down, by insisting on a filibuster, only to be stopped by an extraordinary majority of the Senate voting to return to the regular business.

That was the case in 1957 because, in August of 1957, Senator Strom Thurmond took to the floor of this U.S. Senate and initiated the longest filibuster in its history. For 24 hours and 18 minutes, the man stood by his desk and spoke without stopping. He didn't have any permission to leave the floor for any reason and certainly couldn't sit down without losing his filibuster. He did it. He did it for the wrong reason, I am afraid, because he was trying to stop the march of civil rights in this country, but he did it. Determinedly, he achieved that goal.

When he did, in 1957, that was the broken fifth filibuster in the history of the Senate in the previous five decades. In other words, if you went back to 1919 and all the way to 1957, Strom Thurmond's was the fifth time in history a filibuster was broken. Once every decade, a filibuster was broken on the Senate floor.

Well, that world has changed—dramatically changed. We can now have five filibusters in a couple of weeks. We now have, on average, 80 filibusters a year because of the urging and direction of the Senator from Kentucky, Senator MCCONNELL. He has institutionalized the filibuster to the point where it is now the normal course of business, not an extraordinary procedure.

I recounted the fact that I introduced the DREAM Act 20 years ago—20 years ago. DURBIN, what kind of a Senator are you that in 20 years you can't pass the DREAM Act? Well, I brought it to the Senate floor on five different occasions, and on five different occasions it was stopped by the filibuster. Other Members can tell the story of their legislative experience on the floor too.

The point I am getting to is this: It wasn't until Senator MCCONNELL and the Republicans who follow him decided to make the filibuster just daily business in the Senate that it was abused to the point where the Senate stopped doing regular legislative business.

I would like Senator MCCONNELL to come to the floor the next opportunity he has and explain this to me. In the last calendar year, 2020, the Senate considered 29 amendments on the floor of the Senate in the entire year. Now, that doesn't count a vote-arama, which is an aberration that I don't think would ever be accused of being deliberative. But 29 regular-order amendments during the course of a year—embarrassing, isn't it? When you think of this great so-called debating society, 29 times we brought an amendment to the floor? Well, it was an improvement—an improvement over the previous year, a 30-percent improvement, in fact—because in the year 2019, under Senator MCCONNELL's leadership, we had 22 amendments.

So when Senator MCCONNELL and others come to the floor and plead for us to hang on to the traditions of the Senate, I would tell you that their interpretation of the traditions is strangling this body. They have beaten the old filibuster to the point where it is hardly recognizable and is now the regular order of business in the U.S. Senate.

That is why many of us, frustrated with having worked so hard to come here, wanting to do the best we can to represent the people who have sent us here, are so frustrated by the current state of procedure. And for Senator MCCONNELL and other Republicans to come to the floor and plead for hanging on to this tradition is actually pleading for the Senate to continue to do less and less each year.

There are those of us now in control on the majority side—the bare majority side—on the Democratic side, who really believe there is much more to be done in the Senate. The American people expect us to respond.

Now, you might ask: Well, how did you pass the American Rescue Plan if there is a filibuster used so frequently? It was under a process called reconciliation, which depends on a majority vote. You can't filibuster under the reconciliation. That is why this amazing bill, this new law, the American Rescue Plan by President Biden, is so sweeping in its reach. We had to try to combine, under this law, so many provisions that had been affected by the pandemic and the state of the economy because we knew that returning to the regular order of business with the filibuster looming every single day would tie our hands just as sure as we have seen in the past several years.

So, Senator MCCONNELL, thank you for mentioning my name, but if I became skeptical of the filibuster, it is because of your use of it. I hope that you understand that you can't have it both ways. It can't be a rare procedure and be a procedure that dominates the actual business of the Senate as this has done for so many years.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. President, last year I came to the floor on multiple occasions to ask consent for a simple, sensible resolution. It called for the United States to cooperate in global efforts to address the COVID pandemic. At that time, that point was obvious, and it is even more obvious today.

Pandemics don't respect borders. None of us is safe from highly infectious diseases until all of us are safe. That is especially important to keep in mind as we begin to turn a corner here in America.

Last week, during his first address to the Nation, President Biden announced that all adults in America over the age of 18 will be eligible for vaccinations on May 1 of this year. If all goes to plan, we can look forward, as President Biden mentioned, to a Fourth of July with family and close friends at a close distance.

Considering what they inherited, the Biden administration deserves credit for dramatically scaling up vaccinations in America. The administration helped to strike a historic partnership between rival drugmakers, ramped up manufacture of the vaccine, and improved coordination with State officials everywhere.

We are seeing a world of difference that this makes. When you put competent, qualified leadership in charge in the White House and in State capitols, good things happen. Our weekly vaccine shipments in Illinois have nearly doubled. The Federal Government has erected a mass vaccination site at the United Center in Chicago. It has also supported partnerships with community health centers and retail pharmacies to expand access to vaccines. A cautious hopefulness is washing over America, but we can't lose momentum in our fight against COVID.

To put this pandemic really behind us and to bury it in history, we need to lend a hand to the many poor nations that have yet to receive a single dose of vaccine. The inequities are stark. Ten countries have accounted for 75 percent of the total vaccinations administered worldwide, while approximately 100 countries have yet to administer any vaccine doses. This dangerous shortfall has the potential to undermine the good work that is happening here in America. Closing this gap is not only the right and moral thing to do, it is the safest and smartest thing to do to stop the threat COVID, and its increasingly contagious variants, pose to us all.

Remember back a little over a year ago, an obscure city in China generated a virus—we think they did—that ended up circling the world many times over and changing life on this planet.

Last month, I received a briefing from Dr. Fauci on the new genetic mutations of COVID–19. He shared troubling news about variants that are emerging in the United Kingdom, South Africa, and Brazil. Some of them may have more resistance to our current vaccines than we care to see. He warned that if we fail to stamp out the virus globally, then we will continue to see risks within our own borders. Variants of the virus could counteract the tremendous progress we have made and the progress that we are poised to make in the near future.

As I said at the outset, viruses don't recognize borders. Crushing the virus in other countries is a strategic investment in our own national safety and security. President Biden understands this. He is serious about addressing the virus first in America and then around the world. He has set us on a pace to vaccinate all eligible Americans over the course of the next several months.

Let me urge those who are hesitant or skeptical as to whether it is the right thing to do, do it, please—for yourself, for those you love, and for this Nation.

President Biden wisely halted President Trump's withdrawal from the World Health Organization. He joined

the global COVAX vaccine effort, and he allocated significant funding toward global vaccination efforts, funding that is expanded under the American Rescue Plan, which we passed just a few weeks ago in the Senate.

Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen recently announced that the United States will support the issuance of special drawing rights, a type of IMF foreign exchange reserve that can help poor countries buy vaccines and weather the economic fallout from the pandemic, a welcome move that I encouraged and was a coauthor of with Senator SANDERS and Congressman ''CHUY'' GARCÍA.

Just last week, the President announced a partnership with key allies in the Pacific region to provide at least 1 billion COVID vaccines in countries in Asia. This is prescient, global leadership long overdue. The President's actions will save lives here at home and abroad, and these investments will fuel a global economic recovery, which we all want to see.

To understand why a global strategy is called for, look at history. Some of you who are witnessing this statement on the floor at home may be old enough to have a distinct circular scar on your upper arm. Maybe you have seen it on the arms of a parent or grandparent. That mark is a relic from one of the world's greatest public health victories: the eradication of the deadly smallpox virus.

The fact that so few people living today remember the death and misery caused by that disease is a testament to the global public health strategy that stopped it. Smallpox was one of the most devastating diseases to afflict mankind. It is estimated to have killed up to 300 million people in the 20th century, 500 million people in the last hundred years.

In 1967, the World Health Organization launched a historic international effort to eradicate it. It was one of the most successful public health initiatives in human history. Next month marks the 41st anniversary of that historic achievement.

In the years since, America has led similar global efforts to stamp out diseases like polio and Ebola. If we follow in these footsteps, historians will one day add COVID to the top of that list of historic achievements.

Pursuing a global strategy is the most effective way—maybe the only way—to accelerate vaccine production and distribution in every corner of the world. By sharing our wealth of knowledge and resources with the world, we reap lifesaving benefits, not just around the world but right here at home.

We all know public health is bigger than partisanship and always has been. In the 2000s, for example, I called on then-President Bush to help stem the scourge of AIDS around the world through the historic PEPFAR Program. At the time, many of my Republican friends in the Senate supported it. I hope and expect that they will do the same when it comes to supporting the global effort against COVID–19. The moment calls for nothing less.

Public health experts understand that. President Biden understands that. I know we here in Congress understand that. We can end the threat of COVID once and for all. It is within our power.

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

Mr. President, let me start this statement by saying I am a fan of the U.S. Postal Service. I have been throughout my life. I believe the men and women who make the Postal Service work do a great service to this country and distinguish us from many countries in the world that don't have anything near our service or reliability in delivering the mail. Having said that, and believe it to my inner being, the Postal Service needs to take a hard look at what is going on within their ranks today.

Last month, the U.S. Postal Service Great Lakes area sent out the postal equivalent of an SOS. It put out the call to mail carriers in five surrounding States asking for letter carriers to come to my State of Illinois to help deliver a huge backlog of undelivered mail. It also called for mail carriers to help deliver Chicago's mail on Sundays.

Ken Labbe is one of the mail carriers who answered that call for help. Mr. Labbe has been a mail carrier in Mount Prospect, IL, just outside of Chicago, for 28 years. He is the president of the local letter carriers union. He is also quite an athlete. In 2002, he was the only male mail carrier on the USPS-sponsored professional cycling team.

He volunteered for the last Sunday in February. He figured he had the knowledge and endurance to help reduce the mail backlog that had plagued the Postal Service in Chicago. What he discovered, he said, stunned him. At every home he delivered to, he stuffed 20 to 30 pieces of mail in the mailbox. He worked 12 hours on that Sunday, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., sunup to sundown, without a break, even for lunch. Still, he couldn't complete the assigned workload; the sheer volume of backlogged mail was too great. Inside the local post office, Ken said, he found packages stacked everywhere. Some appeared to have been there for a month or more. The entire situation looked, in his words, ''like an episode of 'Extreme Hoarders.''' ''A crisis.''

Chicagoland is not the only postal chaos location. Nearly 9 months after a new Postmaster General unveiled his surprise reorganization plan, postal service in much of the Nation is erratic. Delays are longer than ever.

The delivery times have shrunk to historic lows since Louis DeJoy took over last June. At the end of December, the Agency had an on-time rate of 38 percent for nonlocal mail. What was it 1 year earlier? Ninety-two percent. A 92-percent on-time rate descended to 38 percent under Postmaster General DeJoy.

Before Louis DeJoy took over, 91 percent of Postal Service customers gave USPS high marks—one of the highest approval ratings of any government Agency. Today, postal customers across America—certainly in my State of Illinois—customers wait anxiously for important checks and bills that arrive weeks late, if at all. They check tracking websites to search for delayed packages, only to read that the package is ''out for delivery.''

In some neighborhoods in Chicago, residents have given up hope of receiving mail at home. They stand in line for hours at the local post office to try to retrieve their mail themselves. Often, even that doesn't work.

Tracey Otis is one of those people. One day last month, she was one of 40 customers—40—waiting in line at the Postal Service station in the Gresham neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago. Ms. Otis hadn't had regular mail delivery since Christmas. She waited in line for hours, hoping to retrieve a package of diabetic test strips before her current supply ran out. She told a Chicago Sun-Times reporter that she would volunteer to sort the mail if it would help. She went home empty-handed that day, still not sure where her package was or when, if ever, she might see it.

Last month, my staff in Chicago estimated that there might be 300 pieces of mail sitting undelivered in four Chicago postal facilities. We based that on the number of complaints we received in our office. After that, the Postal Inspector General released a report that showed we were wrong. There weren't 300 letters in postal limbo in these facilities; there were 19,000 undelivered pieces of mail in those four facilities.

Since then, in my State, the chaos has stretched way beyond Chicago. We hear from all over the State: Springfield, Champaign-Urbana, Belleville, East St. Louis, Quincy, Peoria, the Quad Cities, and Rockford. These delays in Illinois and across America are causing real hardship for tens of millions of Americans waiting for mail delivery. Patients and pharmacists complain about late medication. People are getting dinged for late mortgage and utility payments and forced to pay late fees. Insurance policies are being canceled because of late payments. Small business owners are forced to wait weeks or months for payments. Others are flooded with calls and emails from customers wondering where their packages are—a good way to lose business.

Who is Louis DeJoy, the mastermind of this mess? Did he come through the ranks of the Postal Service, like four Postmasters General before him? No. His qualifications? He is a former logistics executive who donated millions of dollars to Donald Trump and the Republicans—no experience working at the Postal Service before Donald Trump tapped him to head this Agency last June.

One month later, in the middle of a pandemic that turned postal deliveries