

business to hire a new worker or to raise wages if the owner can barely pay the tax bill.

It is unlikely that an American company is going to have a lot of spare cash for investing in its workforce if it is struggling to compete with foreign companies that are paying far less in taxes. And it is unlikely that America's global companies are going to focus on reinvesting in the United States if they face a tax penalty for bringing foreign earnings back home.

When it came time to draft a tax reform bill, Republicans knew that the bill had to do two things. First, it had to lower the tax burden on American families and put more money in Americans' pockets right away, and it had to create the kind of economy that would give American families access to security and prosperity for the long term.

To achieve the first goal, we lowered tax rates across the board for American families. We nearly doubled the standard deduction, and we doubled the child tax credit.

To meet the second goal, we lowered our Nation's massive corporate tax rate, which, until January 1, was the highest corporate tax rate in the developed world. We lowered tax rates across the board for owners of small and medium-sized businesses, farms, and ranches. We expanded the ability of business owners to recover investments they make in their businesses, which will free up cash so that they can reinvest in their operations and their workers. We brought the U.S. international tax system into the 21st century by replacing our outdated worldwide system with a modernized territorial tax system so that American businesses are not operating at a disadvantage next to their foreign counterparts. It is working.

In less than 3 months, we have seen lower tax burdens for American families, pay increases, bonuses, new jobs, increased investment in the American economy, better employee benefits, and other kinds of benefits, such as lower utility bills. All of that means more money in Americans' pockets. It means more money to put toward a child's education, more money to save for a house or a car, and more money to save for retirement.

Tax reform is accomplishing our goal of making life better for American families, and the benefits have just begun.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:43 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

ECONOMIC GROWTH, REGULATORY RELIEF, AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, 10 years ago almost to the day, this country was on the verge of a financial crisis that would wreck the lives of millions of families. The experts—let's say the so-called experts—had their heads in the sand. They shrugged off the warnings. They told the public everything was fine.

Jim Cramer was telling hard-working Americans to invest their money in Bear Stearns. Maybe younger Members of the Senate don't really remember what Bear Stearns was. Jim Cramer said: "I'm not giving up on the thing."

Bank of America was putting the finishing touches on its plan to buy the subprime lender Countrywide, which they called "the best domestic mortgage platform."

Hank Paulson, the last Treasury Secretary who got plucked from Goldman Sachs—we have had at least one since—downplayed homeowners' pain. He said: "You know, the stock market goes up and down every day more than the entire value of the subprime mortgages in the country."

Meanwhile, advocates in communities—the people who were actually dealing with the consequences of the crisis—were sounding the alarm. The fair lending group Greenlining began meeting with Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan at least once a year, starting in 1999—1999—to warn about predatory mortgage lending. Attorneys general from across the country started to caution about troubling trends.

In Cleveland, which is in the Presiding Officer's home State, we saw home prices climb 66 percent in 10 years, with the housing market juiced by "flipping on mega-steroids," according to a government panel that investigated the crisis. City officials in Cleveland began to hear reports that predatory home refinances were being pushed on buyers regardless of whether they could afford to repay the loans. Those refinances mean fees to bankers.

Foreclosures began to shoot up in Cuyahoga County—5,900 foreclosure filings in 2000, and by 2007, 15,000. My wife and I live in ZIP Code 44105, which includes Slavic Village in Cleveland, OH. In the first half of 2007, that ZIP Code had more foreclosures than any ZIP Code in the United States of America.

The city of Cleveland went to the Fed and asked it to use its authority to restrain subprime lending. The Fed did nothing. The people in charge in Washington were too certain, too detached, and perhaps too comfortable to listen to the warnings from Ohioans and from people across the country.

We saw what happened. All of these people who had the hubris to say that the economy could keep growing and keep growing and keep growing while

the middle class was being looted—those people, thank you very much, weathered the crisis just fine. No one with a cable show had their home foreclosed on. Nobody on Wall Street who tanked the economy went to jail. In fact, many of these same people now have fancy jobs in fancy buildings and dress in fancy clothes and have fancy titles and work on Wall Street and in the White House. But in ZIP Codes like 44105, in Slavic Village and Cleveland, OH, and places like it across the country, parents were sitting down at kitchen tables to have painful conversations with their children.

Think about what this means. You lose your job, or you can't keep up with your mortgage payment. The husband, the wife, two teenage children. You have a family pet, a dog. You realize you are falling further and further behind. You are still working and you are still trying, but things aren't going well. The first thing you do—your dog has to go to the vet. You can't pay for that. You simply don't have the money. You take the dog to the shelter. You do what a lot of families in Cleveland unfortunately do; you just try to give your dog away or do something.

You then face your children. You say to your children: We are going to lose our home. We are going to have to move. We don't know where we are going to move yet. We don't know which school district. We don't know where your friends will be because we are going to have to move.

I don't think people around here really think much about what foreclosures mean to families. Remember what I said—5,900 foreclosures in Cuyahoga County in 2000 and 15,000 by 2007. Hundreds of those were in ZIP Code 44105. Think what that does to those families. My colleagues, when we vote today and tomorrow and Thursday on whether we are going to pass this giveaway bill to Wall Street, just think about that.

The CEOs and the boards at the banks and people in Washington who are supposed to be watching failed these Americans. That is why Congress, including some Republicans, did something about it 10 years ago, something to stop this from ever happening again. We passed a law. We created important protections for the financial system, for taxpayers, for homeowners. We held banks and watchdogs accountable to prevent another crisis.

Fundamentally, we did it right a decade ago, but Wall Street never gives up that easily. They didn't like that bill. They opposed that bill—most of them. Big bank lobbyists, the same ones who were so sure the 2000s crisis wasn't going to happen, those who flippantly said that things are all right—remember what Hank Paulson said. Hank Paulson, the Bush Secretary of the Treasury, said: You know, the stock market goes up and down every day more than the entire value of subprime mortgages in the country. Well, Hank Paulson didn't pay much of a price.