Secretary Brouillette has his leadership team in place, and Mr. Menezes has demonstrated that he has the knowledge and the experience needed to succeed as Deputy Secretary.

So I appreciate, and I have shared this with Mr. Menezes, his willingness to serve our country in a new and a higher capacity, particularly as we seek to harness the Department's capabilities to overcome and recover from the COVID–19 pandemic.

I thank the majority leader for bringing up his nomination. I would urge every Member to vote in favor of it on cloture today and on confirmation tomorrow.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. President, before I yield the floor to my friend and colleague, the ranking member on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, I want to take just a very, very, very brief moment and urge us, at this moment, on the 3rd of August, as we are commencing this workweek here, where the expectation from people from Alaska to West Virginia and all points in between is that this Congress is going to come together to be responsive to the needs of the most vulnerable in this country right now—the vulnerability that has come about because of a global health pandemic and the ensuing economic crisis that we see now.

I spent the weekend back home in Alaska. I heard the concerns and the fears of so many for whom things are not getting better. Things are looking worse, and it is bleak. As of today, in the State's largest city, the mayor has recognized that with the numbers increasing as they are, we need to go back to the hunker-down mode. So restaurants and bars are shutting down again—just after they thought, with some level of optimism, they would be able to bring folks back into work, they would be able to fill up the freezers and get the produce and get the great salmon that is coming in off the streams and serve up some great meals. That is not happening.

So that economic picture in our largest community is bleaker and bleaker. And for those who wake up and know that today is the day that they have to pay the mortgage, they have to pay the rent, and they don't know what level of assistance is going to be coming from their Congress—they do know, though, that the unemployment benefits that they had received, the plussed-up amount, that that is not on the horizon for them.

They do know that school is opening up in 20 days, and there is uncertainty with how the schools are going to safely open up for the children and for the faculty, the teachers, the janitors, how they are going to make that work. And, oh, by the way, if this is a schedule where the kids are only in class for a couple days a week, for a shorter time period, how do I deal with the struggles and the challenges of childcare?

The folks at the food bank whom I met with over the weekend who are so concerned about the food security issues, for them, recognizing that a plus-up in SNAP may be—may be what gets that family through from week to week.

This is not the time for us to figure out what every one of us wants because this is the must-pass bill in this Congress. It is a must-pass bill. But we have to recognize that this can't be about what we need, what I might need for my election, or what I might want to advance as a legacy piece. This needs to be about those for whom the anxiety and the—just the awful place they are in right now; that they know we have been responsive to them; that we are addressing the immediacy of now.

So whether it is what we do with unemployment insurance, whether it is what we do with food security, childcare, a longer term PPP program that will help our businesses, the short-term assistances—but understanding what it means for the longer term—the delay here only hurts the most vulnerable.

So I am urging all of us, let's come together, let's work with our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, let's work with our colleagues over in the House, because people in my State are hurting, and they are expecting us to respond.

With that, I know that Senator MANCHIN wished to speak to the nomination of Mr. Menezes. I appreciate his good work on the committee.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous to be able to complete my remarks.

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

NOMINATION OF MARK WESLEY MENEZES

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the Mark Menezes nomination to be Deputy Secretary of Energy.

I agree wholeheartedly with our chairwoman for Energy and Natural Resources. We have a great working relationship, and we have a good friendship that means more than anything to me.

But, basically, every now and then you get a person who comes before you that you know they are there for the good of the public. They are truly public servants, not for private service.

So this person comes across with so much expertise. That is going to play an important role in our national defense and our energy and economic security and our science and research and even in fighting the ongoing COVID–19 pandemic and helping to rebuild our economy.

The Deputy Secretary plays a central role in all of these efforts, and I believe that Mr. Menezes is up to the task.

The Deputy Secretary is the second highest ranking officer in the Department of Energy and the Department's chief operating officer on top of that. He is responsible for managing the Department's wide-ranging mission and a budget of over $35 billion dollars—$35-billion-dollar budget.

The DOE and its labs can also play a vital role in supporting the scientific research and development needed to rebuild our economy.

In addition, the Department is responsible for maintaining the Nation's nuclear weapons stockpile, overseeing the four power marketing administrations, and ensuring our energy security and protecting the Nation's energy sector from cyber attacks, among other things.

As the Department's second highest ranking officer and its chief operating office, the Deputy Secretary necessarily plays a critical role in all of these important functions.

Mr. Menezes brings an impressive background to the job. Thirty years ago, he was counsel to our former colleague Senator John Breaux; 15 years ago, he was chief counsel to the House Energy and Commerce and played a major role in shaping the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

He has held senior posts at the American Electric Power Company, the Hunton and Williams law firm, and Berkshire Hathaway Energy.

Most importantly, though, for the past 3 years, he has served as the Under Secretary of Energy. As the Under Secretary of Energy, Mr. Menezes has shown he is up to the task and capable of handling the job of Deputy Secretary.

I think that he truly, clearly, demonstrated his knowledge and his firm grasp of the wide range of important issues before the Department during the confirmation hearing, and I am happy to support his nomination in the most bipartisan way.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. President, I would also like to make a few comments on what my good friend Senator MURKOWSKI from Alaska said.

People are depending on us. This is not time to have political battles. People are hurting in West Virginia; they are hurting in Arkansas; they are hurting all over. The uncertainty hurts them more than anything else. We have to make sure that we understand this is a health crisis.

A health crisis needs to have its attention. We can't be closing hospitals in the middle of a health crisis. I have three rural hospitals that closed. We have to make sure that they stay open to fight the fight. Also, I am certain of one point. Unemployment is not going to come back full force until people know they have a vaccine or an antibody that will protect them from a fatal disease. They are concerned and worried about that.

With that being said, right now they are asking us to continue on for the next 5 months. We don't have connectivity. You talk about telework, distance learning, telehealth. They can't have any of this if they can't connect. So we have to make sure that one