and more than 50 small, rural, or disadvantaged communities who rely entirely on groundwater for their household water supplies.

But unsustainable groundwater pumping in the valley has reduced the Friant-Kern Canal's ability to deliver water to all who need it. Land elevation subsidence caused by overpumping means that not all of the supplies stored at Friant Dam can be conveyed through the canal. In some areas, the canal can carry only 40 percent of what it is designed to deliver.

In 2017, a very wet year in which we should have been banking as much flood water as possible, the Friant-Kern Canal couldn't deliver an additional 300,000 acre-feet of water that it would have been able to convey had its capacity not been limited by subsidence. This significant amount of water would have been destined for groundwater recharge efforts in the south San Joaquin Valley, where the impacts of reduced water deliveries, water quality issues and groundwater regulation are expected to be most severe.

California Aqueduct and Delta Mendota Canal: The California Aqueduct serves more than 27 million people in Southern California and the Silicon Valley and more than 750,000 acres of the Nation's most productive farmland. But despite its name, much of the California Aqueduct is owned by the Federal Government and serves portions of Silicon Valley, small towns and communities in the northern San Joaquin Valley, and farms from Firebaugh to Kettleman City. The aqueduct represents a successful 70–year partnership between the Federal Government and the State of California.

In recent years, particularly recent drought years, the California Aqueduct has subsided. It has lost as much as 20 percent of its capacity to move water to California's families, farms, and businesses. California is leading efforts to repair the aqueduct and is working to provide its share of funding, but the Federal Government will also need to pay its fair share. The bill I am introducing today would authorize $200 million toward restoring the California Aqueduct.

The Delta-Mendota Canal stretches southward 117 miles from the C.W. Bill Jones Pumping Plant along the western edge of the San Joaquin Valley, parallel to the California Aqueduct. The Delta-Mendota Canal has lost 15 percent of its conveyance capacity due to subsidence. The bill I am introducing today would authorize $200 million toward restoring its full ability to convey floodwaters to farms needing to recharge their groundwater, and to wildlife refuges for migratory waterfowl.

In conclusion, this bill responds to a potential crisis that very possibly could cause the forced retirement of nearly one-sixth of the working farmland in an area that produces half of America's fruits and vegetables.

These are Federal canals, and the Federal Government must help give these farmers and communities reliant of the agricultural economy a fighting chance to keep their lands in production.

I hope my colleagues will join me in support of this bill. I yield the floor.

By Mr. RUBIO (for himself, Mr. CARDIN, Ms. COLLINS, Mrs. SHAHEEN, and Mr. DURBIN):

S. 3833. A bill to extend the loan forgiveness period for the paycheck protection program, and for other purposes; read the first time.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce, with my colleagues Senator RUBIO, CARDIN, and SHAHEEN, legislation to strengthen the Paycheck Protection Program, which has proven to be such an important lifeline to America's small businesses and their employees during this pandemic.

Senators RUBIO, CARDIN, SHAHEEN, and I worked together as part of the Small Business Task Force to create this program during the development of the CARES Act 2 months ago.

Since its launch in early April, this program has provided forgivable loans totaling more than $510 billion to approximately 4.3 million small employers across the country. The overwhelming majority of borrowers are very small employers.

In phase 1 of the program, the average PPP loan size nationally was $206,000. That translates to an average employer size of just 18 employees. As more loans have been approved in phase 2, the average loan size nationally has dropped to $118,000, suggesting an average business size of about 10 employees.

In Maine, the average loan size is even smaller, with borrowers having an estimated 12 employees in phase 1 and just three employees in phase 2. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, nearly two-thirds of the small businesses in Maine have benefited from PPP loans, and that is, I am pleased to say, among the highest rates in the Nation.

In many ways, it is not a surprise. Maine is the State of small businesses. Ninety percent of all the Maine businesses are considered to be small businesses, and they employ approximately 60 percent of all the workers in our State. Overall, in Maine, the funds are sufficient to support approximately 200,000 jobs.

Let's think about this. That means that a business that is seeing receipts go down, is in a cash flow problem, liquidity has dried up can still retain employees who otherwise would have been laid off. In more cases, it has allowed a business to call back furloughed employees. And even in cases where the business has been forced to close its doors because of government orders, it has kept alive the connection between the employer and his or her employees. That is so important because, as the economy does open back up, we want to make sure that link between the employer and the employees remains intact so that the workforce can come back to work as soon as possible.

It is important, as we discuss the economic data behind the PPP, to remember that these are real businesses with real people—people like Larry Geaghan, who owns and runs a craft brewery and pub in Bangor, ME. Larry calls the PPP a ''lifeline bill'' that has made all the difference in helping him to bring back 25 of his employees and reopen for takeout business.

Another Maine borrower—the owner of a small marina—told me that the PPP was exactly what he needed at exactly the right time. With the PPP, this marina has been able to keep all of its employees on payroll, and because they weren't worried about whether they would have a paycheck, these employees continued spending as they normally would—exactly what our Maine economy needs.

Another example of a small business helped by the PPP is the Frog & Turtle Gastro Pub in Westbrook, ME. This pub just completed an extensive renovation and is hoping to reopen June 1, the first day that sit-down dining service will be allowed again in the State of Maine.

The owner of this pub wrote to me to say that the ''PPP program allowed us to bring back our 15 employees and sustain our business during these trying conditions,'' and that taking a PPP loan was the ''right decision'' for his employees and for his small restaurant.

When we were initially developing the Paycheck Protection Program, we had no idea how long the pandemic would last. We did not know that there would be virtually universal economic shutdowns, nor did we know how each State would respond to outbreaks in their communities. The bipartisan bill that we are introducing today builds on the success of the PPP by providing small businesses with additional flexibility so that they can more effectively use these funds in conjunction with State reopening plans.

And, again, I would remind my colleagues that when we were drafting the first version of this, it was before there were widespread orders shutting down restaurants and bars and retail establishments.

Specifically, the Paycheck Protection Program Extension Act that we are introducing today would do the following: It would allow borrowers the flexibility to use their 8 weeks of funding at a point of their choosing within a 16-week period. Small businesses could choose the period that they believe works best to coincide with the reopening of their local economy.

So some small businesses took the loans very early, thinking that the shutdowns would not last or that the pandemic would be on the way down by now, which it is in some States, thank goodness, but not in all.

Well, this builds in more flexibility. You would have 16 weeks to use the loan funds instead of 8.

Second, it extends the deadline to apply for a PPP loan from June 30 to December 31 of this year.

Again, this reflects the fact that shutdowns lasted far longer in virtually every State than we anticipated when we were drafting the bill in March.

Third, the bill would allow borrowers to use loan funds to purchase personal protective equipment for employees and to pay for adaptive investments needed to reopen safely.

Adaptive investments could include modifications to a commercial property to comply with the social distancing regulations or guidelines from the CDC. It could mean creating or expanding a drive-through window service, erected physical barriers such as we see at the grocery stores now, those plexiglass barriers or sneeze guards. It could mean installing ventilation system upgrades or, as many restaurants have mentioned to me, they would like to add an outside patio for outdoor eating, which would allow them to maintain the same number of customers, which they can't do now, and abide by the social distancing guidelines.

The bill would also clarify that the current lender hold-harmless provision relates to all Small Business Administration and Treasury guidance regarding PPP loans. A lender that in good faith followed Federal guidance related to PPP would not be later held liable if the guidance subsequently changed.

I would like to give a shout-out to our small community banks and credit unions in the State of Maine. They have really stepped up to the plate for this program to serve the small businesses, small employers in our State, for the small nonprofits, and that has made a real difference to the employees of these establishments.

And finally, the bill would clarify that borrowers who have maintained payroll for 8 weeks will not lose loan forgiveness due to the extension of the program to 16 weeks.

Now, I would hope that that would be obvious, but we wanted to make sure that we were explicit.

The Paycheck Protection Program is the single most critical stimulus program protecting Main Street America from the economic devastation of the measures taken to control the spread of COVID–19. The bill we are introducing today strengthens the PPP to reflect the evolving nature of this pandemic, the necessity of regulatory actions that have caused a great deal of economic harm but were necessary to prevent the spread of the virus, and I urge all of my colleagues to support this bill.

By Mr. CRUZ:

S. 3835. A bill to prohibit the use of funds for the production of films by United States companies that alter content for screening in the People's Republic of China, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the single most dangerous geopolitical threat that America faces now and through the next century—China.

We are in the midst of a pandemic that has infected over 5 million people and has claimed the lives of over 300,000 people worldwide. In the United States alone, the pandemic has infected over 1.5 million people and has claimed over 93,000 lives.

The coronavirus pandemic has shattered the lives of husbands and wives, daughters, sons, granddaughters, grandsons, brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews who have lost loved ones to COVID–19.

It has also shattered the lives of those who have lost their jobs, their livelihoods, because of this disease.

Thirty-eight million Americans are now out of work. The unemployment rate is at the highest it has ever been since the Great Depression, and entire industries are on the brink of collapse. Just 4 months ago, when the economy was booming, that was unthinkable.

Where did this pandemic start? In China. Whether it began at the Huanan wet market, a barbaric breeding ground for disease, where snakes and turtles and puppies and kittens and bats and other wildlife and farm animals are killed and sold, or whether it began due to substandard safety protocols at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, where research into coronavirus was being conducted and specifically coronavirus from bats, we don't yet know.

Here is what we do know: Not only did the coronavirus outbreak start in China, the Chinese Communist Government did everything it could to cover up the severity of the outbreak, from lying about the origin of the virus to how it is transmitted, to destroying evidence, to silencing the brave whistleblower doctors and scientists and journalists and activists who tried to warn the world and prevent a global pandemic.

It has been reported recently that between January 1 and April 4, the Chinese Government charged 484 people with crimes because of comments they made about the coronavirus pandemic.

In Wuhan, eight doctors who sounded the alarm about coronavirus in December were accused of spreading lies, arrested, and forced to sign documents claiming that they had made false statements that ''disturbed the public order.''

In reality, they were telling the truth. They were warning us.

One of those doctors, Dr. Ai Fen, has been missing since late March. Another, Dr. Li Wenliang, has since died from the coronavirus. Dr. Li Wenliang's wife was pregnant with the couple's second child when he died.

And it is not just Chinese doctors who are paying the price for telling the truth; journalists and activists who courageously spoke up are disappearing too.

Xu Zhangrun, a Chinese law professor who spoke out about the Chinese Government's handling of the coronavirus outbreak and criticized Chinese President Xi, has been missing since February.

Chen Qiushi, a Chinese lawyer and journalist who went to Wuhan to report on what was happening there, has been missing since February 6. Fang Bin, a Wuhan businessman and journalist who reported on the number of bodies piling up outside a Wuhan hospital has been missing since February 9. Li Zehua, a journalist who quit his job as a broadcaster for the Chinese Communist Party's TV station so he could report on what was happening in Wuhan, went missing for 28 days and then was allowed to reappear in public only after he praised the government's policy. Ren Zhiqiang, a real estate tycoon, who had been publicly critical of President Xi's handling of the coronavirus crisis, has been missing since March 12. And Xu Zhiyong, a civil rights lawyer and a legal scholar who criticized President Xi on social media for his handling of the coronavirus crisis, has been on house arrest since February 13.

If the Chinese Government had acted responsibly and sought the advice of public health professionals instead of silencing them, there is a very real possibility the coronavirus could have been contained as a regional outbreak. Instead, we are now dealing with a deadly global pandemic.

These brave men and women are just the latest targets of the Chinese Communist Government's relentless attacks on truth-tellers, on freedom fighters, and on religious and ethnic minorities. The Chinese Government is a 1984-style dystopian state, and it has tracked and imprisoned millions of Uyghurs and other religious minorities. The Chinese Government is constantly tracking the movements of millions of people using cutting-edge biotechnology and artificial intelligence, and it has put 1 million Uyghurs, right now, into concentration camps.

In 2017, I led a bipartisan resolution in this body condemning the Chinese Communist Party's persecution of religious minorities, particularly Buddhist Tibetans. Last year, I introduced legislation and urged the Trump administration to blacklist Chinese companies that are aiding the Chinese Government in its persecution of the Uyghurs. The administration implemented the recommendations in my legislation, and as a result those companies are now banned from acquiring American goods. That is a step in the right direction.

We have known that China's surveillance state and censorship practices are a great threat to human rights, but what the pandemic has shown us is that China's surveillance state and censorship is also a great threat to our national security and to public health. Had those doctors, journalists, and activists who were trying to tell the