

MR. STEVE SCAFFIDI: Joining us on the phone line is U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin. Good morning, Senator.

SENATOR TAMMY BALDWIN: Good morning.

MR. STEVE SCAFFIDI: So you're poised to vote this afternoon. Can you tell us, as much as you can, what's in this bill?

SENATOR TAMMY BALDWIN: Yeah, so we are still working on the house-passed legislation. I have to say, I'm disappointed that we didn't make quick business of that on Monday this week, but it appears to -- you know, have finished it on Monday would have required unanimous cooperation among every senator, and there are a couple who are insisting upon amendments. So right now, actually as we speak, there is an amendment being voted on the senate floor. I will be heading over there shortly.

And so the underlying coronavirus package that we are talking about, we're calling it COVID 2, the first having been legislative package (inaudible) development. This is the one that's focused on families and workers and small businesses, and what it urgently does is try to make sure that everybody who should stay home and socially isolate can do so without losing the paychecks; so that paid sick leave would be available to any worker, especially those who live paycheck to paycheck wouldn't have to choose between the paycheck and taking care of their own health and their families and co-workers. And that is probably the major aspect of that.

The second major aspect of that bill is free testing. So it doesn't mean that everybody needs to be tested. Obviously, they are focusing only on

a small number of folks who have symptoms and are recommended by their doctor for testing, but we don't want lack of insurance or somebody who's enrolled in a junk plan that doesn't cover anything or somebody who has a high deductible plan, we don't want that to be something that causes them not to seek testing for the coronavirus.

And so that is a big part of this bill, and there are several other major provisions as schools closed, for example, we want to make sure the children who rely on their schools for their one hot meal of the day are still going to be able to have access to nutritional assistance. And there are some provisions related to expansion of unemployment benefits.

MR. STEVE SCAFFIDI: What do you say of a couple key aspects of this response to coronavirus: one is, on the medical healthcare side -- not in the ability for people to get it, I think that will be fixed, they will be able to get the test and hopefully the treatment, but on the supplies that are needed by medical facilities across the country -- the ventilators, those types of things, will any of that be addressed in this bill or is that still a significant concern?

SENATOR TAMMY BALDWIN: It's still a very significant concern, and that is why we are not going to depart Washington or adjourn following what I hope will be the passage of COVID-2 this afternoon, but we are going to remain to work on a third package, which continues to deal with various aspects of this crisis. Particularly, the measures and steps we can take to keep people socially isolating, socially distancing, so that we don't peak with the infections and overwhelm the capacity of our medical system. And as we are nearing that just with regard to, say, personal protective equipment for healthcare providers, there are measures that both the president and the congress can take,

including releases from the strategic national stockpile of these items and increasingly looking to working with the military that also has a strategic stockpile of some of these items and trying to work as best we can to get them to deploy to the areas that are seeing these surges first.

MR. STEVE SCAFFIDI: We are talking to U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin.

I saw some images from San Francisco -- a city I used to live in quite a few years ago -- but my question is this: Do you think Americans are taking this seriously enough when it comes to social distancing, self-isolating if they have been traveling? Are we taking it seriously enough?

SENATOR TAMMY BALDWIN: We're getting there, but we're not there yet. I have heard a lot of reports, especially younger people who have listened to part of the science, which is they are likely to have a very mild case if they do indeed contract the virus; however, what I don't think has been communicated adequately is they can be carriers. Children and young adults can be carriers and will expose everyone around them to the coronavirus if they contract it. If they have, you know, elderly parents or grandparents, if you have others who are in vulnerable risk groups, we have to take all this seriously. And this is an event where everyone has a role to play.

MR. STEVE SCAFFIDI: Let me ask you this question -- I only have a minute or so left with you -- there's a primary election coming up in Wisconsin on April 7th, should that election be pushed back?

SENATOR TAMMY BALDWIN: You know, that will be a call for certainly state officials; not me, but my understanding is, having taken a look at what happened yesterday in the states that had elections, the state elections

board will be convening today and will be offering observations and recommendations. And, again, I think our decisions must be driven by the best public health expertise that we can get ahold of.

I do know that there are opportunities to vote early and to vote absentee, and people should seize those opportunities. I would highly recommend that everyone participate, but look into the ways that they can participate by minimizing their social interactions with others.

MR. STEVE SCAFFIDI: U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin, I know you have a busy afternoon and evening ahead of you, probably a busy next few weeks. Thanks for taking a few minutes.

SENATOR TAMMY BALDWIN: Thank you.