in-place and fight the spread. They deserve more than our thanks. They deserve child care, overtime, and hazard pay.

Finally, but of the highest priority, we need to do all we can for doctors, nurses, and other frontline healthcare workers—those risking it all to save lives. They are the true heroes of this pandemic. Angels, not with wings but with masks and protective gowns. You have our undying gratitude.

Never in any of our lifetimes has America stared down an enemy so insidious and so devastating. But we will answer this call of history with courage and resolve. We must.

Be safe. Stay healthy. Stay home. And God bless. We will get through this. We're all in this together.

MIDDLE CLASS HEALTH BENEFITS TAX REPEAL ACT OF 2019

SPEECH OF

HON. NORMA J. TORRES

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 27, 2020

Mrs. TORRES of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Senate Amendment to H.R. 748, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act. This bill will provide emergency relief to millions of Americans as we fight the coronavirus outbreak.

I want to highlight Title VI, which establishes a Coronavirus Relief Fund that provides $150 billion for the Secretary of Treasury to disseminate to States, Tribal Governments and units of local government in fiscal year 2020. Tragically, in recent days I've heard from many tribal nations in California, and they are really struggling. That's because they did the right thing to help our country combat this virus by closing their businesses.

It is worth noting that they did so proactively and were under no obligation to take such drastic steps. But, as we have come to expect from our leaders in the tribal community, they did the right thing because it was the right thing to do.

These closures have been nothing short of catastrophic. The very resources that had been used to fund the tribal government and provide services virtually evaporated overnight. These governments run, for the most part, on these tribal funds. The funds provided by the federal government via the Indian Health Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and other federal programs, often only make up a very small percentage of the total cost of running Tribal governments. So, when these businesses closed, the Tribes knew that doing so would compromise their ability to serve their people during this time of crisis.

I heard these stories and knew that Congress had to respond. This $8 billion fund will address the decrease in revenues, and we have mandated that the Secretary of Treasury work with the Secretary of Interior, to make sure that these decreased revenues are into their determination when making funds available to tribes.

MIDDLE CLASS HEALTH BENEFITS TAX REPEAL ACT OF 2019

SPEECH OF

HON. PETER A. DeFAZIO

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 27, 2020

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I will vote in support of the Senate Amendment to H.R. 748, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. This economic stimulus represents a wartime level investment in our nation as we continue our fight against an invisible enemy: COVID–19.

Public health experts agree the consequences of the virus will only get more devastating in the coming days. People we know and love will get sick. People we know and love may die despite the heroic efforts of our health care workers who are on the front lines, sacrificing the health of themselves and their families to give their neighbors and communities a fighting chance.

We also know that the financial fall-out from this crisis is unprecedented. On Thursday, the Department of Labor announced that nearly 3.3 million people lost their job the prior week, an unfortunate record number of claims. Through no fault of their own, millions of Americans were sidelined by a vicious virus that has brought our economy to a stunning but necessary halt as we work to ''flatten the curve'' to protect our health and safety.

Our next steps in this battle—to both contain the virus and prevent further layoffs—are critical.

And while Members of Congress can't be the experts in the lab developing a vaccine, or flying the cargo planes with medical supplies, there is something we can do today: get desperately needed funding and medical supplies to hospitals and frontline healthcare workers, and provide critical relief to the millions of laid-off workers and small business owners who are hurting right now.

Now, without question, the bill the Senate sent us isn't perfect.

Remember, the Republican starting point was a massive corporate slush fund with no transparency, accountability, or worker protections.

But we could not allow a repeat of the failed bailout of 2008. I'm proud to be part of the Democratic negotiating team that protected jobs because we know that putting working people and families first is how we as a country can get back on our feet. Prioritizing their needs over the profits of giant corporations is how we build an economy that works for everyone—not just a wealthy few.

This bill will put checks in the mail to 80 percent of Americans who make under six figures, and it will boost critical benefits for anyone who lost their job amid this crisis.

We fought hard so this bill will ensure millions of bus drivers, train operators, railroad workers, flight crews, airline ground workers, airport workers, and more not only remain on the job but keep as many of their hard-earned health and retirement benefits as possible during this crisis. The relief in this package flows to workers first, not last—and it makes clear to any industry getting relief: no stock buybacks, no executive giveaways, no layoffs. Workers first—period.

For the millions who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own, this legislation vastly strengthens and makes critical reforms to Unemployment Insurance programs—ensuring 100 percent wage replacement for the average American worker struggling without a paycheck during this crisis. It also provides federal incentives for states to eliminate waiting week requirements, expands access to part-time, self-employed, and gig economy workers, and adds an additional 13 weeks of federally-funded UI benefits.

To support the many small businesses across the country that have been forced to shutter, the bill designates $350 billion worth of 100 percent guaranteed SBA loans, a portion of which SBA will be able to forgive. These loans will be up to $10 million and provide incentives to keep employees on the payroll and pay them at their regular salary levels.

For our state, local, and tribal governments, this legislation establishes a $150 billion Coronavirus Relief Fund so that they have desperately needed additional funding to build field hospitals, buy ventilators and other personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as offset the cost of other essential government services not budgeted in the wake of the economic downturn. While this fund is a good start, we must do more to ensure our localities, especially those in rural areas, have what they need in this fight.

It allows for the temporary suspension of excise taxes on spirits for those used in the production of hand sanitizer in compliance with guidance from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), like Swallowtail and Thinking Tree Spirits in my district in Oregon.

The CARES Act provides $1 billion for the Defense Production Act, allowing the Department of Defense to invest in the manufacturing of PPE and other critical medical equipment in short supply. While this isn't the $3.5 billion allocated for the DPA in the House bill, it is still a notable sum to ramp up production for PPE and other supplies.

The President should have unleased the full power of the Defense Production Act (DPA) weeks ago. He still hasn't, and his lack of leadership means health care workers and their patients are suffering because there are not enough ventilators, PPE, or other medical supplies. I am continuing to call on the President to immediately ramp up domestic production of these crucial supplies.

This legislation also provides much-needed help to hospitals and healthcare providers by allocating $100 billion to cover unreimbursed health care-related expenses and lost revenues attributable to COVID–19. It also increases Medicare reimbursement for treatment of inpatient COVID–19 patients by 20 percent, and it allocates more than $27 billion for the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, investing billions into vaccines and therapeutics and $16 billion into the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS).

It mandates all private insurance plans to cover testing for COVID–19 without cost-sharing and provides free coverage for a COVID–19 vaccine or other preventive service within 15 days. It also protects the uninsured by allowing them to receive a coronavirus test and related services with no cost-sharing in any state Medicaid program that elects to offer such an enrollment option.

To protect and bolster our frontline health care workers, rural providers, and the health care of those with most need, the bill invests $1.32 billion in supplemental funding for Community Health Centers; reauthorizes Human