid family and medical leave for American workers, particularly for those who might not otherwise have access to these benefits. It also invests additional money in unemployment insurance where benefits are available for those who need them.

I am pleased we were able to pass this bipartisan bill that the House produced, but there is more work to be done. The House bill touches on only a small part of what is needed to help Americans weather the storm, which is why Senate Republicans are currently working to develop the third phase of Congress's response.

Our legislation will address three priorities: providing direct, immediate assistance to American workers and families; giving our economy, especially our small businesses, the necessary support to weather the storm; and, of course, most importantly, providing medical professionals with the resources they need to fight this virus.

I have been working closely with colleagues on the Senate Commerce and Finance Committees to develop the parts of the legislation that will address tax relief, particularly for small businesses, and support for industries that have been directly impacted by this pandemic, including the airline industry, which has taken a devastating hit from this outbreak.

The Senate will be here as long as it takes to get this additional legislation to the President's desk.

These are difficult days. This is new territory for most of us, and there is a lot of uncertainty in the air. Americans are worried about their own health and that of their loved ones. They are worried about what this outbreak will mean for their jobs and their financial health. It is a difficult time for our country. We are going to get through this.

America has faced big challenges before, and we have come through them even stronger. This time will be no different. I see the strength of America everywhere I look—in the dedicated doctors and nurses putting their lives on the line to care for the sick and our first responders who are always at the forefront of the response to any crisis and the truckdrivers and grocery store employees and delivery workers who keep on doing their jobs in the face of the outbreak, ensuring all of us have the essentials we need. It is also in the thousands of ordinary Americans who are stepping up to help their neighbors—running to the grocery stores for elderly or sick individuals, providing childcare for those who can't telework, and looking out for those who are struggling financially. This is what will get us through.

I and my colleagues in Congress will continue to do our part to ensure that our country has everything it needs to weather this crisis and to defeat this disease.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, over the last few weeks, given the nature of this unprecedented virus, Members of Congress have been able to come together during divided times to support our country's response.