

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.