

careers. We have heard so many speeches from the other side about deficit reduction. I think my colleagues were sincere. Why are they abandoning it now?

Every one of our colleagues knows that we could do a lot better job in a tax bill at reducing the deficit than we have here. From the very beginning, Democrats have told our Republican colleagues that we want to work with them on tax reform, we want to lower taxes on the middle class, we want to reduce burdens on small businesses, we want to erase the incentives that send jobs overseas and bring jobs back home, and we want to do all these things in a way that doesn't add to the deficit.

From the very beginning, Republicans have said to us: We are not interested in working with you. We are going to draft it ourselves and use reconciliation so we don't need your votes, and you can vote for our bill if you want.

That is not bipartisanship, what the Republican leadership has done.

I know there are some Republicans on the other side who wish we could work together. Well, we can. Today at 11 a.m., I think more than a dozen—certainly a large number of Democrats went to the Press Gallery and said: We want to work with our Republican colleagues to create a better bill.

They came and visited me last night. I encouraged them to do it. This leader—this leader—is not going to stand in the way of bipartisan reform that meets the goals we have talked about: helping the middle class, reducing the deficit, not unduly or in any way aiding the 1 percent.

Bipartisanship and compromise are very possible on tax reform. It is an issue crying out for a bipartisan solution. There are a lot of areas in which we agree. We have to work to find a middle ground that is acceptable to both parties. I daresay it would be a better bill for the American middle-class than the one we are looking at right now.

#### NOMINATION OF GREGORY KATSAS

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally and briefly, Mr. President, because I know my colleagues are waiting, on the Katsas nomination, the DC Circuit is often called the second most powerful court in the Nation because it adjudicates so many highly charged political issues, including cases that deal with the limits of Executive power and regulations issued by Federal agencies. As examples, major cases on climate regulations, the CFPB, and gun safety laws in the District of Columbia are now before that court. On such a court, we should prize independence and moderation and look warily at candidates with highly political backgrounds.

Unfortunately, Gregory Katsas has been intimately involved in a number of the most partisan and legally dubi-

ous Executive orders of the current administration. He was involved in the President's controversial travel ban, his decisions to terminate DACA, to end transgender service in the military, and to establish an election integrity commission based on the lie that 3.5 million people voted illegally in the last election.

His tenure and views in the Trump administration raise important questions about his independence and moderation, particularly on a court that will likely hear cases related to the very same issues he worked on in the White House. He appears to be another example of the Republican majority pushing judges from a political extreme of their party as a way of advancing their interests in lieu of a legislative agenda, which has floundered.

I will vote no on his nomination and urge all of my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

#### 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 Gregory G. Katsas, of Virginia, to be United States Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit.

#### RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 4 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:40 p.m., recessed until 4 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. STRANGE).

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there are 90 minutes of debate remaining on the Katsas nomination, equally divided between the leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

#### THE DEFICIT

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I want to address this body and talk about an issue that we do not talk about enough—the deficit. It is an issue that, for whatever reason, we have stopped talking about in Washington, DC. We talk about tax policy, which we should. We talk about disaster relief areas, which we should. We talk about healthcare policy, which we

should, and a lot of other things. We have stopped talking about the debt and deficit, and I think that is a mistake for us.

You see, after 2011, the trend moved from a high point. Deficit spending that year was \$1.3 trillion—overspending in a single year. After that point, the deficit went down a little bit each year until 2015. In 2016 our deficit number—that is a single year of overspending—started going back up. It went up in 2016, and it went up again in 2017. It is turning in the wrong direction. As you will recall and as many people in this body will recall, deficits were a major topic for us starting in 2010. Each year, Congress was trying to find ways to be able to reduce the deficit. That does not seem to be the issue anymore.

What I bring is a set of solutions and a set of ideas. How do we get out of this? Are there bipartisan solutions to actually deal with deficit overspending? There are priority things that we need to spend money on, and we should spend money on those things. Yet, as to the things that are nonessential for us and on which we might all find some way to agree that there is a better way to be able to spend our dollars, we should.

So this week I have produced our third annual "Federal Fumbles" book. We call it "100 ways the Federal Government has dropped the ball." None of these should be all that controversial, though we will not agree with all of them. But there are simple ways to look at what the Federal Government is doing, what it is not doing, where we are spending, where we are overspending, and where additional oversight is needed. There is no problem in this country that can't be solved, and, certainly, our deficit is an issue that can be solved. We just have to commit to each of us making the decision that this is actually important and that we are going to try to resolve this to try to get us back toward balance.

I have lumped all of these issues from this book back into a whole series of different process things because each one of the 100 things that we identify is not just a stand-alone; it is part of a bigger problem. So I have put them together into budget process reforms and grant process reforms, which allow for more transparency in how decisions are made and as to what decisions have been made. I would say, as well, that there are Senate rule changes that are going to be needed to be able to resolve any of these issues. We put together these four big blocks to be able to ask: What are we actually dealing with? Let me just give you a couple of ideas.

If we are going to actually deal with some of the budget issues, we are going to have to actually deal with the budget process. We are not going to get a better product until we get a better process. Since 1974, the Budget Act has only worked four times, and every year the American people have asked over and over: What just happened? How