me to be behind him on these proposals. I know they will be reasonable, and I know they will be straightforward. Boy oh boy. If, when we see those images, we are not able to step up with a commonsense, bipartisan, and quick response, then shame on all of us. I commend the Senator for his leadership, and I look forward to working with him.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Madam President, as if that isn't enough—and with the challenges we face with having close to 200,000 of our fellow citizens dead from coronavirus and there still being no national plan on PPE or testing or, my fear, that we could see a repeat of the mistakes that were made on testing and PPE happen on vaccinations if we are not careful—what I actually came to talk about and to remind my colleagues about is something that the Senator from Oregon will also be very, very involved in. I express my grave concern that we are only 16 days away from a potential lapse in government funding.

It is encouraging that Secretary Mnuchin and Speaker PELOSI seem to have reached at least an agreement in principle on this must-pass stopgap funding, but I have been around here long enough to know that when negotiations between and within two Chambers on supposedly must-pass coronavirus relief legislation breaks down and stalls—and when that breakdown lasts for months—that we cannot let the funding of our government get mired in the same complacency and lack of urgency.

I hope and pray that the devastating impact of the 2018–2019 government shutdown is still in the front minds of all of my colleagues here in the Senate. I acknowledge it has been a long year, so here is a little recap for those who need it.

The government shutdown over the holiday of 2018 and into the beginning of the new year of 2019 was the longest shutdown of the Federal Government in history—not of this Congress's and not under this administration but in our country's history.

For 35 days, the Federal Government did not hold up its end of the bargain with taxpayers or the public servants who have dedicated their lives to delivering services to them. The economic impact and human toll were devastating. More than 380,000 Federal workers were furloughed, and another 450,000 were forced to work without pay. While Federal employees eventually received backpay, furloughed workers who happened to be contractors still have not been made whole. To put that in context, contractors, including those who had served the Federal Government as custodians, cafeteria workers, and security guards, had to figure out how to pay rent and buy medicine and put food on the table after two entire paychecks just evaporated.

The economic effects were not just personal either. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the 2018–2019 government shutdown cost taxpayers—cost all of us—about $3 billion. It actually registered as a decrease in 2019's gross domestic product of about two-tenths of a percent. Those will be losses that we will never recover.

As bad as that all sounds, that was only a partial government shutdown. There were 9 out of 15 Departments and several Agencies that were closed.

What we are facing in a couple of weeks would affect the entire Federal Government. To state the obvious, that was when we were not in a global pandemic and an economic recession. Virginians and people across the country continue relying on services from the Federal Government to help keep their families and businesses afloat.

I am sure the administration will take steps to ensure people continue to receive their most essential things, like SNAP benefits to keep their families fed and PPP loans to keep their businesses afloat. Shutting down the entire Federal Government will inevitably lead to disruptions and bare-bone contingency matters.

The American people need and, frankly, deserve better. With food insecurity, housing instability, and job loss all on the rise, now is the time for the Federal Government to do more to help everyday people—not by turning the lights out. Shutting down the government just as we are expecting a surge in COVID–19 cases post-Labor Day and as the flu season is starting and as we are needing to work double time to secure the November election and as the Postal Service needs relief and, as Senator WYDEN just indicated, as the entire west coast is burning—boy oh boy. Calling it a self-inflicted injury doesn't even cut it. If we were to shut down, it would be more like kicking ourselves. Failing to reach an agreement on funding the government would be absolutely disastrous.

I can only hope that there will be bipartisan agreement on this point and that we will be able to put aside any of the unrelated policy differences to fulfill one of our most basic obligations as lawmakers—that of funding the government and keeping our commitments to both our constituents and the Federal workforce that works so tirelessly to serve them.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

BROADBAND

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, I rise to address broadband connectivity and broadband access in rural States like the Presiding Officer's State and my State of West Virginia.

Our Nation has experienced a very tough couple of months because of the coronavirus pandemic. With the new normal consisting of teleworking, virtual learning, and telehealth appointments, there is no question that this has forced us to recognize and to reckon with the digital divide in this country. The ability to have affordable and reliable service is more valuable than ever.

However, in 2020, my State remains one of the least connected States in the country. Over the last few months, I have heard from many constituents—hundreds of my constituents—who are having difficulties properly and efficiently working from home, helping their kids with their homework because they lack robust internet access.

You know, I think about those children who either don't have connectivity or don't have an adult in the home who can really help them do their digital learning. We have to get our kids back in school, but in the meantime we have to have this connectivity.

Some examples of this are Randy from Parkersburg, whom I spoke to recently during a tele-townhall meeting that I held with constituents. Randy expressed his frustration with not being able to access the internet, making it difficult for his kids to complete their homework. He was driving to a hot spot.

Laura from Wheeling expressed her concern that her children will fall behind in school without access to their homework online.

And Mandy from Elkins, who is a professor, needs internet because of required online learning at Davis & Elkins.

These are just examples of the few of the concerns that I have heard from my constituents, but, unfortunately, there are many, many more just like those. I am sure you are hearing them as well in the great State of Iowa.

The reality is that broadband buildout in rural areas of West Virginia and across our country are extremely expensive and take more time to complete because, in our case, we have those beautiful West Virginia mountains. I have always said that if we can communicate with somebody on the Moon, we can surely find a way to deliver broadband to individuals, families, and businesses all across this Nation.

Fortunately, the FCC Chairman, Ajit Pai, understands this and has been working with the other Commissioners at the FCC to structure the future of rural broadband deployment. The FCC's upcoming Rural Digital Opportunity Fund—which I am going to call it RDOF, which is how we address it—is the largest Federal investment aimed at closing the digital divide.

RDOF will award $20.4 billion over the next 10 years for broadband service in rural America, with a special emphasis at the beginning on those who are totally unserved and then moving to those who have some service, but it is inadequate.