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**A country in crisis**

In his first 10 days in office, Joe Biden has launched an intense effort to address the “cascading crises” that America faces. In addition to issuing executive orders to reverse several of Trump’s most poisonous acts – ending federal contracting with private prisons, reviving enforcement of discrimination laws, ending the Muslim ban, re-entering the Paris Climate Accord, and much more – Biden has put forth a bold rescue plan to deal with the human and economic costs of the pandemic. He has declared climate change an existential threat and a national security priority and has promised a renewed effort to address systemic racism and other forms of discrimination.

The question now is whether he will continue to push forward against the resistance of Republicans in the House and Senate and the timidity of the establishment.

The first test is on the pandemic rescue plan. Biden’s $1.9 trillion plan is constructed to meet specific needs: a major public health drive to get Americans vaccinated and to ramp up testing and tracking and treatment; aid to Americans to counter the continuing economic distress caused by the pandemic with millions facing the end of federal support for unemployment; and emergency assistance to states and cities now facing devastating service cuts to deal with deficits that have exploded as their economies shut down and their revenues collapsed.

Republicans have denounced the Biden plan from the get-go. Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell has promised to filibuster against the plan, forcing it to pass with a super majority of 60 votes, or through budget reconciliation by a majority vote. Republicans warn against using reconciliation, saying that it would torpedo all efforts at bipartisan cooperation.

Bipartisan cooperation? Are they totally without memory or shame? These are the same Republican senators who used reconciliation to pass the Trump tax cuts that larded billions in tax breaks on the richest Americans. These are the same Republicans who went along with Trump’s lies, refusing to recognize that Biden won the election for weeks, and then voted against even holding a trial for Trump in the Senate after he was impeached for instigating the rioters who broke into the Capitol. Now suddenly, they have the nerve to question Biden’s commitment to working across the aisle.

Ten Republicans – only three of whom voted to support a Senate trial on Trump’s impeachment – have put forth what is billed as an alternative plan that would cost $600 billion. It isn’t designed to address what’s needed; it’s designed only to be less.

It contains no money for states and localities. That would lead to massive layoffs of police, firefighters, teachers, transit workers and drastic cuts in services in the midst of the pandemic.

Their plan would reduce the amount of support for Americans and reduce the number of Americans eligible for relief, despite the fact that Trump supported Biden’s $1,400 stimulus check figure and Democrats won the election campaigning on it.

Their plan would lower federal unemployment benefits and limit their extension to June. With a million people a week still filing for unemployment, and the bill unlikely to be passed until March, this will put at risk the millions still unable to find work because of the shutdowns caused by the coronavirus.

Their plan would drastically reduce the funds available for reopening schools safely, and for sustaining public transport in the midst of the crisis.

They offer no reason for these cuts other than complaining that the Biden plan is too expensive.

Somehow for ‘moderate Republicans’ it costs too much to aid working and poor people but never costs too much to lavish billions in tax benefits to fellow millionaires and billionaires.

Excerpted: ‘So-Called “Moderates” Always Say Helping the Poor Costs Too Much – But Their Lavish Gifts to the Rich Give Them Away’

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