

thing. In Corpus Christi recently, I visited with the owners of Groomer's Seafood, who plan to expand distribution facilities serving thousands of restaurants statewide. American Bank in Corpus Christi is projecting that it can lend an additional \$120 million as a result of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. That is money it can lend to small businesses to grow or start a new business. In San Antonio, my hometown, Cox Manufacturing will move up construction of a new 8,000-square-foot plant. In Amarillo, up in the Panhandle of Texas, Happy State Bank made news to go with its name, which is higher hourly pay. In Lumberton, TX, the women running an engineering company called Leak Sealers paid tax savings forward to employees, calling on other businesses to do the same.

Our colleagues here in Washington who voted against the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act made a big mistake. I think they are beginning to realize that now, as the good news is rolling in. They have mostly kept quiet in terms of the criticism they lodged against the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act as we were debating it because they can't deny the facts, and they can't deny what is happening all across America—more take-home pay, more jobs, more money being invested and coming back home from overseas, and its generally being a very positive piece of legislation.

Some have said—like Ms. PELOSI—that the tax cuts we passed just help job creators and give crumbs to others, but that is not true. Individuals will benefit from lower rates across the board. They will see an increase in the standard deduction and the child tax credit too.

One overlooked part of the law will help bring investments and jobs to distressed communities, creating opportunity zones in every State. That is something our colleague Senator SCOTT championed and made sure was part of the bill.

So, Mr. President, amidst our pain, anguish, and the horror of terrible incidents like that which occurred in Parkland, FL, there is good news to be found, but it is hard to focus on the good news when our constituents are looking at us and asking what we are going to do to make sure that the next potential mass shooting is prevented and that we have done everything in our power to try to stop it. I am not sure we will be able to stop all of them, but we can stop some of them. We can make sure that incidents like that which occurred in Sutherland Springs, TX—that somebody who is already illegally disqualified from purchasing a firearm doesn't get their hands on one.

Well, we know what we have to do, and what I am asking all of our colleagues to do—including the Democratic leader, Senator SCHUMER, who is a cosponsor of Fix NICS, along with the Republican majority leader—let's do this. Let's pass this bill. We could do it in one day, give people an opportunity to debate it and vote on it. If we

keep looking for the perfect and make sure that the perfect is somehow the enemy of the good, we will end up with nothing. But we can't end up with nothing. America deserves something that will make a difference. The people in Parkland, FL, and in Sutherland Springs, TX, deserve something better, and I believe that Fix NICS is the best place to start.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, we heard a whole lot about the tax bill the Republicans passed, and it basically works like this: We borrow \$1.5 trillion from our children and we give that money to the richest Americans. And then when there is a little bit of help for middle-class workers—and I mean a little—we say: Well, that is really cool.

I like that we are doing a little for the middle class, but I don't like the fact that for every dime to help a middle-class worker, we gave away a dollar to the richest Americans. In other words, America has been robbed in the biggest bank heist ever, and then it was justified by distributing a modest amount to our workers. Even then, they included a provision that will drive up the premiums for healthcare by more than 10 percent next year, on top of whatever rises are driven by the drug companies. So whatever modest gain there is for the middle class is wiped out by more expensive healthcare in America.

So we hear these big, sophisticated arguments: Oh, well, a worker here or there got a bonus. A worker here or there got their wages increased. But they don't tell you that they gave \$1 trillion to the richest Americans. Why not? Why not be honest about the whole entire scope of this tax rip-off, borrowing from our children to enrich the richest Americans?

As one House Member said, here is what this is all about: This is about the fact that my rich donors won't vote for me and won't support me in the next election unless I vote to give them all this money.

That is what happened here, and it is not OK because we see the consequences. We have a budget that attacks the foundations for families to thrive. It takes a trillion dollars out of healthcare. Well, that trillion dollars went to the richest Americans. Then the President gets to the budget and takes a trillion dollars out of healthcare, takes money out of affordable housing. Housing is a very important foundation for families to thrive. So it attacks healthcare and housing, and then it attacks public education.

Quite frankly, because all those resources were taken off the table that could have been invested in infrastructure and jobs in America, it also undermines the concept of a living-wage job, which is the principle that nobody who

works full time in America should live in poverty in America.

The majority has conducted the biggest bank heist in history, and they come to the floor and defend this time and time again without sharing the honest facts with the American people, as I have just shared them with you.

THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, let's turn to another attack on workers. Our entire Constitution had a theme, had a mission statement, and that mission statement was "we the people," government of, by, and for the people. My colleagues might be surprised to discover that the Constitution didn't say "we the privileged; we the wealthy; we the well-connected; we the powerful" because they bring bill after bill to the floor of the Senate that is exactly government of, by, and for the wealthy and the well-connected.

Now we see that the Supreme Court is getting in on the act in this effort to undermine the ability of workers to organize, to get a fair share of the wealth that they create.

Former President Jimmy Carter once said:

Every advance in this half-century—Social Security, civil rights, Medicare, aid to education, one after another—came with the support and leadership of American labor.

Well, he was absolutely right. I would also add a few more things to the list, such as 8-hour workdays, the 40-hour workweek, overtime pay, the minimum wage, family and sick leave, health and safety working standards. When workers have organized, they have fought for better conditions for every American—better pay, better safety, better and fair working conditions—and America is a better nation because of it. It is a much better nation because of the men and women of the labor movement who have fought tirelessly to ensure that our country lives up to that "we the people" vision statement. Thanks to their work, an honest day's work means an honest day's pay for millions of Americans. But that is exactly what the Supreme Court is poised to undo. All the powerful and the privileged—they want even more squeezed out of the workers, so they have spent decades really demonizing and attacking the ability of workers to organize.

During the three decades after World War II, workers got a fair share of the wealth they were creating. Their wages went up as productivity went up, and it turned out that this is good for business as well because workers who have paychecks are able to buy products, and then the companies can sell more. The companies do well when people get paid fairly, but that concept is about to be undermined in a massive way with an attack on what are called fair share fees.

When workers organize and bargain for better benefits, there is a cost of developing that organization and conducting those negotiations, and every