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Senate

The Senate met at 10:01 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable LUTHER STRANGE, a Senator from the State of Alabama.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Answer us, Eternal One, as we lift our hearts to You. Have mercy upon our lawmakers and hear their prayers. Remind them that You have set apart the godly for Yourself, surrounding them with the shield of Your favor. May Your never forget that You alone can keep a nation safe.

Lord, lead them on the path that will bring them to abundant life, telling them what to do and showing them which way to turn. As Hanukkah ended last evening and Christmas approaches, may Your blessings and peace rest on our Nation and world.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 21, 2017.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable LUTHER STRANGE, a

Senator from the State of Alabama, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. STRANGE thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, throughout this process of tax reform, Senate Republicans explained time and again that we are fighting for the middle class. Our opponents lobbed one attack after another, claiming we were selling hard-working families short. Of course, that is completely wrong. The tax bill we passed was written to help middle-class families from the very beginning. Our goal was to make their taxes lower, simpler, and fairer.

Under our legislation, the typical family of four making the median family income can expect nearly \$2,000 in tax relief next year. Just yesterday, we saw that tax reform has already inspired job creators to increase take-home pay for thousands of their employees. Yet not a single Democrat joined us to pass this tax relief for American families.

What is worse, just before we voted, Senate Democrats raised a point of order that proved who is really going after low-income families. When given the chance, Senate Democrats, led by the junior Senator from Vermont, raised a procedural challenge to strike out a provision that protects colleges that provide students with tuition-free education. Let me say it again. The junior Senator from Vermont raised a procedural challenge to strike out a provision that protects colleges that

provide students with tuition-free education. They chose to do it after the same provision had already passed the Senate before we went to conference. They didn't have to raise this challenge. It is not required. They chose to. In the process, they knowingly hurt schools that provide tuition-free education to students who can't otherwise afford to go to college.

Let me give you an example. Berea College, in my home State of Kentucky, is dedicated to educating students from the Appalachian region who have limited economic resources—in other words, poor kids from Appalachia. Their students' average household income is less than \$30,000 a year. These are kids from families making less than \$30,000 a year. They are from Appalachia, and their families don't have the means to pay for their education.

Here is what they do at Berea. Every single student receives a scholarship, which covers the cost of their tuition—every student. The students work at the school and in their communities to help cover additional living expenses beyond the costs of attending school. In fact, the vast majority of Berea students are able to graduate debt-free because of the model. For example, they have a great restaurant there. You go there and eat lunch. The kids are cooking, and they are serving. They are working their way through school. When they graduate, they don't have any debt.

Berea College, located in one of the most economically challenged areas of my State, offers a quality education to students with the greatest financial need, and it has done so since 1855—1855. It was founded by abolitionists.

In fact, as my friend in the Chair knows, I am originally from his State. Let me tell you about when I first heard of Berea College. My grandmother and my grandfather had an African-American family who helped them around the house, and they had

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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