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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, the Earth belongs to You and everything in it. Even when wrong seems overwhelming, You continue to rule. Create in our lawmakers a hunger and thirst for integrity and honesty. Give them pure hearts and truthful lips, accompanied by a passion to glorify You.

Lord, provide them wisdom to live for the honor of Your Name as they remember that they are Your ambassadors. May they look to You for help, knowing that You surround them with the shield of Your Divine favor.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The majority leader is recognized.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this evening, President Trump will deliver his first State of the Union Address. As tens of millions of Americans tune in, he will continue a time-honored tradition by taking stock of the past year and laying out his vision for the future.

For anyone who has been reading the headlines over the last year and paying

attention to the issues that directly impact middle-class families, the state of our Union will not come as a surprise.

Unemployment is low and consumer confidence is high. The news is packed with all the pay raises, special bonuses, expanded benefits, and new investments that are flowing into American households and communities because of a landmark tax reform law that Congress passed and the President signed in December.

Hundreds of companies have announced that a more competitive tax code is allowing them to quickly ramp up the amount they can invest in their own American workers. This includes some of our country's largest employers.

Walmart is increasing its starting wage for all hourly associates, expanding maternity and parental leave, and giving \$1,000 bonuses to its own employees. Disney, AT&T, and Bank of America are giving \$1,000 tax reform bonuses to more than 100,000 workers each. The list goes on. It is not just the big guys who are benefiting.

Yesterday afternoon, here on the floor, I talked about Verst Logistics in Walton, KY, which paid its full-time workers bonuses as a result of tax reform. I shared the story of a woman who works for Verst. She fought back tears as she explained what this bonus would do for her family. Money had gotten tight around the holidays, but while she and her husband had saved enough to give their five children a merry Christmas, mom and dad were planning to go without gifts of their own. But because Congress seized this opportunity to modernize our Tax Code, she got her very own tax reform bonus. With that extra money she and her husband were able to buy each other Christmas presents after all and enjoy a nice dinner out, to boot.

I can share these stories all day. I am so proud that Congress and the President teamed up to take money out of

Washington's pocket and put it back in the pockets of hard-working Americans who earned it.

Some of our Democratic colleagues don't seem to feel that way. They all voted against a law that would raise take-home pay for American families, who have spent a decade struggling not just to get ahead but oftentimes to simply stay afloat. Several have made news in recent days by scoffing at these bonuses, pay raises, and new benefits.

My friends the Democratic leaders in both the Senate and the House have both used the word "crumbs"—"crumbs." One of their colleagues, the former chair of the DNC, said she doesn't think \$1,000 "goes very far for almost anyone." So \$1,000 doesn't go far for almost anyone? That might be true in New York or San Francisco, but it sure isn't true in Kentucky. I think taking that argument to most kitchen tables would get you laughed out of the room.

Of course, the immediate raises, bonuses, and worker benefits are far from the whole story. Tax reform will also deliver direct relief to middle-class families across America by cutting our tax rates and doubling the standard deduction.

A typical family of four earning a median income will get to keep more than \$2,000 of their own money that they would have otherwise sent to the IRS next year.

Furthermore, the law repeals ObamaCare's punitive individual mandate tax, and soon many Americans are likely to see lower utility rates as utility companies pass along their savings to consumers.

Just yesterday, two major Kentucky utilities asked the Kentucky Public Service Commission for permission to pass \$180 million in tax reform savings on to their customers, which could lower their bills this year. That is particularly important to low-income families, because paying their utility

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



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