

him on the disposition of an appeal but we respected Don's opinions and never doubted his devotion to principle."

In addition, the retired Texas Supreme Court justice, Wallace Jefferson, recommended Justice Willett's nomination, writing that he will be "a thoughtful, hardworking, diligent, and influential member of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit."

Justice Willett has also been recognized for his excellence by the Texas Review of Law and Politics, which named him its Distinguished Jurist of the Year in 2014.

I would like to commend President Trump for nominating Justice Willett to the Fifth Circuit. Under Chairman GRASSLEY's leadership, the Judiciary Committee has done an excellent job processing this nomination and many others.

By joining the Fifth Circuit, Justice Willett will use his talents to continue to serve his State and his Nation. I look forward to advancing his nomination, and I urge my colleagues to join me in doing so.

#### JUSTICE FOR UNCOMPENSATED SURVIVORS TODAY (JUST) ACT OF 2017

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 274, S. 447.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 447) to require reporting on acts of certain foreign countries on Holocaust era assets and related issues.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Foreign Relations, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

##### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

*This Act may be cited as the "Justice for Uncompensated Survivors Today (JUST) Act of 2017".*

##### SEC. 2. REPORT ON HOLOCAUST ERA ASSETS AND RELATED ISSUES.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—*In this section:*

(1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—*The term "appropriate congressional committees" means—*

(A) *the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate;*

(B) *the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate;*

(C) *the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives; and*

(D) *the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.*

(2) COVERED COUNTRIES.—*The term "covered countries" means participants in the 2009 Holocaust Era Assets Conference that are determined by the Secretary of State, or the Secretary's designee, in consultation with expert nongovernmental organizations, to be countries of particular concern relative to the issues listed in subsection (b).*

(3) WRONGFULLY SEIZED OR TRANSFERRED.—*The term "wrongfully seized or transferred" in-*

*cludes confiscations, expropriations, nationalizations, forced sales or transfers, and sales or transfers under duress during the Holocaust era or the period of Communist rule of a covered country.*

(b) REPORT.—*Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees that assesses and describes the nature and extent of national laws and enforceable policies of covered countries regarding the identification and the return of or restitution for wrongfully seized or transferred Holocaust era assets consistent with, and evaluated with respect to, the goals and objectives of the 2009 Holocaust Era Assets Conference, including—*

(1) *the return to the rightful owner of any property, including religious or communal property, that was wrongfully seized or transferred;*

(2) *if return of any property described in paragraph (1) is no longer possible, the provision of comparable substitute property or the payment of equitable compensation to the rightful owner in accordance with principles of justice and through an expeditious claims-driven administrative process that is just, transparent, and fair;*

(3) *in the case of heirless property, the provision of property or compensation to assist needy Holocaust survivors, to support Holocaust education, and for other purposes;*

(4) *the extent to which such laws and policies are implemented and enforced in practice, including through any applicable administrative or judicial processes; and*

(5) *to the extent practicable, the mechanism for and an overview of progress toward the resolution of claims for United States citizen Holocaust survivors and United States citizen family members of Holocaust victims.*

(c) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—*It is the sense of Congress that after the submission of the report described in subsection (b), the Secretary of State should continue to report to Congress on Holocaust era assets and related issues in a manner that is consistent with the manner in which the Department of State reported on such matters before the date of the enactment of the Act.*

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I further ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported amendment be agreed to, the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The bill (S. 447), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 Leonard Steven Grasz, of Nebraska, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Eighth Circuit.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

#### FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, last week, the House and Senate passed a short-term funding bill to keep the government open as Republican and Democratic negotiators continue to work on a long-term spending deal. The negotiations are advancing well, but many issues remain to be resolved.

First and foremost, we must resolve the issue of the spending caps. If we do nothing, there will be painful and unnecessary cuts to both defense spending and programs that invest directly in jobs and economic development for the middle class in early January. We must lift the spending caps for defense and also those urgent domestic priorities in equal measure. That has been the basis of the successful budget agreements going back several years and as recently as April of this year. There was parity between defense and nondefense, and that is how it ought to stay. That is what brought us home to a good agreement and no shutdowns in previous years.

As the opioid crisis continues to rage, dimming the bright future of so many Americans, we have a moral obligation to step up our country's support for addiction treatment and recovery. I have had a father cry in my arms because his son was online waiting to get into a treatment program, but it was too crowded. He had to wait, and his son died of an overdose before he could get in. We can't have that in America.

So many of our young people, the flower of our youth, are dying or being hurt so badly, addicted, with this opioid crisis. We cannot sit by, just as we cannot sit by with foreign threats that plague our country.

As veterans continue to struggle to find the quality healthcare they deserve after bravely serving this Nation, we should be making additional investments in veterans' healthcare and veterans hospitals. Just as we need to help

our soldiers abroad, we need to help those who have fought for us, risked their lives for us, and now have healthcare problems.

As hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of miners, truckdrivers, construction workers, and food service workers approach retirement age, we have to make sure the pension plans promised to them have enough in the bank to fulfill that promise. These people painstakingly paid every month into their plans, and so did their employers. They would forgo larger salary increases so they could make sure they are taken care of when they retire.

Now that the pension funds—in good part because of the crash of 2008—don't have the money they need, these people should not be left out. Hard-working American families deserve to retire with the dignity and security they have earned. If we don't meet these pension obligations today, they are going to cost the government a whole lot more tomorrow. That is why Democrats are fighting for a pension solution in the year-end spending bill.

These are all urgent priorities. There are more. They can't wait another day, just as we must make sure our men and women in uniform have the resources and support they need to do their job. Let's do both in a bipartisan way.

As Democrats continue to push for desperately needed funding to combat the opioid crisis, improve veterans' healthcare, and shore up pension plans, we will also be pushing to reauthorize CHIP—the Children's Health Insurance Program—and community health centers, as well as dealing with certain healthcare programs that have expired.

We have to do more for the Americans in Texas, Florida, Louisiana, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands who are still recovering from devastating natural disasters.

We are in the process of negotiating with Republicans to provide a significant investment in border security in exchange for DACA. These talks continue to progress, and I am hopeful we can reach an agreement on that issue as well.

We have a lot to get done before the end of the year. We don't have much time to do it, but with the concerted effort of both parties, negotiating in good faith, I believe we can reach an agreement acceptable not to every Member of either Chamber but to large numbers of Members on both sides of the aisle so we can pass our agreement by a wide margin.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### NET NEUTRALITY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, for more than two decades, under both Repub-

lican and Democratic Presidents and Republican and Democratic Congresses, the United States pursued a bipartisan light-touch approach to internet regulation. The internet as we know it today flourished under this light-touch approach, much to the benefit of American consumers and the domestic economy. It also made America the world leader in internet technology and positioned us to continue that leadership in the years to come.

In 2002, broadband internet was classified by the Federal Communications Commission, or FCC, our Nation's communications regulator, as an information service under title I of the Communications Act. This classification exempted the internet from burdensome regulations contained in title II of the Communications Act, which were designed in the Depression era for the old telephone monopolies.

Under the Obama administration, we saw repeated attempts to bring the internet under greater government control. Finally, in 2015, at the explicit direction of President Obama, the FCC did as it was told and reclassified broadband internet access service as a title II service, subjecting broadband internet to onerous common carrier rules and opening the door to further regulation, including price regulation. Not surprisingly, with heavier regulation came a decline in broadband investment. Indeed, we have seen private investment in broadband infrastructure decline over the past 2 years. This decline should not be mistaken as a sign that broadband infrastructure is not needed. In fact, the opposite is true, as there are still 34 million Americans who lack access to broadband services at home.

In States like my home State of South Dakota, encouraging broadband deployment continues to be critical to ensuring that rural areas have the same economic opportunity as their urban counterparts. The Federal Government should not be putting up barriers to broadband deployment; it should be removing them. Congress and the FCC need to ensure regulatory framework is in place that protects consumers but that doesn't stand in the way of investment and innovation.

Prior to the FCC's 2015 actions to bring broadband under title II, and for more than a decade under the light-touch regulatory framework of title I, we saw unprecedented growth that revolutionized our daily lives and allowed us to stay better connected with our loved ones. The internet created new jobs and expanded opportunities for education and commerce. It became the greatest engine of innovation for our times.

Despite the fearmongering and doomsday rhetoric that continues to plague this debate, when the FCC moves forward and restores the internet to its pre-2015 regulatory status, the internet will continue to thrive and serve as an engine for future economic growth.

I commend Chairman Pai at the FCC and the entire Commission for all the hard work over the last year that has gotten us to this point. I also commend Chairman Pai for his commitment to transparency throughout this process. For the first time in the history of the Commission, under Chairman Pai's leadership, the public was able to view the Restoring Internet Freedom item 3 weeks prior to the FCC's vote. That is true of all documents to be considered by the Commission—a major departure from the previous administration's actions, which were often not made public until the very last minute. As a result of Chairman Pai's commitment to transparency, the public has the benefit of not only viewing the item but also participating in the process.

Despite attempts by those more interested in politicizing the issue and distracting from this debate, this item resulted in the most well informed and most exhaustive record of comments ever submitted to the FCC. The FCC is now well positioned to move forward to ensure that the internet is open and free. Regrettably, however, debate doesn't end there. The outcry from opponents of the FCC's proposal is that the internet will fall apart without adequate consumer protections.

There is obviously immense passion that follows the issue of net neutrality. Americans care deeply about preserving a free and open internet, as do I and so many of my colleagues in the U.S. Senate on both sides of the aisle.

As I have stated repeatedly and I will say again today, congressional action is the only way to solve the endless back-and-forth on net neutrality rules that we have seen over the past several years. If my colleagues on the other side of the aisle and those who claim to support net neutrality rules want to enshrine protections for consumers with the backing of the law, I call on them today to join me in discussing legislation that would do just that. While we are not going to agree on everything, I believe there is much room for compromise.

Many of us in Congress already agree on many of the principles of net neutrality. True supporters of an open internet should be demanding such legislative protections today, not posturing while waiting for years during protracted legal proceedings or waiting for the political winds to shift.

If Republicans and Democrats have the political support to work together on such a compromise, we can enact a regulatory framework that will stand the test of time. I have stood willing to work with any and all supporters of net neutrality protections for many years now, and I continue to stand ready today.

It is time for Congress to settle this debate, and I welcome discussion on ways to ensure a free and open internet for decades to come.

#### TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. President, it has been a good week in the U.S. Senate. We are getting closer and closer to the finish line

on tax reform. That means we are getting closer and closer to real relief for the American people. Our legislation is going to cut tax bills for American families, it is going to increase their wages, and it is going to give them access to new jobs and opportunities.

The tax bill the Senate passed on December 2 would cut income tax rates for American families starting next month. It would double the standard deduction. It would double the child tax credit. That would mean a substantially lower tax bill for American families next year. Under our bill, a family of four making \$73,000 a year would see a \$2,200 tax cut.

But our bill doesn't just provide immediate relief for families. Our bill also sets families up for economic health for the long-term by giving them access to higher wages, new jobs, and better opportunities.

How does it do this? By improving the playing field for American businesses. In order for individual Americans to thrive economically, we need American businesses to thrive.

Thriving businesses create jobs and provide opportunities; they increase wages and invest in their workers. But our current Tax Code has not been helping businesses thrive. For years now, our tax laws have left businesses of all sizes struggling under the burden of high tax rates and an outdated tax system that has left American businesses at a disadvantage in the global economy. Small businesses employ nearly half of American workers and create a majority of new jobs in this country, but right now small businesses face high tax rates that can make it difficult for these businesses to even survive, much less thrive and expand their operations.

Our bill fixes this. To start with, our bill implements a new deduction for passthrough businesses, such as partnerships, LLCs, and S corporations. This deduction would allow them to keep more of their money, which would allow them to reinvest in their operations to increase wages and to hire new workers.

Our bill also reforms current provisions in the Tax Code that frequently leave small businesses with little cash on hand. Under our legislation, small businesses would be able to recover the capital they have invested in inventory and machinery much more quickly and, in certain cases, immediately. This, in turn, would free up capital small businesses could use to expand and create jobs.

Our legislation also includes provisions that I helped develop that would simplify accounting rules for small businesses, which would also help reduce their tax burden, leaving more of their earnings to reinvest in their businesses and in their workers.

In addition to providing relief to small businesses, our bill will boost American wages by lowering our massive corporate tax rate. Our Nation's corporate tax rate is currently the

highest in the industrialized world, which puts U.S. businesses at a major disadvantage next to their international competitors. Reducing the corporate tax rate will enable U.S. businesses to compete on a more level playing field, freeing up money that U.S. businesses can use to create jobs and to increase wages.

The White House Council of Economic Advisers estimates that reducing the corporate tax rate to 20 percent would increase wages for U.S. households by \$4,000. That is money that families could use to save for retirement, help pay for a child's education, replace an aging vehicle, or invest in their home.

Our bill would also boost wages and increase opportunities for Americans by ending the outdated tax framework that is driving American companies to keep jobs and profits overseas. Our Nation currently operates under a so-called worldwide tax system. That means that American companies pay U.S. taxes on the profit they make here at home as well as on part of the profits they make abroad, once they bring that money back to the United States. The problem with this is that American companies are already paying taxes to foreign governments on the money they make abroad. When they bring that money home, they can end up having to pay taxes again on part of those profits at the highest tax rate in the industrialized world. It is no surprise that this discourages businesses from bringing their profits back to the United States to invest in their domestic operations, new jobs, and increased wages.

Our bill replaces our outdated worldwide tax system with a territorial tax system. Under our legislation, American companies would no longer face the double taxation that has encouraged them to send their investments and their operations overseas. Instead, U.S. companies would have a strong incentive to invest their profits at home in American jobs and American workers.

All in all, the Tax Foundation estimates that in addition to increasing wages, our bill would create nearly 1 million new jobs for American workers and boost the size of the economy by 3.7 percent.

This week, Members of the House and the Senate—myself included—are working on the final draft of comprehensive tax reform legislation. We hope to send a final bill to the President next week. I am thankful to have been able to be part of this tax-writing effort.

The bill we are finalizing, which is the product of years of work by Members of both parties, represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to profoundly change the American people's lives for the better. Our tax bill will provide real, immediate, direct relief to Americans and do it now, and it will give Americans access to the kinds of jobs, wages, and opportunities they

need for a secure and prosperous future. After years of economic stagnation, the bill we are drafting will usher in a new era of economic dynamism in this country, and it will send a message to the world that America is serious about competing and winning in the 21st century.

I am grateful to my colleagues on the House and Senate tax-writing committees for all the work they have done to put together this legislation, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on the conference committee to finish our final draft and to get this bill across the finish line for the American people.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. STRANGE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I approach this topic with a little bit of trepidation. Ordinarily when people make outrageous, outlandish, and unbelievable statements, I usually think it is best just to let them go because when people make these kinds of statements, I think they lose their own credibility, and maybe it doesn't bear any particular comment by anybody else or a desire or an attempt to refute it. But on the subject of tax reform, there have been some incredible statements that have been made, and I am going to mention a few of those because I think they really paint an ugly picture of what is supposed to be a debate on tax reform policy, but I think probably they relate more to sort of the nature of what passes for debate here in Washington, DC—and particularly the Congress—on matters of important public policy. In other words, there isn't a lot of debate. There is accusation after accusation. It gets repeated on social media, then the press picks it up, and then people just assume, well, it must be true since nobody has ever denied it or offered any contrary narrative.

For example, the House minority leader apparently had the time to read every bill that has ever been written since the year 1789 because she felt comfortable calling this tax bill, which is still in the process of being written—reconciling the House and Senate versions—she called it the “worst bill in the history of the United States Congress.” She has been busy if she has read every bill since 1789. Then she went further because that apparently wasn't enough for her. She said that our tax bill isn't just poor legislation; she said that it is an existential threat to the Nation and possibly the entire planet. Can you believe that? An existential threat to the Nation and possibly the entire planet.

Well, you can see why perhaps I was reluctant to come address these accusations, because I think anybody who would make those kinds of accusations has lost all credibility. But acting either as a prophet or an amateur astrologist—we are not quite sure—she called the prospect of passing tax reform “Armageddon.”

Well, it is hard to know what to say or do in the face of that sort of rhetoric because, frankly, this tax reform bill is a good thing. I wish our friends across the aisle, the Democrats, would join us in trying to make it better. That is what happened the last time we tried to do this or this Congress tried to do it.

In 1986, a Republican President; a Democratic Senator from New Jersey, Senator Bill Bradley; Dan Rostenkowski from Chicago, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, a Democrat; and other Members of Congress came together to try to reform our Tax Code, and they were successful in doing it against all odds.

But today, we have an entirely different scenario. We have Republicans seeing that the economy is growing at a very slow rate and that wages for most workers have been flat for the last 10 years and realizing that our current Tax Code is counterproductive when it comes to encouraging investment, job creation, and wage growth in our country because we have the highest tax rate in the world for businesses that do business internationally. We thought, we need to do something about it, and so we set about reforming our Tax Code with three goals in mind.

One is to simplify the Tax Code. Everybody knows how complex it is and how much money people spend hiring an accountant or H&R Block or somebody to help them figure it out. Secondly, we figured that it would be important to give hard-working families a tax cut. So we have succeeded in reducing the tax break for every tax bracket in the Tax Code for working families. For example, for low-income families, we have a zero tax bracket now. For a joint-filing husband and wife, on the first \$24,000 they earn, there is no tax at all. And thanks to some great work by Senator RUBIO and Senator LEE, we have doubled the child tax credit. Those are good things. We have doubled the standard deduction—so fewer people have to itemize deductions to get the full benefit of the code—while maintaining the charitable deduction and the mortgage interest deduction and popular items like that. We have also said, for example, that a family earning roughly \$70,000 a year—the median income in America for a family of four—would see a benefit of roughly \$2,200 less tax liability.

I would think those would be good things that our friends across the aisle would want to work with us on. How do we simplify the code? How do we let people keep more of what they earn, more take-home pay, a better standard of living? How do we make America's

economy more competitive since we have the highest tax rate in the world and we are seeing investment in businesses flee to other lower tax jurisdictions? You would think those would be the sorts of things on which our friends across the aisle would want to work with us but apparently not. Instead, what we get are these sort of reckless and really buffoonish allegations that cause the speaker to lose all credibility in any sort of debate we might be having.

Unfortunately, the media tends to pick up on some of this rhetoric and jump on the bandwagon, but the media's worst claims are at least a little closer to Earth than what I recounted earlier. For example, the Washington Post said the tax reform “took place behind closed doors.” Well, that is a tired old rhetoric and talking point. You would think the Washington Post could come up with something a little better than that and actually something that is a little more accurate than that. One columnist at the New York Times sighs that the package benefits donors at the expense of voters—what does that mean?—and that it “only modestly addresses the central socioeconomic challenge of our time.” Well, I wonder what this reporter or columnist for the New York Times thinks is the central socioeconomic challenge of our time. I think one of those is for people to be able to pursue the American dream, to be able to find work, to be paid a decent wage, and to be able to keep more of what they earn, but that apparently isn't good enough for this columnist at the New York Times.

Certainly, these charges deserve a little more attention than the minority leader's asteroid attack, but they, too, are misguided.

When it comes to tax reform, the drafting process did not take place behind closed doors. I wonder why the Washington Post was so ill-informed and ignorant of the legislative process that they didn't see the 70 Senate hearings we have had on tax reform since 2011. They apparently didn't bother to turn on C-SPAN to see the debate and the amendment process in the Senate Finance Committee that produced the Senate bill, and they apparently are not paying much attention to what we are talking about here on the Senate floor as we are trying to reconcile the differences between the House bill and the Senate bill. So I guess they are just not paying much attention, which I thought newspapers and reporters were supposed to do.

The second major allegation—that we are ignoring working Americans and the middle class—is demonstrably false.

Many are wondering why tax cuts for families are temporary and the ones for corporations are permanent. Well, we know that businesses need long-term assurances about the tax environment so that they will invest and make plans. We wanted to make tax cuts for

individuals permanent, too, but that requires 60 votes in the Senate, and every single one of our Democratic colleagues voted against the bill and they refused to participate in the process. So with only 52 votes to work with, we were unable to meet that 60-vote threshold. So on the one hand, they criticize us for not making those tax cuts for individuals permanent, but then they deny us the votes we need in order to make that happen. It is not that we don't want to make these tax cuts permanent for the middle class; it is that the Democrats are preventing us from doing so.

I agree with my friend and colleague, the junior Senator from Florida, Mr. RUBIO, who has said that when it comes to debating tax reform, Republicans can't be the country club party. I certainly agree that is not who we are, but that is also not who we should be helping in this bill. We ought to be addressing low-income and middle-class Americans first.

Yes, we do lower the corporate rate, but historically that has been something Democrats have called for. I remember that in 2011, President Obama, in a joint session of Congress, called for reducing the highest corporate tax rate in the world, and he called upon Republicans and Democrats to work together to make that happen. And we have had others, like the ranking member on the Senate Finance Committee, the Senator from Oregon, Mr. WYDEN, who co-sponsored a bill that would have reduced the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 24 percent. We do a little better than that in this bill. We take it down to 20 percent, which is close to the industrialized world average on tax rates, but the Senator from New York, the Democratic leader, has also called for lowering the corporate tax rate and making us more competitive in the global economy. Do you know what will happen when we do that? We will see investment come back to the United States, along with the jobs that go along with it. Who will benefit from that? Will the businesses that create those jobs benefit? I suppose they will, but the people who will really benefit will be the people who perform those jobs and who earn those wages: hard-working American families.

A group of nearly 140 economists say that, on balance, they believe the bill will enhance economic efficiency and result in most households enjoying lower marginal rates. That is economics talk for tax cuts. But what about fairness and simplification? Don't we all want a fairer tax code and one that is easier to navigate? I believe, once again, our bill delivers.

Those economists I mentioned say fairness would be served by reduction differences, and the tax treatment of individuals with similar incomes and simplification would be served by reducing the number of individuals who itemize for Federal tax purposes. That is exactly what we do by doubling the standard deduction.

Right now, about 3 out of 10 individual taxpayers itemize. Under our doubling the standard deduction, only 1 out of 10 will find it necessary to itemize.

The simple truth is, the Senate bill will lower tax bills on millions of working-class Americans. It will lower taxes, not raise them, on the working class. Again, by nearly doubling the standard deduction and lowering rates across the board and doubling the child tax credit, the Senate tax reform plan will lower taxes for every income group. The Senate tax plan was written with working families in mind, and the legislation reflects that goal.

As I said earlier, and I will say it again, a family of four earning a median income of about \$70,000 will see a \$2,200 savings in their tax bill each year. It may be easy for folks living in the rarified air in Washington, DC, to shrug that off and say \$2,200 is no big deal to me, but to the people I represent, \$2,200 in tax savings a year is a big deal. It can mean the difference between being able to save for retirement, help pay for a college education, or maybe take a vacation for the first time in a long time. That is the money they have earned, and we are simply saying you can keep more of it under this bill.

Finally, I want to mention the Federal deficit. Will the tax bill increase it? Well, yesterday the Office of Tax Policy at the Treasury Department released an analysis of expected tax revenue associated with the administration's economic growth initiatives. Among the key findings is, \$1.8 trillion of additional revenue would be generated over 10 years based on expected economic growth. The Congressional Budget Office uses the baseline of 1.9-percent economic growth. That is because, during the entire Obama Presidency, the U.S. Government and economy experienced an unprecedented low rate of economic growth since the Great Recession of 2008, but, historically, dating back to World War II, we have seen the economy grow at 3.2 percent. So why should we settle for 1.9 percent or 2 percent? We shouldn't.

Our friends on the other side have suddenly become deficit hawks after seeing the national debt double during the Obama administration. Let's not forget, they supported lowering these same corporate tax rates year after year and embraced other parts of our plan which we have incorporated. That is why their attacks, their histrionics, their screams of Armageddon are laughable, and, frankly, they insult the intelligence of Americans who are trying to figure this out. It is hard to figure out what is actually happening when you have somebody crying like Chicken Little that the sky is falling. It is hard for people to sort all of this out.

Well, as we continue to work on a conference committee report to reconcile the differences between the House and the Senate versions of the

bill, our focus will be on those hard-working American families I mentioned earlier—people of modest income, people of average income.

Yes, we are going to make our businesses more competitive globally because that will benefit the same families we are trying to benefit by the individual tax cuts.

You can see why I perhaps was a little reluctant to come address some of these histrionics and outlandish and unbelievable claims, but I have also learned that if you don't respond—if you don't counter falsehood with truth—some people are simply going to believe the falsehood, so I thought it was important to do so. Let's remain clear-eyed, and let's get this work done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I come to the floor to talk about the Children's Health Insurance Program and Community Health Centers, but I do want to take a moment to respond to my friend and colleague, the distinguished Senator on the Republican side.

I can speak for myself and others, I know, on this side who very much want to see tax reform, very much want to close loopholes that take jobs overseas and support small businesses, but what is in front of us and what was voted on was a bill that, when fully implemented, would raise taxes on something like 87 million middle-class Americans. That doesn't make any sense at all.

All of the rosy estimates on economic growth were not backed up in legislative language. As to the \$4,000 wage increase that had been talked about as a minimum for people across the country to receive based on economic growth, I suggested we write that into law; that if, in fact, folks don't get their \$4,000, the tax breaks would stop—and folks aren't willing to do that.

I want to make sure folks in Michigan get their \$4,000 wage increase, and we don't get another bunch of promises with trickle-down economics, where everything goes to the top 1 percent, and folks in Michigan are still waiting for it to trickle down.

#### CHIP AND COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

Mr. President, let me go to the subject I am here to talk about; that is, the fact that we are now on day 73 since the Children's Health Insurance Program and community health center funding has stopped. The Federal funding stopped on September 30.

I am very concerned. I was reading today that the House leadership has essentially been saying they don't want to see this continued as part of a year-end package in 2 weeks. My assumption was, we were going to see the Children's Health Insurance Program and community health centers wrapped into the bill in a couple of weeks that would set the priorities for our country.

If it is true what was reported, there ought to be an alarm going out all across the country. The Children's Health Insurance Program—which we call MICHild in Michigan—covers 9 million children across the country. These are working families. These are working families who need some help to have insurance for their children—children who now go to the doctor instead of an emergency room. This actually saves dollars by children being able to have a regular relationship with a doctor, parents knowing they can take their children to the doctor instead of having to figure out how to address their concerns in the middle of the night in the emergency room.

So 9 million children right now are at risk because of inaction. It has been 73 days. I am very concerned that as soon as February, the MICHild Program will be running out of funding. In fact, this month, there are three States that are losing funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program: Arizona, with over 88,000 children who receive health insurance and are able to go to the doctor. Their moms and dads know that at least the kids are going to be able to see the doctor for their juvenile diabetes, their asthma, or simple things like a cold, flu, or serious things like cancer.

New Hampshire has 17,000—almost 18,000 children. In Oregon, 140,000 children right now receive their healthcare through the Children's Health Insurance Program. Starting in January, if there is no action, we will see millions of children losing their health insurance: California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, and Virginia. Each month, we will see funding that will be eliminated. In total, we are talking about 9 million children.

This has been a bipartisan program. This came out of committee on a bipartisan vote in September with Senator HATCH and Senator WYDEN. I was pleased to join them in putting together a 5-year extension. It came out of committee with strong bipartisan support and only one "no" vote.

I assumed it was going to be brought up on the floor before September 30 and passed. Yet 73 days later, children and families across the country are still waiting.

The other piece of healthcare that has been so critical to families—to children and individuals across our country—is funding for community health centers, which, by the way, also has strong bipartisan support. Senator ROY BLUNT and I have put in legislation with Republicans and Democrats cosponsoring it. We have a letter that 70 different Members signed to our leadership saying they support extending community health center funding. Yet, again, there has been no action for 73 days.

Our assumption had been that the Children's Health Insurance Program would come to the floor, we would amend it to add health centers, and get

it done before September 30. It has not happened. The community health centers serve 25 million patients in every part of our country. So 300,000 veterans rely on community health centers, and 7.5 million children, as well, rely on community health centers. I should add, we have 260 sites all across Michigan serving 681,000 people. Again, almost 13,000 Michigan veterans use our community health centers.

We have bipartisan support to continue funding, but the funding ended September 30. So what happens? Well, starting in January, Michigan's community health centers will lose \$12.8 million in funding because about 70 percent of the funding for health centers comes through the legislation we are now offering with bipartisan support. About 20,000 people will lose their healthcare. By June, Michigan's health centers will lose over \$80 million in funding, and almost 100,000 patients will lose healthcare. This is critically important as well. We are talking about 25 million people across the country.

Community health centers and the Children's Health Insurance Program is something we have come together on, on a bipartisan basis, over the years. There has to be a sense of urgency about this. We cannot leave at Christmas—we can't leave for the holidays without having a guarantee that children and families and individuals across our country will be able to have the health insurance and the medical care they have been receiving.

The best Christmas present—the best New Year's present we could give families—is to guarantee that moms and dads can take their kids to the doctor, if we have the Children's Health Insurance Program, and that people young and old across the country who use community health centers will still know they can count on them.

Let me close by just sharing a story from John, who is one of the more than 12,700 veterans served by Michigan's community health centers.

John had always been healthy. He didn't have health insurance. In fact, the last time he had seen a doctor was when he was still in the service back in 1975.

Last summer, he started having symptoms. He tried to ignore them, but his wife knew something was wrong. They tried to get help but faced long waits for him to be seen. That is when they contacted the Traverse Health Clinic.

The clinic was able to get John in right away, and his wife's fears were confirmed. He was diagnosed with congestive heart failure.

The team at Traverse Health Clinic helped get John admitted to the hospital, coordinated services with the cardiologist, and got him signed up for health coverage. That is what community health centers do—connect people with the services they need to be treated or provide preventive care so that they can stay healthy.

In John's case, he says it changed his life. John said this:

There are a lot of people like me who were doing fine and now they're not. There are a lot of people like me who need a place like Traverse Health Clinic. I consider myself extremely fortunate. Now I have a doctor. I'm so thankful.

On behalf of the 25 million people who use community health centers and the 9 million children covered by the Children's Health Insurance Program, it is time that we act. They have been waiting for 73 days. We could do this in a few hours, in a day, on the Senate floor. I urge us to get this done.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, I rise today in continued support of Steve Grasz's nomination to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit.

Some of those who have been attacking Mr. Grasz have claimed that he doesn't have the character or the temperament to treat litigants fairly and decide cases based on the facts and the law.

In evaluating those claims, I hope my colleagues in this body will listen to the hundreds of Nebraskans of all partisan and ideological stripes who have stood up in support of Steve's nomination. I urge everyone to listen to what those Nebraskans have to say specifically about his character and about his temperament.

One Nebraskan wrote to Mrs. FISCHER, the senior Senator from Nebraska, and to me, as well as to the Judiciary Committee:

I was the plaintiff in a First Amendment defamation and political speech action against the Nebraska Republican Party. . . . Mr. Grasz represented the Nebraska Republican Party. I was not successful in my lawsuit. However, I did have the opportunity to meet and interact with Mr. Grasz during the case and found him to be . . . a consummate professional. Based on my observations I believe his judicial temperament would be of the highest quality and all parties would be given equal opportunity. . . . I can think of no one better qualified or suited to be appointed to this prestigious judgeship than Steven Grasz.

Another Nebraskan wrote to us:

I know Steve personally having served as opposing counsel to him on cases. . . . Steve was a formidable opponent. . . . While he zealously advocated for his clients, he did so in a level-headed and even-keeled manner.

Yet another Nebraskan writes:

I . . . have . . . represented clients in cases where Mr. Grasz was opposing counsel. In all circumstances he demonstrates the utmost professionalism. . . . I am a registered Democrat and, quite frankly, am not a strong supporter of the current administration. However, as a practicing attorney dealing with complex litigation and appearing regularly in the federal courts of appeals, I want intelligent, thoughtful individuals appointed to the Bench who will administer the law and apply existing precedent. I have no doubt that Mr. Grasz can do that very effectively.

Also, consider the words of this Nebraskan:

Steve does not allow his role as an advocate to cloud his analyses and judgment. He

reviews statutes, regulations, rule and common law with a clear eye, and he applies these authorities to the facts presented to him. . . . [H]is respect for precedent and his high regard for the works of other branches of government show his dedication to following the Constitution and our nation's laws as they are written.

Steve Grasz is a Nebraskan through and through. As I said here on the floor yesterday, Steve bleeds Husker red, but he is a guy who is well suited to take on the black robes of the judge, for he understands that we do not have blue or red partisan jerseys on our article III branch of government, the independent judiciary.

Steve is well suited to serve as a judge on the Eighth Circuit. I think that not just Nebraskans but folks across all the States represented in the Eighth Circuit are going to find a man of unbelievable temperament.

The ABA is a liberal advocacy organization. That is absolutely their right. What is not OK is for the ABA to masquerade as a neutral arbiter of professional qualifications.

Attacks on Steve's character have come out of this process because the two reviewers from the ABA cite again and again and again anonymous sources of his supposed rudeness. We have seen none of that in Nebraska. Again, hundreds of people have written to the senior Senator and to me and now to the Judiciary Committee in support of the President's decision to nominate Steve Grasz to the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the specific letters I have just cited.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

MOATS LAW FIRM, P.C., L.L.O.,

*Elkhorn, NE, September 21, 2017.*

Re Nomination of Steven Grasz for 8th Circuit Appellate Judgeship.

Chairman CHUCK GRASSLEY,  
*Senate Judiciary Committee,*  
*Washington, DC.*

Ranking Member DIANNE FEINSTEIN,  
*Senate Judiciary Committee,*  
*Washington, DC.*

DEAR SENATORS GRASSLEY AND FEINSTEIN: Steven Grasz has been nominated as an appellate judge for the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. I write this letter of recommendation in support of his nomination and confirmation. I am a lifelong member of the Democratic party.

I have known Mr. Grasz since 2009 when we were involved in common litigation to the Nebraska Supreme Court (*Moats v. Republican Party of Nebraska*, 281 Neb. 411, 796 N.W.2d 584 (2011)) which was subsequently appealed to the United States Supreme Court where certiorari was denied. I was the plaintiff in a First Amendment defamation and political speech action against the Nebraska Republican Party arising out of a non-partisan office I sought in the Nebraska Unicameral in the fall of 2008. Mr. Grasz represented the Nebraska Republican Party.

I was not successful in my lawsuit. However I did have the opportunity to meet and interact with Mr. Grasz during the case and found him to be polite and courteous and extremely well informed and educated on this complicated subject matter. At no time did

he ever show any inappropriate actions or behavior towards me or my family and was a consummate professional. Based on my observations I believe his judicial temperament would be of the highest quality and all parties would be given equal opportunity.

In life there is always another chapter to each of our collective stories. I am pleased to inform you, that my dealings with Mr. Grasz and his family extended beyond the case we were involved in. Our children were involved in competitive dance for the past four years and my wife and our children had the opportunity to interact with Mr. Grasz and his family in a social setting. My observations and interactions with him were always positive and productive notwithstanding him having been on opposite side of a very emotional case. He is a terrific husband and father, a brilliant legal scholar and oaring human being. I can think of no one better qualified or suited to be appointed to this prestigious judgeship than Steven Grasz.

Sincerely,

REX J. MOATS.

SEPTEMBER 18, 2017.

Re Nomination of L. Steven Grasz.

Chairman CHUCK GRASSLEY,  
*Senate Judiciary Committee,*  
*Washington, DC.*  
Ranking Member DIANNE FEINSTEIN,  
*Senate Judiciary Committee,*  
*Washington, DC.*

CHAIRMAN GRASSLEY AND RANKING MEMBER FEINSTEIN: I write in support of the nomination of Steve Grasz to the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. I know Steve personally having served as opposing counsel to him on cases. I also know him by reputation in the Omaha legal community through his work on significant litigation.

Steve was a formidable opponent. He was willing to go the extra step to advance his clients' interests. While he zealously advocated for his clients, he did so in a level-headed and even-keeled manner. I've never seen him raise his voice. He listens and asks good questions. His temperament is well suited for the position to which he has been nominated.

There is no question Steve has the intellect to do the important work of a federal appellate court judge. He has published multiple law review articles which have contributed to the practice of law. Steve's pleadings and briefs are clear, thoughtful, and well written. He did not attempt to advance frivolous claims. In my experience with him, he works diligently and was always well prepared.

Unfortunately, with some lawyers, every conversation has to be memorialized in a letter out of fear that the lawyer will reverse course. That was not the case with Steve. His word was good.

Steve has both represented the government and represented individuals in claims against the government. He has valuable litigation experience in cases involving Section 1983 claims and qualified immunity which make up a significant portion of the cases handled by federal appellate judges. His experience will serve him well while sitting on the other side of the bench.

I believe Steve is committed to upholding the laws and Constitution of the United States, and will do so as a member of the Eighth Circuit. I urge the Judiciary Committee to advance his nomination.

Respectfully Submitted,

TIMOTHY J. THALKEN.

SEPTEMBER 9, 2017.

Re Confirmation Hearing for L. Steven Grasz for Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit.

Chairman CHUCK GRASSLEY,  
*Senate Judiciary Committee, Washington, DC.*  
Ranking Member DIANNE FEINSTEIN,  
*Senate Judiciary Committee, Washington, DC.*

DEAR SENATOR GRASSLEY AND SENATOR FEINSTEIN: I am writing to express my support for Steven (Steve) Grasz to be confirmed as judge for the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. I have been a lawyer for twenty-one years, and had the good fortune to spend five of those years working with Steve on a variety of matters spanning from local litigation to federal regulatory and administrative actions. While Steve ably represented clients in state and federal venues, I observed firsthand the qualities that would make him an outstanding federal appellate court judge.

Steve possesses admirable analytical skills an ability to grasp complex and often highly abstract concepts in a manner that allows to communicate these concepts in a plain, understandable way. From a practical perspective, this is very important skill for any judge to possess because it is the vanishingly rare lawsuit in which the underlying dispute is so very narrow that the judge's ruling is limited only to the parties before the Court. Instead, judges' resolutions of disputes serve as guidelines for many other lawyers and their respective clients to follow in future transactions. This is especially true for Circuit-level opinions, which are widely disseminated. Well-reasoned, cogent judicial opinions are an invaluable resource for lawyers to turn to when advising Clients who may or may not be overly familiar with our justice system. Lawyers rely upon judicial opinions when advising clients about the relative risks and benefits of a particular course of action. Steve's ability to communicate difficult, often abstract concepts in plain terms will contribute greatly to this very important function of our legal system.

Importantly, Steve does not allow his role as advocate to cloud his analyses and judgment. He reviews statutes, regulations rule and common law with a clear eye, and applies these authorities to the facts presented to him. Steve advises clients and develops strategies based upon existing authorities, showing his respect for our system of governance and for each branch's contribution to it. His ability and willingness to evaluate particular facts in light of various authorities is a critical skill for judges to possess, and shows his deep respect, for precedential law. Similarly, his respect for precedent and his regard for the works of other branches of government show his dedication to following the Constitution and our nation's laws as they are written. This quality is critically important for a judge to have following the Constitution and our nation's laws as they are written is part and parcel of the development and application of clear, lasting legal principles upon which all members of the public—not only lawyers and their clients—may rely in conducting the transactions of everyday life.

Finally, Steve has a temperament very well-suited in the bench. He is levelheaded and unfailingly courteous to opposing lawyers their respective clients, and to judges. I have seen Steve involved in challenging, stressful situations, yet his demeanor consistently remains composed and polite. He does not engage in personal criticism of judges, fellow lawyers, or litigants, nor does he allow the behavior of others to be anything other than courteous and professional. While certainly not every lawyer possesses this ability, it is a vital one for judges to

have because our system of justice depends upon judges' ability to maintain decorum even when attorneys or litigants are not doing so. Through trying situations, Steve has consistently shown his ability and willingness to treat all attorneys and parties with respect, and he has conducted himself in the professional, composed manner that lawyers hope to see in judges at every level. His treatment of others ultimately honors the truth-seeking function our system of justice is intended to fulfill since he does not engage in obstructionist tactics or gamesmanship intended to drive up litigation costs or designed to deny other parties access to information bearing upon matter in dispute. As a lawyer, Steve sets an excellent example of someone working toward fair and just resolutions of disputes. This attribute would serve him very well as a judge and would directly benefit all persons impacted by the court's decisions.

Thank you for taking the time to review my letter of support for Steve. If you have any questions or concerns about my standpoint regarding his ample qualifications for being confirmed as judge for the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, please let me know.

Sincerely,

TIM DOLAN.

OMAHA, NE,

September 20, 2017.

Re Nomination of Steve Grasz, United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit.

Hon. CHUCK GRASSLEY,  
*U.S. Senator,*  
*Senate Judiciary Committee, Washington, DC.*

DEAR SENATOR GRASSLEY: I am writing to indicate my strong support for President Trump's nomination of Steve Grasz to the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit.

Mr. Grasz was employed by the Kutak Rock law firm when I began working there right after law school. Mr. Grasz is very intelligent and has the legal background and skill to be an asset to the Court of Appeals. I have maintained my acquaintance with Mr. Grasz and have also represented clients in cases where Mr. Grasz was opposing counsel. In all circumstances he demonstrates the utmost professionalism.

I have no hesitation in stating that litigants could present to him the most complex legal issues and he would be able to analyze them intelligently and coherently. I have also had the opportunity to read materials he has written. Opinions by him would be a credit to the judiciary.

Although I personally believe that an individual's personal political, social, or religious practices and beliefs are irrelevant to qualifications for a judicial position, I realize that such considerations have been injected into judicial confirmation proceedings over the past few years. I expect that certain factions may attempt to raise such issues regarding Mr. Grasz who has actively served both his government and his community.

I am a registered Democrat and, quite frankly, am not a strong supporter of the current administration. However, as a practicing attorney dealing with complex litigation and appearing regularly in the federal courts of appeals, I want intelligent, thoughtful individuals appointed to the Bench who will administer the law and apply existing precedent. I have no doubt Mr. Grasz can do that very effectively.

I appreciate your consideration of my recommendation. If there is any interest in further information, please feel free to have your staff contact me.

Sincerely,

DIANA J. VOGT,  
*For the Firm.*

Mr. SASSE. I urge all of my colleagues to listen to all of the Nebraskans, again, of all backgrounds and across the partisan spectrum, as they have urged us to confirm Mr. Gras today.

Thank you.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRUZ). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII that at 4 p.m. on Tuesday, December 12, there be 30 minutes of postcloture time remaining on the Gras nomination, equally divided between the leaders or their designees, and that following the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate vote on the confirmation of the Gras nomination and that, if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

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

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

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR 5-YEAR  
OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS PLAN

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, there are all kinds of reports swirling around Washington, and we are hearing from those reports that the Trump administration is about to give a huge, early Christmas present to the oil industry. The reports are, the Department of the Interior is preparing to unveil a new 5-year plan for offshore oil and gas drilling—one that would open up the entire Atlantic coast of the United States to drilling. This new 5-year plan, which would go into effect in 2019, would replace the current 5-year plan that was finalized just last year and doesn't expire until 2022.

Why is the Department of the Interior in such a rush to waste taxpayers' money to write a new one? The answer is, the oil industry wants to start drilling in these areas now, and the Trump administration is going to let them do it. While it hasn't been released yet, we are hearing that the administration's new plan will open up the entire Atlantic coast to offshore drilling—from Maine to as far south as Cape Canaveral. Let me show you why that is a problem.

This is the east coast of the United States. This is Maine. This is Florida. This is Cape Canaveral. This is Fort Pierce, FL. Look what happens on the Atlantic coast off the eastern continental United States. These are all military testing areas. Every one of these hatched areas—every one of these blocks—is of a place that has limited access because of military testing.

Take, for example, all of this area off the east coast of Florida. There is a place called the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. There is a place called the Kennedy Space Center. We are launching commercial and military rockets, and within another year and a half, we will be launching American rockets with American astronauts that will go, just like the space shuttle before them, to and from the International Space Station and will carry crews as well as the cargo they already carry.

When you are launching to the International Space Station or, in 2 years, when we launch the largest rocket ever from the Kennedy Space Center—the forerunner to the Mars Program, taking humans to Mars, or in the case of the new Mars rocket, called the SLS, the Space Launch System—where do you think it will drop its solid rocket boosters? It will drop them precisely out here, which is exactly why you cannot have oil rigs out here.

All of the commercial rockets that come out of Cape Canaveral right now put up a host of communications satellites; that is, a constellation of satellites. How do you think we get our pinpoint GPS here on Earth? Many of those rockets are coming right out of the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, and, increasingly, there is commercial activity at the Kennedy Space Center, which is collocated with the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station.

What about all of those scientific satellites that are out there that give us precise measurements on what is happening to the climate so when we then track hurricanes, we know precisely and have such great success in predicting the path and the voracity of a hurricane? All of those rockets are coming out of Cape Canaveral. They have first stages, and when the first stages burn up, they have to fall someplace. You cannot have oil and gas production out here.

It would be the same off of Norfolk, VA. They also have a launching point there for NASA—Wallops Island. Yet, in the Norfolk area, all of the military does its training out in the Atlantic, and you are going to have a whole disruption.

Take, for example, all of the military assets—spy satellites—that go into orbit and are rocketed out of Cape Canaveral. Those first stages, when burned up, have to fall. That is why we have a location like the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. It launches from west to east in order to get that extra boost of the Earth's rotation and, therefore, needs less fuel to get into orbit.

This is a prime location. You cannot put oil and gas out here. You cannot have oil rigs off of Cape Canaveral, where all of these military, NASA, and commercial rockets are going, as well as governmental payloads that are not military.

We have heard the loud opposition from the Department of Defense, the chambers of commerce, fishermen, and coastal communities all along the Atlantic that have weighed in against the administration's plan to allow drilling off their coasts.

We thought we had put this puppy to bed last year when the Obama administration backed off its plans to have these drilling areas. They backed off because of the opposition. They also backed off when it came to Florida. Why? Florida has more beaches than any other State. We don't have as much coastline. Alaska has the greatest coastline, but the last time I checked, Alaska didn't have a lot of beaches. The one that is blessed with the beautiful beaches is Florida. When it comes to beaches, that means people want to go to the beach, and that means there is a significant tourism-driven economy there. We learned what happened with just the threat of there being oil on the beach. Remember the Deepwater Horizon oil explosion off of Louisiana? Let me show you so you don't get confused with all of these colors.

In essence, all of this yellow over on the other side of Florida, in the Gulf of Mexico, means this area is off-limits. It is in law, and it is a good thing because when the Deepwater Horizon spilled off of Louisiana, the winds shifted, and that oil started drifting to the east. It got as far as Pensacola Beach, and it completely blackened the white, sugary sands. That photograph went all over the world. Pensacola Beach was covered up in oil, and the winds kept carrying it forward. Some of it got into Choctawhatchee Bay and the sands of Destin, and some of the tar balls went as far east as the Panama City Beach. Then the winds shifted and carried it back, and that was the extent of the oil on the beach.

For 1 solid year—a tourist year—the tourists did not come to the west coast of Florida because they had seen the pictures of what had happened to Pensacola Beach, all of the way down the west coast—the Tampa Bay area, Sarasota, the Fort Myers area, Naples, Marco Island. The tourists did not come.

Now let's go back to the Atlantic. When you start to do this, you are now threatening the lifeblood of Florida's economy, its tourism-driven economy. It is not only a threat to the environment, but it is a threat to the multibillion-dollar, tourism-driven economy.

In 2010, we lost an entire season, as the tourists did not come to the west coast of Florida. That is why, when I gave the list of all of those entities, including the U.S. Department of Defense, they don't want it. It is because



of the military areas. I also mentioned the chambers of commerce. They have awakened to the fact that oil on beaches is a killer of our economy. When this plan is announced later today, probably, it will not be unusual to see local governments spring into action, like the Broward County Board of Commissioners, which has already sent letters that oppose drilling off of Florida's coast.

Floridians understand this issue. That is why, in the past, we have had such bipartisan agreement all over Florida—Republicans and Democrats alike—to keep drilling off of our coast, but if Big Oil gets its way, every inch of the Continental Shelf is going to be drilled. We saw what happened less than a decade ago. The scientists would say we are still uncovering, for example, the full extent of that BP oil spill and its damage.

I urge our colleagues to take up the bill that was filed earlier this year by this Senator, Senator MARKEY, and others that would block an attempt by the administration to open up our coast to oil drilling.

The stakes are extremely high for the economy of our States all along the eastern coast. Georgia has a substantial tourism-driven economy. You know South Carolina has Myrtle Beach. What about North Carolina? What about Virginia's tourism-driven economy and especially with all of the military concentration there? You can go right on up the coast. The stakes are exceptionally high. We simply can't risk it.

I yield the floor.

#### RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:29 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

#### FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT AND THE REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, as everybody knows, the Republican Party now controls the U.S. House, the U.S. Senate, and the White House. We also know that unless a budget agreement is reached by December 22, the U.S. Government will shut down, which will cause serious harm to our country, including the men and women in the Armed Forces and our veterans.

I do not know why the Republican Party, which controls all the branches of government, wants to shut down our government. I think that is wrong, and I think a shutdown will be very hurtful to people from coast to coast.

Earlier this year, President Trump tweeted: "Our country needs a good

shutdown." I strongly disagree. I don't think we need a good shutdown; I think we need to reach an agreement on a budget that works for the middle class of our country and not just the wealthiest people.

It is no great secret that we are living in a nation that has almost unprecedented income and wealth inequality, at least since the 1920s. We have the top one-tenth of 1 percent owning almost as much wealth as the bottom 90 percent.

I don't believe that now is the time to give massive tax breaks to the wealthiest people in this country in a horrific tax bill and then at the end of 10 years raise taxes on 83 million middle-class families. I think that makes no sense. I don't think it makes much sense to be passing a tax bill that gives 62 percent of the benefits to the top 1 percent.

Apparently it is not good enough for my Republican colleagues that corporate America today is enjoying record-breaking profits and that the CEOs of large corporations are earning more than 300 times what their employees make. What the tax bill would do is give over \$1 trillion in tax breaks to large, profitable corporations at a time when already one out of five of these major corporations is paying nothing in taxes. That is apparently not good enough—we need to lower taxes for large corporations even more.

Right now as we speak, legislation is being written behind closed doors by the House Freedom Caucus and other Members of the extreme rightwing to provide a massive increase in funding for the Pentagon for the rest of the fiscal year, while only providing temporary and inadequate funding for the needs of the working families of this country, including education, affordable housing, nutrition, environmental protection, and other vital programs.

What we have seen over the last year is a Republican effort to throw 30 million people off of health insurance. What we then see is a Republican effort to give \$1 trillion in tax breaks to the top 1 percent and large corporations and at the end of 10 years raise taxes on middle-class families. Now what we are seeing on the part of the Republican Party is an effort to increase military spending by \$54 billion while ignoring the needs of a struggling middle class. We have to get our priorities right and maybe—just maybe—we have to start listening to what the American people want, not just what wealthy campaign contributors want.

In terms of the Republican so-called healthcare bill, the repeal of the Affordable Care Act, there is massive opposition from the American people. In terms of this tax bill, in case you haven't seen the last few polls, there is massive opposition to a tax bill that gives incredible tax breaks to people who don't need it and raises taxes on the middle class. Maybe—just maybe—we should start paying attention to the needs of working families.

For a start, let us be clear that since the passage of the Budget Control Act of 2011, Democrats and Republicans have agreed to operate with parity, which means if you are going to increase military spending, you increase programs that meet the needs of working families, domestic spending. There was parity in 2011 and parity three times after, and parity must continue. It is not acceptable to be talking about a huge increase in military spending and not funding the needs of a shrinking middle class, which desperately needs help in terms of education, in terms of nutrition, and so many other areas.

Furthermore, the American people are quite clear that they want us to move toward comprehensive immigration reform. They understand that it would be a terrible, terrible, terrible thing to say to the 800,000 young people who have lived, in most cases, their entire lives in the United States of America: We are ending the DACA Program. You are going to lose your legal status. You are not going to be able to go to school. You are not going to be able to hold a job. You are not going to be able to be in the military. We are taking away the legal status that you now have, and you will be subject to deportation. That is not what the American people want. They want to continue the DACA Program, and, in fact, they want comprehensive immigration reform—and now. Now is the time to deal with that.

I am happy to say that on this issue, there are a growing number of Republicans in the House and in the Senate who understand that in America, you are not going to throw 800,000 of our brightest young people, who are serving in the military and holding important jobs, out of this country by withdrawing their legal status.

I have been deeply involved, as have Senator BLUNT and others, in the Community Health Center Program, which is so important for the people of our country. Twenty-seven million Americans today receive their healthcare through community health centers, which provide primary care, provide mental health counseling—so important today—provide dental care, and provide low-cost prescription drugs. While my Republican colleagues have been busy trying to throw 30 million people off of health insurance, while they have been busy trying to give a trillion dollars in tax breaks for the rich and for large corporations, somehow they have not had the time to extend the CHIP program or the Community Health Center Program. How in God's Name can we be talking about tax breaks for billionaires and not extending a health insurance program for the children of our country? If the CHIP program is not reauthorized, 9 million children and working families will lose their health insurance.

Let us get our priorities right. Let us immediately pass legislation extending and funding the CHIP program and the Community Health Center Program.