should be the first step in creating home- and community-based services infrastructure that can serve seniors and all people with disabilities who want to live in their own homes and remain in their communities with their families, friends, and neighbors.

With the passage of this American Rescue Plan, we will be able to address the immediate pandemic needs of older adults, as well as people with disabilities. Let's work to ensure this first step starts to create the path to a robust, comprehensive home care and home health network in every State for every senior and every American with a disability.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Ohio.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I worked with my colleague from Pennsylvania on some of these home care options, and I think it is a very positive thing. In fact, it saves a lot of cost for the system, but the question is, What is it doing in a COVID relief bill?

You know, I just have to say, having been involved in a bipartisan way on five different COVID relief packages over the last year, I am just so discouraged that we can't sit down, Republicans and Democrats alike, and work out a targeted, focused bill on COVID, and, by the way, then move on to other things, including healthcare reform, including issues that traditionally have also been bipartisan, like infrastructure and broadband expansion, like retirement security or dealing with China and supply chain issues.

But this is not the way to start. We are looking at a $1.9 trillion package, the second largest ever written by Congress. The first one went through last year. And there was no input—virtually no input—from anybody on our side of the aisle because the administration decided they didn't want it. They wanted to jam this thing through without our participation. And it is too bad, because they will end up with a product that is not going to be as focused and targeted, but, also, it is just getting off on the wrong foot and making it more difficult for us to figure out how to come together on other issues.

It is really the opposite. This process is really the opposite of what President Biden talked about. He talked about it in his campaign. I mean, he won a campaign, including in his primary, saying he wanted to work across the aisle; he wanted to change the tone in Washington. That was pretty brave of him to say, really.

And, then, in his inaugural address, he did the same thing; didn't he? He talked about the need for unity. He talked about wanting to get people together and to work with Democrats and Republicans alike and kind of get back to that. This is exactly the opposite of that. I just don't get it. I have to tell you, I am mystified why they want to start off this way.

I was one of the 10 Republicans who went down to the White House to meet with President Biden about this a few weeks ago, and we offered our own proposal and said we would like to work with you and negotiate with you. And, you know, there has been no interest, to be honest, and I wish it weren't the case.

And $4 trillion has already been allocated to the COVID–19 issue, and it was needed. It is a crisis. It still is. It is not over yet, although things are getting a lot better, both in terms of the healthcare crisis and in terms of the economy. But we did that, again, five different times—over $4 trillion, five different times in a bipartisan way.

So we know we can do it. It is hard for us to do it on other issues—let's face it—like taxes or even healthcare, but it is not with regard to COVID–19. At least it hasn't been until now.

The most recent $900 billion COVID relief package passed at the end of December by a 92 to 6 vote—92 to 6. I came out to the floor to give speeches on this Senate floor over 20 times in the months prior to that legislation finally being passed, urging Congress to come out of our partisan corners, Democrats and Republicans alike, and to come up with a COVID relief package, because I saw so much middle ground. And we found it by the end of December. I was part of a group of five Democrats and five Republicans who sat down over a month-long period or so. We actually wrote a bill. The ''908 Coalition,'' we called ourselves because we wrote a bill for $900 billion that was the basis for that $900 billion legislation that eventually passed. So I have been there. I have done it. We have done it. We can do it. Yet we are looking here at an entirely different process and, unfortunately, a product that is not targeted, not focused.

It is interesting to note that of the $900 billion that we appropriated just a couple of months ago, at the end of the year, more than half of that, we are told, has not been spent yet. So while we are starting a $1.9 trillion new spending project, about half of what we just did has yet to be spent. So how do we know how much is needed? It is very hard to know.

I will say that it is troubling to me that this bill is loaded up with provisions that don't relate to addressing the COVID–19 pandemic, because we should be targeted and focused like a laser on that issue and not on other things. In fact, when you look at the healthcare part of this, most people would think: OK, what would you do with a COVID–19 bill? You would focus on the coronavirus. You would focus on the testing and the tracing. You would focus on the vaccine development and distribution. You would focus on the healthcare side, including healthcare providers.

Unfortunately, that is a very small part of the funding of this bill. It is $160 billion out of $1.9 trillion, so less than 10 percent of the bill is focused on that. And, by the way, the alternative I mentioned that we offered to President Biden—$160 billion. We totally believe in that part of the bill, and that we should put all of that in there, particularly with regard to the vaccines.

So it is frustrating because not only is the process not what we have done in the past and is best for this country, but also the substance of this bill is just not targeted on COVID–19. How do I tell hard-working families in my State of Ohio that there is a provision in the bill that asks Medicare to spend more money in New Jersey, Delaware, and Rhode Island but not in Ohio and other States? How do I explain that we need to set aside hundreds of millions of dollars that are in this bill in additional Federal funds for the arts? We can have that debate on the arts, but it has nothing to do with COVID–19. We have the highest deficit, as a share of GDP, since World War II—the highest debt as a share of GDP. You know, I don't think we should be spending that kind of money on things that don't relate to COVID–19.

Beyond these kinds of unrelated provisions, there are also proposals in this stimulus that are directed at important issues, but, based on what is needed to respond to the current challenges, are simply unnecessary and add up to more wasteful spending.

For example, we reached a point in this pandemic where the CDC, or the Centers for Disease Control, has said that schools can start to open safely with the right measures in place—thank goodness. We want to get our kids back to school. That should be a cause for celebration. But the plan here, the $1.9 trillion, doesn't reflect those findings. Last year, we appropriated $113 billion for schools to help navigate the pandemic, but, as of now, of that $113 billion, only $15 billion has been spent. So, roughly, $100 billion is left over from last year with regard to schools.

If we are already opening classes safely with that amount, why does this $1.9 trillion plan instead call for an additional investment of $130 billion in our schools, but especially when we are told that most of that $130 billion will not be spent in this calendar year? Nobody thinks that next year, at this time, we are going to have the crisis we have now, and yet the $130 billion of new money will not be spent until the end of 2028.

By the way, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that about half of the funds in the entire proposal won't even be spent in this calendar year. That is their analysis—objective, nonpartisan. No one expects, again, that we will be in this crisis at that time. So it just doesn't seem to make sense to me.

There are other provisions in this bill that seem to actually take solutions we have come up with in the past COVID–19 package and make them worse. Unemployment insurance is a good example. Republicans and Democrats alike believe there needs to be

some expanded help in terms of those who have been hit hardest by the pandemic and have lost a job, and the last bipartisan spending agreement reflected that consensus. But now, after finally reaching an agreement on expanded unemployment insurance, one that got people the help they need without creating a disincentive to work, Democrats want to jam through another UI proposal that increases the $300 per week that we just agreed to in December to $400 a week. Now, again, that is in the context of the healthcare crisis getting better and the economy getting better and the unemployment numbers going down that we are going to put more into unemployment insurance.

That creates a problem because it will mean if you go up to $400 a week, then more than half of the workers on unemployment insurance will be earning more on unemployment than they would staying employed. We want to get people back to work. That is what we all should want, at least. So why would you do that? We shouldn't want that. It is going to result in fewer people getting to work as unemployment continues to go down, as the vaccines are more widely available. That is the opposite of what we should want.

At the same time, a new provision in this bill would allow employees who are Federal employees to take 600 hours of taxpayer-funded emergency leave this fiscal year. To put that in perspective, 600 hours is about half of the total number of working hours remaining in this fiscal year.

There are plenty of problems with the way this plan is written. To give you one example, a Federal employee with children in school would be eligible for this leave program as long as the school is offering a remote learning option, even if the kids are going to the classroom every day for in-person learning. Federal employees would also be eligible for this leave if they are feeling unwell, even if they don't have COVID–19, and with no oversight, no doctor's note, and no supervisory approval.

This is far beyond the responsible bipartisan family leave proposal we did include, because we should have, in the Family First Coronavirus Response Act, which offered 80 hours of sick leave, about one-seventh of the time off in this new proposal, and which applies to millions of private and public sector employees, in addition to the Federal employees who are only covered by this new proposal.

When none of us knew exactly how long we would be faced with the COVID–19 crisis, we decided, on a bipartisan basis, that 80 hours was sufficient. But now that we have this new proposal, at seven times that leave with no test necessary, it is at a time when we are actually turning the tide on this virus, and we all acknowledge that. When more of us are being tested and vaccinated, our numbers are going down—thank goodness—and we have a much better understanding of the dangers of COVID–19. So why does this make sense?

Furthermore, Federal jobs are pretty secure. Why should taxpayers pay for Federal employees to get 600 hours of leave when private sector employees are suffering more job losses than the public sector? It hardly seems like a good use of taxpayer dollars. It is also disappointing in this bill, which all of us are expected to vote on here in the coming days, because the end result is so different than the last five. As I said, the last five times, we put it together in a bipartisan basis.

The process has been frustrating, and I know many colleagues who were part of the group of five Republicans and five Democrats agree with that. We are, in effect, for the sake of expediency and partisan victory, forgetting about thoughtful policy and bipartisanship.

We have to show that we have enough Republicans to work with Democrats to get this done. I understand that. That is why 10 of us went down to the White House, because along with 50 Democrats, that would be 60, which is the magic number needed. But there is more than 10 Republicans who want to work with Democrats. There have been every time we have taken this up over the past year.

We proposed the $618 billion counterproposal that shares a lot of common ground with the Biden plan—not $1.9 trillion but $618 billion. Again, we take care of all the healthcare response to the virus. This is in the Biden plan. We have a similar approach on stimulus checks: Make it a little more targeted, which everyone, I think, agrees is a good idea.

Again, with regard to schools, we don't waste the money, which we talked about earlier, but we would be focused on getting kids back to school. The main difference in our bill is we take a more targeted approach to address the most urgent healthcare and economic needs.

We heed the advice of prominent Democratic economist Larry Summers and so many others who have now said that the $1.9 trillion Biden stimulus is not just wasting taxpayer money; it risks overheating an already recovering economy, leading to higher inflation, hurting middle-class families, and threatening long-term growth.

But rather than the counterproposal leading to this productive type of bipartisan negotiations we had last year, this time we have been told Democrats want to go it alone.

We will keep talking to the President's people. We will keep talking to Democrats in Congress, hoping they will follow through on the campaign message and the inaugural promise because that is what we should be doing as a Congress, not just on this issue but so many other issues as well. We shouldn't be going it alone.

Reconciliation has allowed Democrats to take what is essentially a ''my way or the highway'' approach to a response package that would be among the most expensive pieces of legislation in our country's history. As a result, dozens of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle are being shut out of providing their input on this bill, and we are going to be left with a partisan bill that fails to meet the most urgent and pressing needs.

In fact, because all of these unrelated spending measures we talked about and others are directed toward traditional Democratic constituencies, I would argue that this bill has not just been my way or the highway, but it has been my way and the highway.

The bottom line is, at the end of the road of this reconciliation process, we will have a bill that underdelivers in many respects and is overpriced, and that is sad to me. It didn't have to be this way. Again, we have done it before five times together, made it inclusive, listened to each other to come up with a bipartisan result. Let's put a stop to this runaway train that is going to add to the deficit unnecessarily and put a damper on the prospects for the bipartisanship promised by this new administration.

Wanting to heal the wounds is something all of us should want. Wanting to work together is something all of us should want. Getting back to an era where we actually sit down, debate things, work them out, and help bring the country together is something all of us should want.

I agree with what President Biden said in his campaign and the inaugural address about the need for unity. Let's do it. Let's not have rhetoric; let's have action.

We can work together to get this done. We won't get there if we continue to operate like this. It hurts not just our new President and his hopes for getting things done; it hurts the country and the ability for us to continue to work together to deal with this crisis and get back to a more normal life.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Florida.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 88

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Madam President, America is in crisis. Today, the Federal debt sits at a staggering $27 trillion, and it has grown by more than $4 trillion in just the last year. Now, Congress is debating whether to spend another $1.9 trillion, raising our debt to nearly $30 trillion.

Less than 10 percent of this massive $1.9 trillion package actually goes directly to COVID relief, and just 1 percent is dedicated to vaccine-related programs. The rest is filled with wasteful liberal priorities.

Speaker PELOSI and Leader SCHUMER, bridges and tunnels have no business being included in a COVID relief bill. It is shameful. Only in Washington can people throw these numbers and ideas