LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. WARREN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, and that upon the conclusion of my remarks, the Senate resume executive session, as under the previous order.

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

EVICTION MORATORIUM

Ms. WARREN. Madam President, almost exactly a year ago today, I stood here and called for Congress to take action to protect renters before the expiration of the eviction moratorium enacted during the early weeks of the pandemic.

Today, like a year ago, we are only hours away from a fully preventable housing crisis.

The CDC's eviction moratorium expires tonight at midnight, putting millions of families still recovering from the economic fallout of COVID–19 at risk for losing their homes, from losing the bedrock of their safety and stability.

Right now, more than 11 million renters report being behind on rent. That is one out of every seven renters. And people of color, who have been hit hardest by this pandemic, are disproportionately at risk. Nearly one-quarter of Black renters report being behind on rental payments.

Last year, Congress worked together to account for that staggering reality. We provided more than $45 billion in emergency rental assistance. That money is now finally getting into the hands of landlords around the country. It is helping families who lost jobs get caught up on the missed payments.

But the money is getting out too slowly. Some States and local governments opened their assistance programs only last month. Some hadn't spent a single dollar by the beginning of June.

Now that is starting to change. In June, States delivered more than $1.5 billion in emergency rental assistance. That money went to help nearly 300,000 households, but there are still billions of dollars to distribute and millions of families in need.

We have the tools, and we have the funding. What we need is the time.

Look, I agree that the eviction moratorium is not a long-term solution, but let me be very clear: it is the right short-term action. It is how we keep families safely in their homes while States deliver emergency aid. It is how we keep families who are starting to recover from the worst economic crisis of their lifetimes get back on their feet.

Millions of jobs have been lost, businesses are still shuttered, and childcare for too many families is still a patchwork of uncertainty. The recovery underway in this country is historic, and it will continue, but it has not yet reached every family.

But the need is not just economic. We are still in the throes of a public health emergency that is trending in the wrong direction. Cases of COVID–19 are rising. Hospitalizations and deaths are rising. The Delta variant is more contagious, threatening to spread faster among the half of the country that remains unvaccinated.

Needlessly evicting families would risk escalating our public health crisis. The CDC understood that reality when it issued an eviction moratorium in September. The Agency was clear, and I want to quote the language they used: ''Housing stability helps protect health.''

That's right. Research shows that moratoriums aid in reducing infections and deaths due to COVID–19. And research also shows that when eviction moratoriums expire, there is an associated increase in COVID–19 and mortality.

Yesterday, Congresswoman CORI BUSH sent Members of Congress a letter. Congresswoman BUSH has lived through eviction. She has been unhoused. And I want to quote her letter. She said:

> I know firsthand the trauma and devastation that comes with the violence of being evicted, and we have a responsibility to do everything we can to prevent this trauma from being inflicted on our neighbors and communities.

CORI BUSH is exactly right.

My office has heard from so many people in Massachusetts who are terrified about the possibility of losing their homes. I know that each of my colleagues here must be hearing these stories. In every State in this country there are families sitting around their kitchen table right now trying to figure out how to survive a devastating, disruptive, and unnecessary eviction.

Congress has a choice to make. It is a privilege for us to represent people, and we have a duty to exercise our power on their behalf. Every Senator in this Chamber should be grateful that they have the power right now to keep families safe.

My colleagues understood the stakes in March of 2020, when Congress passed the CARES Act eviction moratorium into law. They understood the stakes when we provided historic funding for emergency rental assistance. I urge them to join me now in continuing this lifesaving protection as States distribute assistance to keep renters housed; to keep landlords paid; and, most of all, to keep families safe.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume executive session.

Ms. WARREN. 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. WARNER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

H.R. 3684

Mr. WARNER. First of all, Madam President, let me thank you and all of the floor staff and others who are here. I think on a beautiful Saturday at the end of July, we all wish, perhaps, we were somewhere else other than on the floor of the Senate.

For the 30 years that I have been involved in political discussions in Virginia and some on an international level, we have had President after President and Congress after Congress talk about the generational unmet needs in infrastructure. We have seen our roads and bridges start to crumble. The estimates are that close to, depending on the survey, 14,000 bridges are in a decaying state, and in my State, over 700 bridges. We know the potholes in many of our roads and highways. We know our airports resemble third world nations, not the United States of America. We know our ports have not kept up with modern technology. We know that many of our shorelines are dealing with the unprecedented effects of sea level rise. We know after COVID that high-speed internet connectivity is not a nice-to-have but essential. It is something the Presiding Officer has taken a legislative lead on.

We know that it is time to get past talking about infrastructure and finally doing something. That is why I have been proud to be part of this bipartisan effort, working with the White House, to produce a historic piece of legislation, $550 billion of new spending over 5 years that in every category I just mentioned will make historic investments.

I have been a little surprised, to tell you the truth, that some of our colleagues on the other side who were not part of the bipartisan group have suddenly said: No, we can't do infrastructure now. They were all for it when President Trump was in; now they find excuses why not.

I have to also say I have been a little bit surprised even with some of my colleagues on my side of the aisle, when the deal that we have structured is literally twice as much as where the earlier negotiations were between President Biden and some of the Republican committee chairs—committee leaders.

There has been some sense of, well, you know, infrastructure—that shouldn't be that hard to do. If it wasn't hard to do, why has it taken us 30 years to get to this moment?

I hope—and I know we are finalizing the last couple pieces of legislative language—I hope that we will get that finished as soon as possible so we can get this bill on the floor, have amendments, have a debate, but at the end of the day, pass this historic legislation