

President Trump again suggested yesterday that a “shutdown could happen.” If a shutdown happens, as the President seemed to be rooting for in his tweet earlier this year, it will fall on his shoulders. His party controls the Senate, the House, and the Presidency.

Nobody here wants to see a shutdown. We Democrats are not interested in one. That is why we are working with our Republican colleagues in good faith to resolve all of the issues we have to solve before the end of the year, and it is in this spirit that Leader PELOSI and I will go to the White House this afternoon to discuss all of the issues before us.

It is no secret that one of the major sticking points—if not the major sticking point—in the negotiations is funding levels for programs that invest directly in economic growth and a social safety net for the middle class. Democrats are pushing for sorely needed funding to combat the opioid crisis, to shore up pension plans, to support veterans’ health, to relieve student loan debt, and build rural infrastructure.

Without a budget agreement that lifts spending caps on both defense and economic development in a fair and equitable manner, programs I have mentioned, and so many others—medical research comes to mind—could see their funding cut. Our veterans deserve better. People seeking recovery from opioid addiction deserve better. Hard-working pensioners deserve better. We must do both things—support the military and programs that create jobs and growth here at home—in equal measure. Both are very important.

I know there are some on the far right who say all the jobs programs and economic growth programs are unimportant, but most of us, Democrats and Republicans, believe both are important. The idea that both are important has been the basis of successful budget agreements going back several years, including the agreement we reached last April, where the military side and the domestic job, economic growth side were treated equally.

Unfortunately, it appears that the Freedom Caucus—a rather small bloc of hard-right House conservatives—is trying to derail another successful parity agreement. According to press reports, the Freedom Caucus is pushing for a very short-term extension of funding for jobs and economic development, while pushing for a long-term extension and a large increase for funding in defense. That is a ruse designed to slash funding for education, healthcare, infrastructure, and scientific research—all the things the Freedom Caucus, against the will of the overwhelming vast majority of Americans, doesn’t want the government to fund.

Make no mistake, the Freedom Caucus is gearing up to hurt the middle class on the budget, just like so many Republicans way beyond the Freedom Caucus did with their tax bill—just like on the tax bill. We Democrats are

going to defend the middle class because they need our help, too, and they have been forgotten by our Republican colleagues throughout the year, but this time, the Freedom Caucus’s actions, if they had their way, could lead to a disaster. Speaker RYAN must stand up and tell the Freedom Caucus, no, they cannot be allowed to hold hostage productive bipartisan budget negotiations with outrageous demands that hurt the middle class. If Speaker RYAN lets them have their way, it will cause a shutdown. It will be on the Freedom Caucus’ shoulders, Leader RYAN’s shoulders, and the President’s shoulders because such a bill could not pass either the House or the Senate—we are giving them fair warning right now—not right at the deadline.

DREAM ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, Mr. President, let me say a word about the Dream Act. Earlier this week, my friend, the senior Senator from Illinois, came to the floor to update the Senate on the progress he is making in his negotiations with Senate Republicans on an agreement that would provide a significant investment in border security in exchange for the Dream Act.

As I have said in the past, Democrats support real border security. We will be happy to join with Republicans to pass legislation to secure our border in exchange for the Dream Act. Those talks continue to make good progress. I hope we can reach an agreement soon.

SPECIAL COUNSEL MUELLER

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Mr. President, a word on the special counsel. Over the past few weeks, I have continued to hear Republican lawmakers and partisan media hosts attack the integrity of Special Counsel Mueller in a shameful display meant to undermine his investigation into the connections between the Trump campaign and Russia. Spuriously attacking Robert Mueller, one of the most respected and trusted civil servants in our country, is the surest route to losing all credibility.

I remind everyone on the right who are trying to muddy the waters on the Mueller investigation that Robert Mueller was a career prosecutor who has served both Republican and Democratic administrations in the most trusted of roles. He was appointed by President Trump’s own Deputy Attorney General. It defies credulity to lambaste him as partisan or biased. He is as straight a shooter as they come. This is bigger than one man. The attacks on Special Counsel Mueller and his investigation erode faith in the rule of law, that bedrock principle at the heart of our civic life.

If independent investigations into matters as grave as foreign interference in our elections succumb to intimidation and partisan slander, we will be no better than a third-world country. Rule of law will be gone, at

least for the President of the United States, which is something Americans have treasured for centuries. What has always defined American democracy is an unyielding faith in the rule of law—its power to check our people, as well as our Presidents. Special Counsel Mueller is the rule of law at work in our 21st century American democracy. Intentionally and spuriously impugning his integrity—not because he has done anything wrong but because they don’t like what he is doing; very partisan, very biased, very one-sided is their view—is not only inaccurate but damaging to a core ideal in our country—the independent and impartial rule of law. We must loudly reject the strident voices who engage in these attacks on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue.

REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, Mr. President, on the issue of taxes, with the passage of the Republican Senate bill last Friday, the Republican Party has shrugged off its history as the party of tax cuts and become the party of tax hikes on the middle class. The Republican tax bill will end up raising taxes on millions of middle-class families to pay for corporate welfare.

As our Republican colleagues march us toward an enormous corporate tax cut, we have seen numerous companies start to announce plans to buy back more of their stock—not build factories, not create jobs, but to buy back their stock, which, of course, benefits the CEOs because the stock price goes up.

T-Mobile has announced \$1.5 billion in stock buybacks; Mastercard, \$4 billion; Bank of America, \$5 billion. Just this morning, three or more companies announced hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of buybacks. These companies, I would say to President Trump and I would say to my Republican colleagues, are not announcing new investments in their workforce or wage increases, as Republicans promised they would. They are announcing stock repurchasing programs that benefit their wealthy investors.

The tax bill will also saddle the next generation of leaders with larger deficits and debts, limiting our ability to make the kinds of investments we need to be making in education, infrastructure, and scientific research—a far surer path to good-paying jobs and raising wages than giving corporate America, already flush with cash, even more stock buybacks. For the same reason, those increased deficits, Republicans are now coming back and saying that they want to slash Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, making it even harder in America to access affordable healthcare and retire with dignity.

Speaker RYAN admitted it yesterday. He said: “We’re going to have to get back next year at entitlement reform, which is how you tackle the debt and