into a lifeline for many, Mr. DeJoy unveiled a radical plan to reorganize the Postal Service, after only 1 month in the job and no experience in the Department. He slashed overtime hours, prohibited late and extra mail delivery trips, and set stricter delivery schedules.

In August, with no public explanation, the Postal Service began removing mail-sorting machines from postal facilities around the country, reducing their ability to process mail. Amazingly, the Postal Service Inspector General determined that the changes were ordered with no analysis and no understanding of how they might affect timeliness of mail delivery. A Federal lawsuit forced the Agency to put the changes on hold until after the election.

On February 6, Mr. DeJoy was quoted in the Washington Post saying that his new plan for reorganizing the Postal Service would be ready for public release ''as early as next week.'' He said that on February 6. We are still waiting for it, waiting for the DeJoy plan to shape up the Postal Service. It is like waiting for a lost package.

We know some of the biggest changes he intends to propose because he has confirmed them publicly. The DeJoy plan for shaping up the post office is expected to call for the following: more service cuts, higher prices, and slower mail delivery. If that sounds like a winning combination to you, I have some vintage computers to sell to your business. In short, this is not a solution; this is sabotage of an essential public service, and we shouldn't tolerate it.

Well, America has a new President who understands that affordable, efficient postal service is essential to America. Five days after taking office, President Biden replaced the Chair of the Postal Regulatory Commission. Late last month, he filled three vacancies of the Postal Service Board of Governors, the body that hires the Postmaster General and oversees the Postal Service.

I encourage President Biden to make all the changes necessary to rescue the Postal Service. Mr. DeJoy has offered a stream of excuses for the chaos that has fallen the Postal Service since he showed up. He says it is the pandemic, the Christmas holidays, bad weather, an election that saw a record number of Americans vote by mail. He has a list as long as your arm.

I would remind him that in 1864, we held a national election in the middle of a Civil War, and 150,000 Union Army troops voted absentee from the field. The Postal Service is as old as America itself. It has proven that it can adapt to crises with the right leadership. If Mr. DeJoy cannot or will not provide that leadership, I respectfully suggest he step down.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NOMINATION OF ISABELLA CASILLAS GUZMAN

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise in support of Isabella Guzman, currently the director of California's Office of the Small Business Advocate—the Presiding Officer's State—to be the Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration.

We all know the importance of small businesses and how they have been hit so hard during this pandemic. Small businesses employ nearly half of all private sector workers and make outsized contributions to the innovation that makes America's economy strong. Yet the coronavirus has put millions of people out of business, hundreds of thousands of these mom-and-pop, brick-and-mortar retail shops out of business, and restaurants out of business.

We are so pleased that there is, as we say in Minnesota, a lighthouse that we are looking to now. I was up in Duluth on Sunday, and instead of the light at the end of the tunnel, which so many of us talk about with regard to the end of this pandemic, the mayor there referred to it as a lighthouse, for they have a lot of lighthouses on Lake Superior. The end of this pandemic is our lighthouse. We see the blinking lights from a distance, but we know we are not there yet. To get there, we not only need to get this vaccine to every person—and the President has said we will have vaccines available by the end of May for every adult in America—but we have to get it distributed, and our pandemic bill certainly is going to be a major step toward getting that done.

We also need to get our business economy back in order. We need to be able to not be so far down in the ground that we can't climb out of where we are. That is why having Ms. Guzman in place—someone with her record and her ability to lead and who served as the Deputy Chief of Staff and as the Senior Adviser at the Small Business Administration during the Obama administration—is so important.

She will oversee the Paycheck Protection Program, which we established on a bipartisan basis in March of 2020 as part of the CARES Act, as she understands the need for greater equity in loan distribution and has shown a commitment to transparency and accurate loan data. She has made clear that she will make the Paycheck Protection Program more accessible to businesses that have traditionally not had access to the banking relationships needed to secure loans and grants.

Very significantly to me and to those of us who worked on the Save our Stages bill, including Senator CORNYN of Texas, who led the bill with me, she has made clear that she will move on the grant program immediately. We have been working with the staff there, and we have given these venues that have been shuttered—the first to close and the last to reopen—the ability to access PPP loans, which is really important right now. We also want to get the grant program out immediately—get that money out—and distribute over $16 billion in grants. Our venues can't wait. They need that relief. Ms. Guzman will be key to leading our way out of this and helping Senator SCHUMER with his theaters in New York to the Fargo Theatre in North Dakota. We need to get this done.

We just passed restaurant relief as part of the American Rescue Plan—a major, major bill—with the $28.6 billion Restaurant Revitalization Fund, which is going to be so key. I was at The Block Food & Drink restaurant in Saint Louis Park on Sunday and then headed up to Duluth, to the Boat Club, with the mayor and the owners of the Boat Club. There were stories I heard of servers who had been laid off, then came back, laid off, then came back, and there were stories I heard about the owners of some of these restaurants in their taking out repeated loans. They are hanging in there, and we need to have their backs.

One out of six restaurants in this country has permanently closed down during the pandemic. As the leader of the antitrust subcommittee in the Senate, we don't want to just give all of our food service and action in the restaurant area to the big guys. We are pleased we have successful restaurant chains in this country, but that can't be the only thing we have. That is why helping these smaller venues is so important.

Ms. Guzman gets that. She is a lifelong proponent of small businesses and is the daughter of a small business owner. As a former entrepreneur, this makes her the right person for this job at a pivotal time in the life of our country. She has the backing of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and numerous trade organizations. I know her leadership at the SBA will put our struggling businesses in the best hands.

I ask my colleagues to support the nomination of Isabella Guzman to be Administrator of the Small Business Administration. The Presiding Officer must be proud to have someone who has done such good work in California in this job. We are excited about her and what she can do.

NOMINATION OF XAVIER BECERRA

Mr. President, today, I rise to speak in support of Xavier Becerra's nomination to serve as Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Attorney General Becerra will bring a fresh perspective to HHS at a critical time during this pandemic. While there is light at the end of the tunnel with the distribution of the coronavirus vaccines, there is still work to do to end this pandemic and put our country on a road to recovery, and that is where Attorney General Becerra's leadership will be crucial.

Attorney General Becerra's 12 terms in the U.S. House of Representatives gave him a solid foundation in knowing how to set agendas and achieve results, which we saw deployed in his work as a key leader on the Committee on Ways and Means, ranking member of the Subcommittee on Social Security, and chair of the House Democratic Caucus.

He helped to expand the Children's Health Insurance Program, modernize and strengthen Medicare, and helped pass the Affordable Care Act. His commitment to the letter and spirit of this law is something he carried into his role as California Attorney General, fighting to maintain his State's ability to bring millions of previously uninsured residents under the ACA's umbrella.

Last November, he led the defense of the Affordable Care Act in the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of 20 States and the District of Columbia. His tweet after the oral arguments concisely sums up the national importance of his effort: ''The ACA saves lives. It is the law of the land.'' He brings a strong commitment to using the law and regulatory tools to make access to health care and other vital services equitable—the very thing that makes our nation strong.

I look forward to working with him on ensuring that everyone has access to quality and affordable healthcare, and I know he will be a partner in the fight against the coronavirus and our goal of getting all eligible Americans vaccinated, even in hard-to-reach areas.

Last week, President Biden signed into law the American Rescue Plan Act, which included major funding to address the Nation's worsening mental health and addiction crisis. This is a high priority of mine and an issue with which Attorney General Becerra has firsthand experience. He started his career as a legal aid attorney in Massachusetts, supporting clients contending with mental health issues. I am eager to work with him on this issue.

Addressing the skyrocketing costs of prescription drugs is another area where Attorney General Becerra has shown key leadership. He and I share a belief that fairer competition means increased access to affordable prescription drugs and better public health. As California Attorney General, he investigated and brought enforcement actions against drug manufacturers' anticompetitive business practices to help reduce drug prices and ensure that people have access to the drugs they need. In March 2020, he led a bipartisan group of 46 State attorneys general who successfully advocated before the U.S. Supreme Court to uphold the rights of States to regulate and address the rising cost of prescription drugs.

The United States must do more to ensure that new technologies have appropriate privacy and security protections for health data. At a September 2020 hearing on the need for Federal data privacy legislation, Attorney General Becerra told me and other members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation that ''every consumer should be able to own and control his or her data'' and that ''if we decide that we don't want anyone to use [our data], it's our choosing.'' His testimony was reassuring, and I look forward to working with him to ensure consumers can have peace of mind when it comes to the security of their personal health data.

Given the pandemic' s spotlight on the vulnerability of our Nation's seniors, I am eager to work with the Biden administration to improve the safety and well-being of older Americans. When my 92-year-old dad, living in a memory care facility, was diagnosed with COVID–19 last year, I was only able to visit him through a window. He recognized me, but he just didn't understand why we couldn't be in the same room together. Tens of thousands of families have been through these wrenching situations over the past year and want to see the Federal Government doing more. Attorney General Becerra recently moved to make the California Department of Justice Medicaid Fraud Control Unit a full-fledged division, underscoring his commitment to protecting seniors and people with disabilities. I know his leadership will place the needs of seniors front and center.

Attorney General Becerra has the expertise and experience and the enforcement and regulatory savvy to handle the job of protecting public health, strengthening our hospitals and health care system, making sure people have access to quality, affordable health care, and supporting our health care workers. And as the first Latino to lead the Department of Health and Human Services, he will bring a personal understanding of the immediate need for equitable access to care.

With that, I ask my colleagues to support the nomination: Xavier Becerra as Secretary of Health and Human Services. Thank you.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to finish my remarks before we vote.

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

NOMINATION OF ISABELLA CASILLAS GUZMAN

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise to voice my strong support for Isabella Guzman's nomination to serve as Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

Our Nation passed the 1-year mark of COVID–19's being declared a national emergency last Saturday, March 13, and, thankfully, the American people can now see the light at the end of the tunnel. Already, more than 20 percent of all Americans have received at least one COVID–19 vaccine dose, with an average of more than 2.39 million additional doses being administered each day. We can see the light at the end of the tunnel, but we are not there yet.

The COVID–19 pandemic has decimated American small businesses, and the worst effects have been felt by the most vulnerable small businesses, especially those in Black, Latino, Native, and rural communities, so the SBA must continue to be a lifeline in the coming months. That is why it is important that we confirm Ms. Guzman's nomination, so she can provide the permanent, steady leadership the SBA needs right now.

When we passed the CARES Act, Congress tasked the SBA with one of the most important aspects of our COVID–19 relief effort. We knew we had to support our small businesses because the public health restrictions on public gatherings, which have saved thousands of lives and kept our communities safe, have been especially challenging for small businesses. We had to help small businesses so that, when we get out of this pandemic, when our economy returns, our small businesses will emerge in a position to help our economy recover and continue to grow.

The CARES Act included $377 billion in funds for small businesses and created the Paycheck Protection Program, the EIDL advance program, and the small business debt relief program to help small businesses that had traditional SBA loans, like the 7(a) and 504. In April, we passed legislation to replenish the PPP, EIDL, and the EIDL advance grant program with $370 billion in additional funds. Then, in December, we passed the bipartisan Economic Aid Act to provide another $325 billion to support small businesses, allow for second round PPP loans, and create the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant Program. In total last year, Congress appropriated more than $1 trillion to the SBA for COVID–19 relief programs.

Since the passage of the CARES Act, the SBA has approved more than 7.5 million PPP loans worth more than $687 billion and more than 3.7 million EIDL loans worth more than $200 billion. These loans and grants have saved millions of jobs and prevented millions of small businesses from closing their doors.

I want to thank the SBA personnel who have worked long hours, including nights and weekends, to implement these critical programs.

SBA still has a lot of work left to do. As I mentioned, the December bill created the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant Program, which we expect the SBA to open in the coming weeks.

SBA also has to open a new $28.6 billion grant program for restaurants and bars, which was created by the historic American Rescue Plan.