

an adopted daughter. I was a little kid, and I remember them talking about her going to college.

I said: Where are you going?

She said: I am going to Berea.

I said: Where is that?

She said: It is up in Kentucky.

It was the closest college that would take African-American students at that time. Since they didn't have the means to pay for the tuition, it was a great opportunity to get a tuition-free education.

A few years ago, I called the president of Berea College and said: I would like to try to locate somebody.

He said: Well, the privacy rules are such that all I can do is to see if we can find them and see if they want to meet you.

I said: That is fair enough. This would be a person about a certain age, who would have originally been from Athens, AL. If you can identify this student, I would love to meet her.

He did. When she came to my office in the Capitol with her daughter, who lives in the area, I found out that she graduated from Berea and went on to be a nurse. She lived in the north most of her life and is now relocated in Athens, AL.

This is Berea College. This is the college these guys over here—every single one of them—voted to target by making their endowment subject to a tax that would otherwise only apply to the really big schools in the country—the Ivy League schools.

Every year, Berea uses the returns on its endowment solely for scholarships, and that sets it apart from nearly every other college and university in the Nation. I worked with the Finance Committee to include a provision to protect schools like Berea from taxes on endowments that apply to private schools who choose to sit on these large funds rather than using them aggressively to reduce the cost of attending school. But Senate Democrats identified this exemption as a bridge too far. Instead of allowing the provision to stand, thereby protecting these students at schools like Berea, they decided to pick partisan politics and attack the measure simply because they could. In the process, they assured that Berea would bear the brunt of their blatant political calculation.

Because Democrats stripped this part of the bill, Berea estimates it could pay a tax penalty of nearly \$1 million every year. Berea's president has already explained to us the effect of this tax: The school will be forced to offer fewer scholarships to kids.

The junior Senator from Vermont and his allies, which included every single Member of the Democratic conference, have chosen to make it harder for low-income students to earn a college degree. This is especially hypocritical coming from the man who claims to support free college for all. During the Presidential campaign last year, I remember he was promising free college to everyone. Apparently, that

is free college to everyone except at Berea College, where it is already free, thanks to generations of donors who built their endowment.

I am at a loss for words. I don't understand how they can claim to fight for students one moment and then make it harder for students to afford college the next. They chose to attack the tax bill by any means necessary, even though they knew the outcome and, in the process, launched a direct attack on the ability of schools like Berea to provide tuition-free education to needy students.

This action by Senate Democrats is deeply disappointing and will provide real and lasting harm. I hope my friends on the other side of the aisle realize the American people will see their partisan tactics for what they really are—an attack on low-income students who want to pursue opportunity and find success.

A number of my colleagues in Congress have said they are interested in fixing this problem, including my colleague from Kentucky, Congressman ANDY BARR. I am committed to working with him and other Members of Congress, and with schools like Berea, to help right this wrong. It is hard not to repeat. This amendment was offered by the man who wanted to provide every student in America with free college tuition but at the same time wanted to reduce the number of scholarships at a college where it is already free, actually, thanks to the generosity of decades of wealthy people who gave to their endowment, believing the mission of providing a college education for poor kids from Appalachia was a worthy goal. We are going to fix this problem. We are going to fix it as soon as we can.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, the Senate has important business to conclude this week. The American people are counting on Congress to reach a government funding agreement. If we were to fail to reach an agreement, we would be failing to ensure that our all-volunteer Armed Forces have all of the resources they need to protect our country in the face of myriad threats from all around the globe. We would be subjecting programs that American families rely on to draconian sequestration cuts that none of us want to take effect.

The Senate stands ready to take up an agreement as soon as one originates over in the House. We are ready to work together, across the aisle, to ensure there is no lapse in funding for critical services. Furthermore, my Republican colleagues in the Senate stand ready and eager to ensure full and long-term funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program. There are 9 million children who receive coverage through CHIP. They and their parents deserve to know that Congress is committed to them.

Republicans agree. We support a provision that would fund CHIP not just for a few weeks but for 5 years. Unfortunately, our Democratic colleagues are unwilling to make that commitment to American families. Thus far, they have opposed all of our efforts to include 5 years of CHIP funding in this week's agreement. Whatever partisan politics are leading my colleagues on the other side to this mystifying conclusion, it is time to put them aside and do right by our constituents. I hope we can all work together and give Americans the peace of mind they deserve, particularly going into the Christmas season.

TRIBUTE TO LUTHER STRANGE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on a completely different matter, I would like to say a few words in tribute to a fine colleague whose all-too-brief time in the Senate will soon draw to a close.

Senator LUTHER STRANGE of Alabama is the newest Member of this body, having been sworn in just this past February, but he did not waste any time in making an impact. In this historic year for the Senate, LUTHER quickly emerged as a strong voice on policy and an important vote on landmark legislation.

On a personal level, it didn't take anyone long to realize that this newcomer would rank among the most diligent, dedicated, and public-spirited Members of this institution. At first, we even wondered whether LUTHER might be a little too diligent.

Upon his arriving in Washington, the Senator dived into the task of meeting his colleagues with the friendly earnestness that is his calling card. The first time LUTHER passed Senator ROBERTS in a Capitol hallway, he stopped to introduce himself and share his excitement to be joining the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee. There was nothing unusual there, but I have it on good authority that the very next day, when LUTHER found himself sharing an elevator with Senator ROBERTS, the junior Senator from Alabama introduced himself all over again. Not long after, a chance meeting on the train occasioned yet a third introduction. PAT ROBERTS had to put a stop to it.

"Yes, Luther," he broke in. "I think we've met before—and we're sure glad to have you here, too." We certainly were glad as well.

LUTHER came to the Senate with a national reputation for integrity and excellence in public service. That started young. The proud son of a Navy veteran turned college professor, this Birmingham paperboy made Eagle Scout at age 13—an accomplishment that still shows up on his lapel from time to time.

He received his bachelor's from Tulane, where—and I know this may come as a shock—the man the Senate historian has apparently verified as the tallest Senator in history played scholarship basketball.

After graduation, to save for law school, he spent a year on a boat that supplied oil rigs in the North Sea. He pitched in on everything—did whatever it took to help the team—and helped the crew navigate the ship through choppy waters.

These qualities will sound familiar to everyone who has worked with LUTHER since.

He built a sterling reputation as an up-and-coming lawyer in private practice. He then set it aside to serve the people of the State he loves as Alabama's attorney general.

In the fine Alabama tradition of public servants, like his friends and mentors Jeff Sessions and RICHARD SHELBY, he combined a steel spine with a servant's heart. Whenever the people of the State needed defending—their businesses, their religious liberties, their Second Amendment rights—their attorney general was there for them.

Then as now, he fought fiercely when times required it and his principles demanded it, but no matter how important the issue at hand, from the Supreme Court to the Senate floor, LUTHER never loses his good humor or his conviction that we serve in order to help our constituents, not to aggrandize ourselves.

LUTHER STRANGE reminds us that character counts. He reminds us that deeply held conservative values do not in any way stand opposed to collegiality and common decency. To the contrary, our values require these things.

He reminds us that the American people need not choose between leaders who share their principles and leaders who dignify public service. They should hold their elected officials to a high standard and demand that we do too.

If you cannot tell, LUTHER's colleagues look up to him in more ways than one. We are sorry to see him go.

In the farewell speech that Senator STRANGE delivered on this floor, he challenged his colleagues to revive greater comity in this body. He implored us not to give up on bipartisanship or on building friendships that run deeper than policy disagreements. He reminded us that the Senate's Marble Room, across the hallway from this Chamber, used to be a popular gathering place. Senators from both parties would relax and get to know one another above and beyond the specific disputes of the day. Today, LUTHER pointed out, this room often sits empty.

His advice is well taken, and I have an idea how we could begin to put it into practice. All of us on both sides of the aisle could try to approach our work with more of the optimism, can-do spirit, and reverence for this great institution that LUTHER STRANGE has brought to work every single day.

Of course, the Senate's loss will be a happy gain for LUTHER's beloved family.

Despite the fact that his bright idea for a first date with Melissa was a trip

to the Talladega Superspeedway to take in the Talladega 500, he convinced her to marry him anyway. Their loving partnership has now spanned 36 years and counting. They have raised two sons. I hear that Luke is just an inch shy of his dad's height and that Keehn is an inch taller. In recent years, LUTHER and Melissa have become the proud grandparents of two young boys.

I have it on good authority that a certain black Lab named Sophie might be the most excited of all the Stranges to welcome the Senator back home to Birmingham.

Wherever LUTHER's distinguished career takes him next, I know he is glad it will involve more time with the people he loves most.

He has served with distinction in the Senate during a year of historic achievements. On behalf of Alabamians, he has made vital contributions on the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry; Armed Services; Budget; and Energy and Natural Resources Committees. He has cast votes to help middle-class families and set America on a brighter trajectory for years to come.

We thank him and wish him every success in his future endeavors, and we salute him for the dedicated service he has rendered to his country and to the people of the great State of Alabama.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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. HATCH. 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.

WORK OF THE REPUBLICAN-LED CONGRESS

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, often here in Washington, it can be difficult to focus on what counts.

We live in an information environment which is increasingly atomized and persistently polarized. Almost all will inevitably focus on who is up and who is down in the endless cycle of partisan gamesmanship. News cycles come and news cycles go. Poll numbers jump, then fall, then jump again, and fall again, but nobody should forget that

what really matters around here, at the end of the day, is policy, and the first year of unified Republican government has delivered plenty of that.

In 2016, the American people faced a stark choice. The Republicans promised a new era of deregulation and limited government—a new policy approach that would entrust free markets and free citizens to drive us forward. The Democrats, on the other hand, renewed and restated their faith in the effectiveness of government, centered here in Washington, to direct and command the national welfare. The American people spoke loudly, and they spoke decisively. The Republicans were given the reins and were instructed to sort all of this out.

Nobody needs to remind me that elections are the beginning of the challenge, not the end. The Republicans may have prevailed in the campaign, but an election won is nothing more than an opportunity seized. It is nothing more than a charge to carry out the promises offered on the trail, and that is precisely what we are doing.

Here in the Senate, despite fits and starts, we are moving the ball forward. Notwithstanding often vicious treatment by the media and the constant obstruction of the Democrats here in Congress, we are getting work done. Promises made in 2016 have become promises kept in 2017. The American people were promised the removal of redtape and infuriating bureaucratic encumbrances on economic growth. As soon as we took office in early 2017, we moved to do just that.

We confirmed Neomi Rao as the Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. Under her stewardship, the Executive has cut over a dozen old rules for every single new rule created. Regulation has been subjected to actual cost-savings analysis, and, likely, billions have been saved in the process.

Here in Congress we passed a dozen CRAs to cut down on costly and ineffective rules passed in the twilight hours of the Obama administration. The list of deregulatory items speaks for itself: restoration of free markets and free competition on internet, done; new environmental policy to unleash the potential of American energy production, done; reform of public lands designation and renewal of State and local control over western territories, done; Labor Department reform that restores bargaining power to employees and employers rather than unions and bureaucrats, done. On nearly every front, from education to justice issues and everything in between, there has been substantial progress.

Personnel are often the catalyst to policy, and we still have nominations in several agencies to come. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is in good hands with Mick Mulvaney and will eventually be handed off to a capable permanent Director. Federal Trade Commission nominations should be arriving shortly, and just recently the