

standard deduction and significantly increasing the child tax credit. We will eliminate loopholes that are primarily used by the wealthy while protecting incentives that benefit the middle class.

Our plan also reforms the Tax Code to provide relief to our Nation's small businesses and to make it easier to keep jobs here in America. In an increasingly competitive global economy, we are working to put American workers on a level playing field.

Above all, our goal is this. We want to take more money out of Washington's pockets and put more money into the pockets of the middle class in Kentucky and across our country.

This sounds like a place where we should all be able to agree—Republicans and Democrats alike. In fact, our friends on the other side of the aisle have often supported the idea of tax reform and bringing jobs back to America. I hope they will again in the course of this important effort. I hope they will not fall into blind partisanship and reject any collaboration simply because they don't like the President.

Instead, they can work with us in a serious way on an overhaul of the Tax Code that can truly help the people of Kentucky, help the people of their States, and help Americans all across the land.

I look forward to continuing to work with colleagues in Congress and the administration to pass a responsible budget and to deliver tax reform for the American workers and families, who deserve an economy that reaches its true potential once again.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. SCHUMER. First, Mr. President, a brief word on healthcare. Senators ALEXANDER and MURRAY continue to negotiate a bipartisan package of legislation to stabilize our healthcare markets and lower premiums, a process that began over the summer. From what I have heard, they are down to a few final issues and are hopefully close to an agreement that can be taken back to both of our caucuses. Congress ought to show, through the work started by Senators ALEXANDER and MURRAY way back in July, that Congress can work in a bipartisan way on healthcare, and we have no intention of

going along with President Trump's reckless sabotage of the Nation's healthcare law.

Last week, President Trump showed that he is willing to take a wrecking ball to our Nation's healthcare for the sake of politics without any regard to the people it would hurt: veterans, senior citizens, kids, and folks struggling to afford insurance. President Trump was so angry they couldn't repeal and replace, he instead said: I am going to wreck the system. The problem is, it hurts millions of innocent people all for pique and politics. He has shown he is willing to put at risk the healthcare of millions of Americans. President Trump's decision to end the cost-sharing program was an act of impulsive malice with no benefit and no end.

This seems to be his MO. He throws red meat to his rightwing base, whether it is on healthcare, immigration, Iran, or disaster aid. Then he says to Congress: You fix it up. That is not the way to lead. That is following. That is an act that exhibits no strength—no strength.

We want our President to be a strong leader. Every American does, regardless of ideology, but when the President plays so many political games that are not just harmless but that hurt people and then says to Congress to clean it up, blaming Congress for the mess he created, it doesn't work, it is not fair, it is not right, and it is the reason that, except for his base, President Trump's numbers keep sliding. They are flat now, and they are down below 40 percent. No President has had such low numbers. By the way, it is not helping the Republican Party. Numbers today show a record difference between whether people prefer Democrats or Republicans, so I would urge him to stop these harmful, almost malicious shenanigans and let us all work together for the good of our country.

On healthcare, we in Congress should continue to shore up the healthcare markets and lower premiums in a bipartisan way. We ought to reject the path of President Trump's sabotage and destruction and instead view a path of consensus and compromise. That is the way it has to go. No side wins everything they want. That is not how the Founding Fathers set up this country, otherwise we would be a dictatorship or a country without checks and balances. We ought to work together to improve our healthcare system, to lower costs for people, and to ensure that more people have access to health coverage. We Democrats have been pushing that for several months now.

I salute Senators ALEXANDER and MURRAY for understanding that. They have been in careful negotiations that represent the best first step forward on healthcare. I hope we hear more from them on the status of negotiations. I hope they can come to an agreement that includes curtailing the sabotage I spoke of that the President is doing. I hope Leader MCCONNELL and I can sup-

port this bill together, and then maybe even the House might pass it. The President has said, I think—we don't know, it changes from day to day—but I think the most recent pronouncement is that he might sign it.

TAX REFORM AND THE BUDGET

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on the GOP tax plan, as soon as today, we will vote on the motion to proceed to the GOP budget resolution, which includes instructions to increase the deficit by \$1.5 trillion, slash Medicare and Medicaid by \$1.5 trillion, and sets up, unfortunately for everybody, the same destructive, partisan process on taxes that the GOP used for healthcare called reconciliation. It says: We don't need you. We are just going to rush it through with our votes. It didn't work on healthcare. It is not going to work on this either.

Tax reform—if it is real reform—or even just tax cuts are very complicated. If you don't have the center coming together, everyone can pick it apart, and they are setting themselves up to do just that.

Although the Republican tax plan is little more than principles at the moment—and we have talked a lot about these principles of the Republican plan—it is so far away from what the American people want because of the process they have decided to use. When you don't want Democrats and use just Republicans, the people of the hard right—a minority in the Republican Party probably—can push the debate so far over because they say: We are not voting for this unless you do it our way. So we have a bill that really is so out of touch and harmful to all but the wealthiest Americans that it is hard to believe the Republicans are putting it forward with a straight face.

It is going to be the first time, my friends, that Republicans in Congress will vote to increase our Nation's deficit by \$1.5 trillion, which is spelled out as clear as day in the budget. I hope, given this dramatic increase in the deficit, all of the Republican deficit hawks are out of their nests for this one.

For the sake of ideological consistency, the same folks who decried debt and deficit under President Obama ought to denounce them under President Trump, but we haven't heard much of a peep from a whole lot of Republicans on this side with a few notable, brave, and leaderlike exceptions.

Here is what Representative WALKER, a conservative Member of the House, said, lamenting what was going on:

[The deficit is] a great talking point when you have an administration that is Democrat-led. It's a little different now that Republicans have both houses and the administration. There's been less talk about it this year with a Republican-led administration than there has been the last seven or eight years.

Representative WALKER is exactly accurate.

The Republican leader on May 16 told Bloomberg TV that tax reform “will have to be revenue neutral.” These are his words. That is a principle he has advanced for years.

We are not hearing much from Republicans about deficits now. Yet, I repeat, this budget instructs the committees to increase the deficit by \$1.5 trillion. It will be difficult for many of my Republican friends to say that they care about deficits and still vote for this budget.

The GOP budget resolution will also be the first time that my Republican colleagues vote to slash Medicare. The budget spells out over \$400 billion in Medicare cuts, as well as over \$1 trillion in Medicaid cuts—even more than the healthcare bill, and probably the No. 1 reason for its demise was that huge slash to Medicaid.

So it is going to be difficult for my Republican friends and this Republican Party to say that they want to protect Medicare and Medicaid and still vote for this budget. Unfortunately, this will not be the first time Republicans vote to advance a major piece of legislation—changes to our Tax Code—through a hyperpartisan process known as reconciliation. Reconciliation, as has just been documented in an article—I believe it was in Politico, but in one of our leading publications—was never intended for this type of purpose.

With this vote, though, Republicans are saying from the very outset that they don’t really want Democratic input on this bill because they are setting up a process in which they don’t really need Democratic votes. It is honestly a shame. And just as the partisan reconciliation process portended failure for the Republican healthcare bill, it is likely to portend failure here as well.

It is difficult to pass major legislation in the Senate, as it should be. That is what the Founding Fathers intended. That is the true conservatism of our government: checks and balances, no rush. It is even more difficult if you work only with the votes of one party. As I said, that allows a small few, usually on the hard right, to dictate what is in this bill.

My guess is that the vast majority of people here didn’t want to vote for Medicare and Medicaid cuts, but because they couldn’t get enough votes in the House to pass the budget without putting that in, because maybe 30 or 40 Members there insisted on it, it is in there. It is not going to serve you well. If anyone thinks it doesn’t have real effect, look at the PAYGO rules. This is not just the budget. PAYGO, after this budget passes, would insist on slashes in Medicare, 4 percent. That is the law; that is not a rule.

I hope that our colleagues will vote down this bill, and then I promise you, just as we are doing on healthcare, we can come together in a bipartisan way. That doesn’t mean you get everything you like. It probably means more of the tax cuts go to the middle class and

fewer to the wealthy, but there are lots of people on our side of the aisle who want to see small business get a tax cut, who want to see money from overseas come here and be used for jobs, and who want to see a middle-class tax break. We could come up with a bipartisan bill that would make, for the first time in a long time, this body shine.

The Republican Congress, at least at the moment on the path it is on, has abandoned the grand tradition of bipartisanship, working together, which has made this Chamber great through the decades and centuries.

When Republicans need Democratic votes, they come to us. The President and the leader have said: Come vote with us. Make it bipartisan. That is not what bipartisanship is. You don’t craft a bill just within your party and then say: Voting with us is bipartisan. Bipartisanship means you sit down together and you come out with a proposal that a majority of both parties can support. They are not doing that.

Republicans will spend the entire first year of this Congress trying to pass their major agendas through reconciliation or similar vehicles, first with CRAs, then healthcare, now taxes. The majority leader himself said in a speech, “Restoring the Senate,” in 2014 that “when the Senate is allowed to work the way it was designed to, it arrives at a result acceptable to people all along the political spectrum.” But if it’s an “assembly line for one party’s partisan legislative agenda,” it creates “instability and strife” rather than “good, stable law.”

The American people want to see us work together. We may not always succeed. It may not be easy, but we can try.

As I said—and I would say this to my colleagues—there are areas in which we can agree on taxes: Lower middle-class taxes; don’t raise them. Give some relief to small business. Try to bring the money from overseas and put it into infrastructure and job creation. We can work together, but not in this process and not with this awful bill, which favors the wealthy dramatically, raises taxes on the middle class, hurts the deficit—increases the deficit dramatically—and is a partisan process. I hope my Republican friends keep that in mind when they vote today. If you vote this down, I promise you that we will come together in a bipartisan way and work for something that actually could pass, instead of what happened with healthcare. Try it. Try it. Reconciliation—working with one party—failed miserably for you on healthcare, and now we are coming together. Let’s not repeat the same mistake on taxes.

OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY NOMINATION

Finally, Mr. President, I just heard that the nomination of Representative MARINO to lead the Office of National Drug Control Policy has been withdrawn. That is the right decision. The fact that he was nominated in the first place is evidence that the Trump ad-

ministration talks the talk but refuses to walk the walk. The bottom line is that this Congressman supported President Trump but is the wrong person for the job, and I am glad they saw it and withdrew.

I want to salute two of my colleagues who were way out in front on this: Senator MANCHIN, whose State has been ravaged by opioids, and Senator MCCASKILL, who has similar problems, particularly in rural areas, but all over. Senator MCCASKILL has legislation that I think would correct the kinds of ills we have seen in Representative MARINO’s proposals, and I hope that in a bipartisan way we can support them.

The opioid crisis demands that the next drug czar be solely focused on getting communities across the country the help they desperately need, and we hope the administration nominates someone who fits that bill so we can pass that nominee quickly and in a bipartisan way.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of David Joel Trachtenberg, of Virginia, to be a Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent all remaining time be yielded back.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Trachtenberg nomination?

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SHELBY).