result of an administration that did not take COVID–19 seriously enough early enough and refused to heed the warnings of public health officials and scientists.

The same phenomenon of the President's not wanting to hear the truth will hurt us dearly when it comes to national security as well. If the Director of National Intelligence can't stand up and tell the President what is really happening, even when the President doesn't want to hear it, our country will be dramatically less safe—the same thing that has happened during the coronavirus crisis. If we move RATCLIFFE and pass him, we will repeat the same mistake that the President has made on COVID. Not hearing the truth, not acting on the truth, listening to flattery and not much else, which we did on COVID, will be repeated on national security.

Now, I think many of my Republican colleagues actually know this. This is not the first time that President Trump has floated RATCLIFFE's name—it is the second—because, the first time, the Republicans balked. Many Republicans whispered: He has no experience. Some Republicans said to one another and to some of us: You don't need someone in the DNI who is just a cheerleader for the President; you need someone who knows intelligence and will speak the truth.

There is no new evidence that Mr. RATCLIFFE will act with the necessary independence. Nothing has changed about RATCLIFFE's qualifications since he was shot down by the Republican Senators in their saying he was the wrong man for the job. Yet sometimes—all too often in this Senate and to the detriment of this country—even when my Republican colleagues know the President is wrong, they go blindly along with him anyway. That happened with COVID and will now happen with our intelligence agency. I hope it is not the case. I hope Mr. RATCLIFFE's nomination will be roundly rejected, as it should be.

NOMINATION OF BRIAN MILLER

Madam President, the second hearing this morning is in the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs on Brian Miller to be the Special Inspector General of the pandemic relief efforts. Having an independent, experienced, and strong IG to oversee the administration's use of taxpayer funds in this pandemic is critically important. Under President Trump, who has been firing IGs left and right simply because they tell the truth and who believes that he is accountable to no one, selecting a truly independent watchdog is essential and urgent.

As someone who currently works directly for President Trump as a member of his White House Counsel's Office, Mr. Miller's independence from the President is very much in doubt. We need a strong, tough IG. Billions of dollars are being spent. We don't want someone who has in his mind: I have to please the President. Mr. Miller needs to explain why the Senate should confirm him to a position that requires genuine independence. In particular, he must answer specific questions from the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs about his role in the White House Counsel's Office and what issues he has worked on. It is not acceptable to hide behind vague assertions that he can't answer those questions. It is too important. The burden on Miller is to demonstrate that he can be a truly strong and independent inspector general.

CORONAVIRUS

Madam President, there are serious questions about the fitness of both of these nominees—Mr. RATCLIFFE and Mr. Miller. Yet, more broadly, the Republican leader has made a mistake by choosing to dedicate this session to nominations only instead of to urgent legislative business—COVID–19.

We could and should be focused on issues like testing. The first diagnosed case of COVID–19 was diagnosed here in the United States just over 100 days ago. We still don't have a national testing strategy that is adequate. In early March, President Trump said that anybody who needs a test gets a test, which has entered the pantheon of Presidential lies, alongside: ''I am not a crook,'' and ''Read my lips: no new taxes.'' It was not true then, and it isn't true now. We still don't have a situation in which everyone who needs a test and wants a test gets one.

As nations around the world, like South Korea and Canada, flatten the curve with rigorous national testing programs, the United States—this great United States, usually the leader of the world—is lagging so far behind. So, today, 42 Senate Democrats are sending a letter, demanding that the Trump administration fulfill its responsibility to produce a comprehensive, national strategic plan of action by May 24. Congress provided $25 billion in the last round of COVID legislation to help build up our testing capacity. The administration needs to take those resources and produce results. We have given him the money and the wherewithal. Where are they? The strategy they must come up with must include a strategy for managing supply chains and for making sure resources are equitably allocated and a strategy to use all available tools, like the Defense Production Act, to make sure we reach the level of testing that will manage this disease, save lives, and get our economy moving again.

Until we have a vaccine, the most important tool we have at our disposal for tracking the disease, limiting its spread, and understanding where we can safely open is testing, testing, testing. We await the President's response to our letter and want to work with the administration to make sure we can end its embarrassment of inadequate testing, which, frankly, is far more than an embarrassment—it is crucial. It is life and death.

SMALL BUSINESS LENDING TRANSPARENCY

Madam President, finally, on small business lending transparency, over the past several months, Congress has provided historic levels of funding to help small businesses retain employees, meet payroll, and stay afloat during these turbulent times. Because of the depth of this crisis, we have dedicated trillions—not billions but trillions—to this effort. We must absolutely make sure these relief programs are implemented properly. With so much taxpayer money at stake, oversight, transparency, and accountability are musts.

Issues with the small business lending programs cropped up almost as soon as the administration began implementing them. Truly, small businesses had a difficult time in securing loans while larger businesses that had standing relationships with big banks had a much easier time. Minority-owned businesses, women-owned businesses, and other unbanked businesses—the proverbial small restaurant owner, the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker—have been left out to a large degree. We tried to rectify some of these problems, particularly in COVID 3.5, but more must be done.

As Justice Brandeis said: ''Sunlight is the best disinfectant.'' Transparency around these programs is the order of the day. So, this afternoon, Senator CARDIN and I will ask the Senate to pass legislation that demands new disclosure requirements for the Paycheck Protection Program and other disaster relief accounts. Our bill is very simple. It would require the daily and weekly reporting of the PPP, the Economic Injury Disaster Loan, and debt relief programs to be broken down, in each case, by geography, demographics, and industry. The data would need to be downloaded and would include the names of the entities and the loans or grant amounts. It would need to detail whether the programs are reaching underserved communities.

This is hardly a controversial idea. There is nothing partisan about it. Our legislation would simply require the basic transparency we expect from any Federal program—certainly, one of this size and importance. It is my hope that my Republican colleagues will not block our request simply because it comes from this side of the aisle. I would hope, on a day when the Republican leader has scheduled literally no business on the floor of the Senate, that we could come together to pass this very simple bill to make sure we know how taxpayer dollars are being spent.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, to date, more than 1 million people have contracted coronavirus in the United States—61,000 in the State of Illinois. Sadly, we are quickly approaching a death toll of 100,000 Americans. While more people continue to contract and