

other parts of our broken immigration system is our best chance to produce legislation that can pass the House, pass the Senate, and earn the President's signature. This is why the proposal put forward by Senator GRASSLEY and others, which draws on the President's generous framework and which the President has officially endorsed, has my support, because presumably we will actually make a law here.

I have made no effort—none—to tell Democrats what amendments they should offer. Of course, they shouldn't try to dictate Republican amendments either.

The longer my colleagues across the aisle refuse to come to the table, the longer they are unable to produce any legislation they actually support, the lower the odds that we can arrive at a legislative solution this week.

Yesterday alone, the Senate was open for 9 hours—yesterday alone, 9 hours. Nine hours we could have spent processing amendments and proceeding to votes. Nine hours down the drain because Democrats won't let us start the debate they have spent months demanding.

Now that we can finally proceed to consider the underlying bill this morning, I hope my colleagues across the aisle will come to the table. The President has made clear what principles must be addressed if we are going to make a law instead of merely making political points.

While our Democratic colleagues can no longer prevent the Senate from starting the debate, they can continue to delay votes on amendments. I hope that won't happen.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on Monday, President Trump unveiled his proposal to improve America's infrastructure. Today he will host committee chairmen and ranking members at the White House for a bipartisan, bicameral meeting on that subject. I am grateful the President is prioritizing this and reaching across the aisle.

Experts agree that America's aging infrastructure needs a lot of help. Nationwide, 9.1 percent of our bridges are considered structurally deficient, and 13.6 percent are considered functionally obsolete. One recent study suggests that road congestion costs us \$160 billion a year—for road congestion. The answer is not simply to throw new money at old problems.

It took American workers less time to build great skyscrapers, start to finish, than it now takes bureaucrats to review—not even build, but review—proposals for new bridges and roadways. We need to streamline regulations, reform the permitting process, and get government out of the way wherever possible. Once projects are proposed, they should be reviewed in a safe but reasonable amount of time and then completed as quickly and cost effectively as possible.

This is a prime opportunity for bipartisan cooperation. Our last three highway bills, our last three WRDA bills, and our last three FAA bills all passed the Senate easily, averaging more than 80 votes. I hope we can renew that consensus when the time comes.

TAX REFORM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on one final matter, for 8 years under President Obama, our economy didn't perform as well as it should have. America's wages and salaries hardly grew. Many job creators sat on the sidelines, wary of new tax increases or heavy-handed regulations. Washington had its foot on the brake. Last year, all that changed.

President Trump and this Republican Congress set out to make life easier for workers and for job creators. We cut regulations and passed tax reform to give middle-class families immediate relief and set the stage for more hiring and more wage growth in the years ahead.

I recently heard from a small family-owned inland river shipyard in Ashland, KY, along the Ohio River. They build and repair commercial barges. Here is what their president wrote. He said: "Thanks to the tax change and optimism of our customers, we are at long last able to replace equipment which has been used way past [its] life expectancy and possibly add two more production workers."

Last week a Louisville employer dropped by to tell me how he is using his tax reform savings: \$1,000 bonuses for more than 100 Kentucky employees.

Small companies and big business alike are thrilled that they finally have a 21st-century tax code. It makes them more competitive with overseas rivals and frees up more money to invest right here at home, and middle-class workers are reaping the rewards. Major national companies like Pfizer and Home Depot, which together employ more than half a million Americans, have announced hundreds of millions of dollars in employee bonuses—again, thanks to tax reform.

Just this week, MetLife announced a major new investment in 50,000-plus employees. The company is raising its minimum wage, enhancing benefits, boosting retirement contributions, and creating a skills development fund. In short, MetLife is betting big on U.S. workers, and so are the more than 300 other companies that have already announced major investments in their employees and in their facilities—right here in America, right here, thanks to historic tax reform.

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. MCCONNELL. 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.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

BROADER OPTIONS FOR AMERICANS ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 2579, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 302, H.R. 2579, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow the premium tax credit with respect to unsubsidized COBRA continuation coverage.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. All postcloture time is expired.

The question is on agreeing to the motion to proceed.

The motion was agreed to.

BROADER OPTIONS FOR AMERICANS ACT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bill.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2579) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow the premium tax credit with respect to unsubsidized COBRA continuation coverage.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Iowa.

AMENDMENT NO. 1959

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute.)

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 1959.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Iowa [Mr. GRASSLEY] proposes an amendment numbered 1959.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

AMENDMENT NO. 1948 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1959

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I call up the Toomey amendment No. 1948 to the Grassley amendment No. 1959.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL], for Mr. TOOMEY, proposes an amendment numbered 1948 to amendment No. 1959.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.