for her here in DC. About 3 years ago, she met her husband Anthony at a Boy Scouts fish fry at St. Peter's Church right here on Capitol Hill. I know Johanna regards that as a blessing for her, but it was a blessing for our office, too, because we got to keep her around a little longer than she had originally anticipated. But now, in a couple of weeks, Johanna will move back to South Dakota. We are all very excited for her, but she will be sorely missed.

Madam President, I know I don't have to tell you or any other Senator here just how important the role of a scheduler is in any office. The days here on Capitol Hill are busy. Our schedulers are the ones who bring some semblance of organization to an otherwise chaotic day, making sure we get to connect with our constituents in town, make it to committee hearings and votes on time, get the briefings we need on legislation, and much more.

Johanna is not only a good scheduler, she is a great one. I will miss her patience, her professionalism, and her unparalleled ability to keep trains running on time. But what I and I think the rest of my staff will miss the most about Johanna is her kindness. Johanna has had a positive impact on pretty much every staffer who has worked with me during her time here, taking the time to get to know each of them on a personal level. Whether she is interacting with an agency head, constituent, or a fellow staffer, she is always the same—unfailingly gracious, patient, and kind.

No matter how busy or chaotic the day, Johanna can be counted on to bring a steady hand and a positive attitude. She is a woman of deep faith, and it shows. I am sad to see her go, but I want to wish her the very best of everything as she embarks on this new chapter in life.

Johanna, thank you for all your hard work on behalf of South Dakota. You will be missed.

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.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, well, we in Congress are no strangers to December funding deadlines or the occasional pre-Christmas cliffhanger.

In that respect, the situation we face now is familiar. Funding for the Federal Government is hanging in the balance. In the next few days, Congress will either succeed or fail at providing secure and stable funding for our military commanders, our Federal Departments, and key investments for our future.

Fortunately, our colleagues on the Appropriations Committee and their House counterparts have been on the case. Bipartisan, bicameral committee work has full-year government funding legislation on the 1-yard line.

I am optimistic that if we can close out our other parallel business, we should be able to fund the government and move forward together.

But that brings me to the way in which this year is unlike anything we have seen before. It has been more than 9 months since our Nation began to feel the full force of the COVID–19 pandemic. The American people have done what Americans do when crises come knocking.

Essential workers have kept our Nation running. Healthcare professionals have worked day and night to care for strangers. Heroic American businesses have adapted, reinvented, and obeyed the advice of medical experts.

Now we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. Operation Warp Speed has given us safe and effective vaccines in record time, but the American people need another bridge to those better days that are not so far off. The country needs Congress to come through with another targeted rescue package. They have waited months. They have waited and suffered, and some have died while needless political games have played out. The American people's wait for more emergency assistance ought to be over.

For months, I have called for a targeted, bipartisan package that would put hundreds of billions of dollars into payroll support, testing, vaccine distribution, extended unemployment aid, safe schools, and other essential priorities.

So I am encouraged that our Democratic colleagues have now embraced this framework that has been the right solution for our country all this time. And a bipartisan, bicameral agreement appears to be close at hand.

The outline that I have been discussing with the Democratic leader, Speaker PELOSI, and Leader MCCARTHY would get another huge dose of bipartisan support out the door as fast as possible.

We have yet to nail down every detail, but in broad strokes, we have been discussing the targeted second round of the job-saving Paycheck Protection Program that Republicans have sought since last summer.

We are discussing many tens of billions of dollars for distributing vaccines, COVID testing, and equipping safe schools to get our kids' educations back on track. We are discussing extending important unemployment programs.

At the particular urging of President Trump and Secretary Mnuchin, who continue to be the champions of cash relief for American families, we are discussing more direct impact payments for individuals, plus the bonus for families with children.

These are just some of the major pillars. And equally important, we are agreeing to be smart about financing these extraordinary policies.

Now listen to this. We intend to repurpose more than $400 billion in unspent funds which we have already allocated in the CARES Act. It turned out these funds did not need to be tapped to restore basic stability to our economy. It is time we put that money to urgent use.

Like I said at the time yesterday, I am heartened by our discussions and our progress. I believe all sides are working in good faith for our shared goal of getting an outcome.

But I will say this. In my judgment, we are very close to a point that arises in every major negotiation. It is the point where each side faces a fork in the road.

Do we want to lapse into politics as usual and let negotiations lose steam? Do we want to haggle and spar like this were an ordinary political exercise, get wrapped around the axle of language or policy riders that we know are controversial, or, on the other hand, after months of inaction, do we want to move swiftly and with unusual bipartisanship to close out our issues, seal the deal, and write text that can quickly pass into law?

In short, we are near the point in this process where we decide if we are going to stay on the fast track or drift back toward business as usual.

I say the answer should be obvious. After all these months, struggling Americans don't just need action; they need action fast—fast.

So I continue to appreciate our productive discussions, but I hope we also remember just how urgent the situation is for millions and millions of our fellow citizens.

So for the information of all Senators, we are going to stay right here—right here—until we are finished, even if that means working through the weekend, which is highly likely.

And if we need to further extend the Friday funding deadline before final legislation can pass in both Chambers, I hope we will extend it for a very, very short—short—window of time.

Our citizens can't afford for us to get bogged down in the back-and-forth. Let's finish up our bipartisan framework. Let's make law as soon as possible. That is what our people deserve.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, we continue to move closer to a final