

bill is a big percentage of any of their take-home pay.

We are already seeing early signs that tax reform will create an environment where wages will be higher and opportunity will be more abundant for years, even decades, to come.

President Trump and Republicans in Congress understand that when you make America a more attractive place to invest and create jobs, you are helping American families and communities.

We understand that the myth of an “us versus them” economy, where employers must lose for workers to win, is nothing more than a divisive political talking point with no basis in economics. That is why we seized this generational opportunity to provide a 21st century tax code that will give our country a fairer fight with our competitors overseas. We are already seeing new factories announced and new investments pouring into our country as a result.

Tax reform is far from the only way this President and this Congress have gone to bat for the future of our country. We have taken a machete to the forest of redtape that the Obama administration left behind.

To name just three examples, Congress and the White House have teamed up to roll back regulations that threatened hundreds of thousands of coal jobs, required States to give grants to Planned Parenthood, and had needlessly blocked oil exploration in a small portion of Federal land in Alaska.

After the Senate confirmed President Trump’s Cabinet, from Secretary Mattis at the Pentagon to Administrator Pruitt at the EPA, these fine officials have notched achievement after achievement for the American people, laying the groundwork for a stronger and safer nation.

We have made major progress for American veterans, like Cpl Matthew Bradford of Central Kentucky, a true American hero who will be attending tonight as a guest of the First Lady.

Congress has passed and the President has signed laws that will help our veterans access the healthcare options they need and the employment training programs they deserve. We have much more to do for our heroes, but these first steps are indeed promising.

We have taken big steps in the war against addiction and the scourge of opioids, an issue that is deeply personal for far, far too many American families.

In just his first year in office, the President has begun to transform the Federal judiciary. President Trump had more new circuit court judges confirmed in his first year than any prior President, a testimony to the fine quality of the nominees he sends here to the Senate, and we will vote to confirm another excellent judge later today. And the President rose to the occasion of a Supreme Court vacancy by filling it with a brilliant and experienced jurist in Justice Gorsuch.

On all of these fronts—from middle-class Americans’ pocketbooks to the ongoing fight against ISIL—there is more good news than I can begin to recite this morning.

I very much look forward to attending the State of the Union tonight and hearing from our President. On behalf of all the Americans we represent—men and women from coast to coast who are seeing the economy turn around and their country grow stronger before their eyes—I am glad there will be so much to applaud.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of David Ryan Stras, of Minnesota, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Eighth Circuit.

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

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

REMEMBERING ELDER VON G. KEETCH

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I rise to honor the life of my friend Elder Von G. Keetch, legal counsel and leader in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. His passing on Friday evening was sudden and unexpected, and I wish to extend my condolences to his family during this difficult time.

Elder Keetch served as a general authority and executive director of the LDS Church’s Public Affairs Department. He helped to shape community and government relations for the church as a recognized expert in constitutional law. His career was devoted to defending religious liberty for all religious institutions. His insight was particularly salient during this ever-changing world. As his daughter Steffani Keetch Dastrup said, “He wanted to defend and support all churches and all religious beliefs and all people’s rights to believe and act

the way they feel is right. That was a big part of his work.”

I consider it a privilege to have worked alongside Elder Keetch over the past several years. I was able to witness firsthand the love he had for his wife, the pride he had in his children, and the devotion he had for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I am grateful for his guidance, for his counsel, and for his friendship.

His humble expertise and kind demeanor will be sorely missed by all those who knew him. His legacy of faith and love will bless his family for generations to come.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

REMEMBERING ED LORENZEN

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I rise with great sadness to remember Edward Lorenzen, who, along with his 4-year-old son Michael, perished this weekend in a house fire.

Ed was invaluable to my staff during last year’s tax reform debate. The Washington Post honored his contributions to Congress, saying: “Quietly and intelligently, Mr. Lorenzen provided objective, reliable fiscal information, even—or especially—when facts and figures were the last thing wishful thinkers in Washington [or the government] wanted to face.”

The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, where Ed served as a senior adviser, said: “He was a brilliant budget mind—his guidance and expertise is a void that cannot be filled.”

The committee also remembered his deep love for his children, saying: “We worked every day with a kind, loving man who cherished his three kids, bringing them to the office on occasion and lighting up in their presence and at the sound of their names.”

I cannot imagine the grief Ed and Michael’s family and loved ones face. I would like to extend my deepest sympathies to them during this difficult time. May we all hold our families a little closer today.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, tonight the President will address a joint session of Congress in his first official State of the Union. I want to talk about what I expect the President to say and also what I suspect he will not.

The President will be eager to defend the accomplishments of his nascent administration and take credit for a healthy American economy, pointing to low unemployment, job growth, and a soaring stock market, but the truth is, these trends were present before Donald Trump took office. President Trump was handed an already healthy economy by his predecessor. Like many things in his life, he inherited the healthy economy.

Here are two words we will not hear President Trump say tonight about the