

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. (Mr. TILLIS). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 50, nays 48, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 68 Ex.]

YEAS—50

Alexander	Flake	Paul
Barrasso	Gardner	Perdue
Blunt	Graham	Portman
Boozman	Grassley	Risch
Burr	Hatch	Roberts
Capito	Heller	Rounds
Cassidy	Hoeven	Rubio
Collins	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Corker	Inhofe	Scott
Cornyn	Isakson	Shelby
Cotton	Johnson	Sullivan
Crapo	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cruz	Lankford	Thune
Daines	Lee	Tillis
Enzi	McConnell	Toomey
Ernst	Moran	Wicker
Fischer	Murkowski	Young

NAYS—48

Baldwin	Hassan	Nelson
Bennet	Heinrich	Peters
Blumenthal	Heitkamp	Reed
Booker	Hirono	Sanders
Brown	Jones	Schatz
Cantwell	Kaine	Schumer
Cardin	King	Shaheen
Carper	Klobuchar	Smith
Casey	Leahy	Stabenow
Coons	Manchin	Tester
Cortez Masto	Markey	Udall
Donnelly	McCaskill	Van Hollen
Durbin	Menendez	Warner
Feinstein	Merkley	Warren
Gillibrand	Murphy	Whitehouse
Harris	Murray	Wyden

NOT VOTING—2

Duckworth	McCain
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The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 50, the nays are 48.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Patrick Pizzella, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Labor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

NOMINATION OF MIKE POMPEO

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor as we, as Americans, continue to see the regular reminders that the world is a very dangerous place. The horrendous reports out of Syria over the weekend show us there are leaders in the world who will test the rules that define civilized nations. They will exploit any crack that they see in our resolve.

President Trump has consistently responded to these kinds of challenges by showing that he is resolute and that he is unshakable. He has a foreign policy

that always puts America first. To continue to do this, the President needs to have a full national security team on the job and working for America. The Secretary of State is a very important part of that team.

Tomorrow, the Foreign Relations Committee is scheduled to have a hearing on Mike Pompeo's nomination to do this very important job. Mike Pompeo understands that if we want safety and security at home, we need a world that is peaceful and stable. I expect he is going to talk about all of these things at the confirmation hearing, and I look forward to his testimony.

We have all heard about Mike Pompeo's impressive qualifications for the job to which he has been nominated—first in his class at West Point; Harvard Law School; a Member of Congress; and the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. He has the integrity, and he has the experience to serve as America's Secretary of State. As a former Member of Congress, he certainly understands how policy decisions get made and the key importance of congressional oversight. As head of the CIA, he clearly understands the crucial role that the intelligence community plays in preserving America's national security. As a soldier, he understands the consequences of decisions that get made in Washington, DC.

I have traveled with Mike Pompeo to meet with world leaders and to attend national security conferences. He knows the issues, and he knows the people. He is the right person for this job. I met with him just last month after he was nominated. We talked about some of the specific issues going on around the world and how they affect our Nation's national security. It was a very good conversation, and I am extremely confident that he is the right person for this job.

I expect many more people will come away from these hearings tomorrow with great confidence in Mike Pompeo. He will be an excellent representative for our Nation, and he will be a strong hand to implement President Trump's foreign policy. So I look forward to voting on this nomination as soon as possible after the hearings.

It was just a little over a year ago that he was confirmed by a very large, bipartisan majority for his current job as the CIA Director. It was right here on this Senate floor where that confirmation occurred. Fifteen Senators from the other side of the aisle agreed that Mike Pompeo was the right choice for that position. As the nominee for the job he now holds, he drew bipartisan praise for his qualifications. Two Democratic Senators actually came to the floor and spoke in favor of his nomination—Senators FEINSTEIN and WARNER. They are the current vice chair of the Intelligence Committee and the former chair of the Intelligence Committee. Since that time, Mike Pompeo has done an excellent job at the CIA. Even Hillary Clinton has come out and

praised his time in heading that Agency.

I expect that this can be a short process to confirm him in the new job for which he has been nominated, that of Secretary of State. There is certainly no good reason for Democrats to slow things down or to attempt to slow things down.

We need to restore America to a position we once held as the most powerful and respected Nation on the face of the Earth. For 8 years, the previous administration had us going in the wrong direction. The Obama administration followed a policy that it called strategic patience. That meant watching while the Assad regime in Syria crossed one redline after another. Then the redline became a green light. The result is that Syria continues to use chemical weapons today in attacking its own people. Strategic patience did not work.

The Obama administration's policy also meant that North Korea was allowed to get away with too much for far too long. North Korea continued to test nuclear weapons, continued to test missiles, and continued to use hostages as a way of getting what it wanted from other countries. Strategic patience did not work with North Korea.

The Trump administration has said very clearly that the era of strategic patience is over. The leaders of these countries need to understand that their belligerence will not succeed. They need to get the clear message that America has a new foreign policy. It is a policy to secure America's national interests and demonstrate America's leadership around the world. Part of this leadership is to stand up to show that there is a limit to the patience of the civilized countries of the world. The previous administration too often placed international opinion ahead of what was actually best for America. That only made the world a more dangerous place. The Trump administration has begun to get us back on the right track, and Mike Pompeo will ensure that we stay on the right track.

When it comes to issues like the upcoming discussions with North Korea, Mike Pompeo understands the risks of dealing with these kinds of aggressive adversaries. He also understands the opportunities that we now have because of President Trump's forceful stand for American interests.

Democrats should commit to allowing this nomination to move as quickly as possible. We will have a hearing tomorrow. We need to have a thorough discussion about what is happening around the world, and then we need to vote. Let's not have any more of the deliberate delays that we have been seeing by the Democrats in this body—no more pointless and partisan obstruction.

America's adversaries around the world are watching closely—in Russia, in Syria, in North Korea, in Iran, and in other places. It is time for us to show that we are serious about maintaining a strong foreign policy that

puts America first. President Trump is doing his part. Mike Pompeo is ready to do his part in his job. It is now time for the Senate to do our job.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FAIR HOUSING ACT

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, 50 years ago today, Congress enacted the Fair Housing Act, exactly 1 week after the assassination of Martin Luther King as he fought for economic justice for sanitation workers in Memphis. It also came just weeks after the Kerner Commission issued its report on the origins of urban unrest in the 1960s. This report contained the now famous warning that “our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.”

In the wake of these events, the Fair Housing Act made discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of housing illegal for the first time. For generations, redlining, restrictive covenants, and outright discrimination kept families of color locked out of entire neighborhoods, often far from where jobs were, and they created segregated communities that linger to this day. They denied these families the opportunity to build wealth through home ownership. Many of these exclusionary practices were carried out by private entities and local governments. But as Richard Rothstein reminds us in his new book, “The Color of Law”—and I recommend to everybody listening that they read that book—Federal policies also played a significant role in reinforcing segregation.

From 1934 through 1962—30 years, three decades—98 percent of all FHA mortgages went to White homeowners. In a country that in those days was about 10 percent African American, 98 percent of mortgages went to White homeowners. The Fair Housing Act made this despicable discrimination illegal. It required that Federal housing and urban development grants be administered in a way that would “affirmatively further” fair housing—not in a reactive way but in a way that would affirmatively further fair housing. State and local governments and public housing authorities were required to use their Federal funds in ways that would reverse, rather than accelerate or reinforce, segregation in their communities.

April 11, 1968, however, was not the end of our work to ensure fair housing and equal opportunities. Fifty years later, we haven’t had the progress we should have had, and so much more needs to be done.

A new report this year from the Center for Investigative Reporting analyzed tens of millions of mortgage records and found that all across the country people of color are far more likely—even holding constant for economic situations—to be turned down for a loan, taking into account factors like their income and the size of the loan. We know that the 2008 housing crisis hit communities of color particularly hard.

In the run-up to the crisis, faulty mortgages were targeted to people of color. Even those who qualified for a no-frills, no-surprises prime mortgage were often instead steered into a subprime, much riskier loan. Even African-American and Hispanic borrowers with higher incomes than other borrowers found themselves in risky, subprime, designed-to-fail products. These practices of discrimination stripped a generation’s worth of equity from communities that had fought hard for equal access to home ownership.

I know in my community in Cleveland, on the southeast side of Cleveland in the Broadway, Harvard area of that community, so much wealth has been lost. As people finally began to gain in home ownership and in wealth accumulation, what happened in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011 devastated these communities. As a number of my colleagues have heard me say, in my ZIP Code of 44105, in Cleveland, OH, in the first half of 2007, there were more foreclosures than any ZIP Code in the United States of America.

The household wealth of communities of color still hasn’t recovered. My neighborhood hasn’t, my community hasn’t, and my State hasn’t. Middle-class Black and Hispanic families lost half their wealth from 2007 to 2013—half their wealth. Middle-income Black household wealth was \$63,000 in 2007. A decade later, it was \$38,000. The numbers are similar for Hispanic households—\$85,000 down to \$46,000.

Borrowers with these higher cost loans were foreclosed on at about triple the rate of borrowers with standard, 30-year, fixed-rate mortgages. Over a recent 8-year period, 9.3 million homeowners lost their homes through foreclosure, distress sales, or surrendering their home to the lender.

After the crisis, we took steps to fight this discrimination. We created the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to look after bank customers and to help root out discrimination. We required lenders to report more detailed data so that we can more easily spot modern-day redlining.

In 2015, HUD also issued the affirmatively furthering fair housing rule. This rule would have given clearer guidelines to communities to help them assess their own fair housing needs and provided them with the data they needed to inform their decisions. It would have allowed them to set their own goals and timelines.

Some of the questions communities would ask during these assessments

would demand they think in new ways about how to create housing and economic opportunities for all of their residents—no matter their color, no matter family size, no matter their disability if they have one. These are the types of questions this body told the country to ask when it enacted the fair housing bill five decades ago.

But instead of recommitting ourselves to the promise we made 50 years ago, too many Washington politicians are trying to take us backward. Earlier this year, HUD suspended implementing the affirmatively furthering fair housing rule. That will not reverse the requirements of the Fair Housing Act. Instead, it hurts communities, which will once again be left to comply with the law without the technical assistance they need.

Remember that new data that banks were going to report to make it easier to spot lenders who discriminate? The bill the Senate passed last month right here would exempt 85 percent of banks from reporting the data they are collecting and reporting today. So we are not even going to know what happened. This body has scaled back the amount of data we are trying to gather to stop discrimination. Without it, we can’t monitor trends in mortgage lending. It will be harder to see who has access to affordable mortgage credit and, importantly, who does not have access.

HUD is even thinking about changing its mission statement in ways that diminish the importance of combating housing discrimination. The administration’s actions over the past year make it clear they are already wavering in that commitment. For example, in 2017, HUD withdrew guidance requiring equal access for transgender people in homeless shelters. Let’s pick on them even more. According to a report in the New York Times, Dr. Carson’s HUD has suspended several anti-discrimination investigations, including an investigation of discriminatory housing advertisements on Facebook. The administration proposed a 14-percent cut to the HUD budget, including affordable housing and community development programs aimed at creating housing and opportunity for low-income communities.

We know that one-fourth of renters in this country spend at least 50 percent of their income on housing. If one thing goes wrong in their lives, they are evicted or they lose their homes. One-fourth of people in this country who rent are paying at least half their income in housing costs. In Cuyahoga County, the second most populous county in Ohio, one-fourth of all family units, one-fourth of all residents, homeowners or renters, spend one-half of their income on housing, so it is not just renters, but it is often homeowners too.

We are deciding in this body because the President wants to—the far right in this body wants to cut spending on housing even more. We have enough money to do a huge tax cut for the

richest people in the country. The richest 1 percent will get 81 percent of that tax cut. I was talking to an accountant the other day in Elyria, OH. It is tax season, of course, and he is busy. He said: When people come and see me, they ask inevitably when I am doing their taxes “Well, how does this tax bill affect me?”

He asks: Are you a billionaire?

They laugh and say: Of course not.

He then says: Well, only if you are a billionaire will it affect you, and then you will save millions of dollars on your taxes.

That is a bit of an exaggeration, but that is what that tax bill is all about. So if you are a billionaire, if you are a decamillionaire, if you made a million dollars last year, you are going to save a whole lot on your taxes this year. But if you are living in working-class housing, if you can't afford much more than the very basic kind of housing or even worse than that, you are going to see your budget cut. You are going to see fewer vouchers. You are going to see less funding for housing.

What kind of government is this, this mean-spiritedness? There are more tax cuts for the richest in this country, but let's stick it to people who are barely making it. These are people who make \$10 to \$12 an hour. They make \$10 to \$12 an hour, and we are going to cut their Medicaid. They are making \$10 to \$12 an hour, and we are going to scale back their SNAP benefits. They are making \$10 to \$12 an hour, and we are going to undermine their housing subsidies. What is all of that about in this new government that we are living in now?

The last thing we ought to do at a time when a quarter of all renter households—400,000 families in my State of almost 12 million, 400,000 families pay half of their income in housing costs. Again, if one thing goes wrong, if their car breaks down going to work, could they come up with \$500 to fix their car? Probably not. Then what happens? Then they are evicted, and then everything goes upside down because they can't pay their rent, so they get evicted. The kid has to go to a new school district. They lose most of the things they have. They have to find a place to live. They probably don't have the money for the downpayment that a landlord charges.

A few years ago, I hosted a discussion with some of my colleagues and invited Matthew Desmond, the author of the book “Evicted.” In the front of the book, he scribbled the phrase “Home = Life.” If you don't have decent housing, it is pretty hard to put a stable life together for you and your family. One of the things he said in that book is that when you get your paycheck every 2 weeks or once a month, the rent eats first. You have to pay your rent. If you can't afford to pay your rent or you can barely afford to pay your rent, you can't do much else. That simple statement captures so much—a safe, stable home is the foundation for opportuni-

This government is going to give tax cuts to the richest people in the country, and we are pulling the rug out from under people who are working every bit as hard as we do in this body—and many of them work harder than we do—just trying to get along on \$8 or \$10 or \$12 an hour. We are denying people the opportunity of living in a safe, stable home. That is why we must redouble our commitment to fair housing. That is why we must take real, proactive steps.

My colleagues and I have legislation, the Fair and Equal Housing Act of 2017, that would add gender identity and sexual orientation to those protected from discrimination under the Fair Housing Act. Rather than take us backward, we must take these sorts of actions to give more Americans the opportunity to have a safe, stable home and to build wealth through home ownership. We must constantly work toward Dr. King's vision—killed 50 years ago this month—of equality and equal opportunity for all.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

NOMINATION OF ANDREW WHEELER

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today about the nomination of Andrew Wheeler to be the Deputy Administrator of the EPA—an extremely important position.

Mr. Wheeler's expertise and experience make him extraordinarily qualified to become the Deputy Administrator. I am a little biased when it comes to Mr. Wheeler because he has great family roots in the State of West Virginia, which, to me, is a good recommendation in and of itself. I think his wealth of knowledge over the years working on environmental policy in the public and in the private sectors is just incredible. His knowledge and experience will be a tremendous asset to the Agency and to the American people. He understands—watching policy being made and helping policy being made himself but also then transitioning to the private sector and watching how that policy then influences the private sector as well. He has had an active hand in significant environmental—energy—and infrastructure policy achievements and debates and probably some of the failures that we have had, as well as the confirmation of numerous Presidential nominees. So Andrew will have a head start. He will hit the ground running, and that is what we need at the EPA.

Andrew was also tasked with coordinating and working with the various agencies within the committee's jurisdiction. Most importantly, he has been and was tasked with this, so he worked with other agencies while he was a staffer.

Beginning in 2009, Mr. Wheeler went into the private sector, continuing his work in environmental and energy policy. Throughout his career, he has worked with individuals and stake-

holders who run the political gamut, and he has left a very positive impression on them.

During his confirmation hearing in our EPW Committee, he was very forthright in his answers, very willing to look deeper into certain areas, and very willing to not express an opinion if he didn't really know or was unsure of some of the details. Actually, I think he exhibited a real curiosity as to how he could make the EPA run smoother and better and be more reflective of what the President and we here in the Senate and people across this country see as a vision for the EPA.

I have also been impressed by the number of individuals who know Mr. Wheeler and who have come forward and spoken about his expertise and his willingness to collaborate on issues all across the country. He has had an active role in my State of West Virginia, which is a high energy-producing State.

I urge my colleagues to vote to confirm Mr. Wheeler. They will have no regret. I look forward to working with him at the EPA on issues that are important to my State of West Virginia and across the country.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

TAX REFORM AND GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, over the last couple of weeks, many of us have had an opportunity to spend more time at home than we do just going back and forth a few days a week.

While I was there, I had the opportunity to talk to small business owners, employees—people who are seeing their paychecks for the first time reflecting what we have done with the tax bill. Both in my hometown of Springfield, MO, and around our State, I also heard a level of optimism that was very encouraging.

One of the people I talked to was on the national board of manufacturers. A recent poll of the manufacturers looking at their confidence level reflected that it was the highest it has ever been in all of the time they have been polling on how they see the future.

Mr. President, where you and I live, in an economy that makes things and grows things, we always do better. We are a productive part of the country. We don't do quite as well in an advice economy, but we are not opposed to an advice-giving economy. We have people who give advice. But, frankly, if you put that on top of truly productive capacity and a marketplace that meets that capacity, we always do very well.

As I talked to people, I heard consistently two reasons that people feel their optimism is justified and understandably growing. One reason is the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. No matter what was said about the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, people who were told it wouldn't help them are finding out, when they get their first paychecks, that it is helping them. People who were told that the

investment opportunities that would encourage them to grow their small businesses wouldn't be there for them are finding out that they are there for them, and they see those things coming. The economy is generally seeing money stay where we live that otherwise would have gone to Washington, DC. Forty-three different entities have come to our offices with ideas about what they are doing.

The 53,000 State employees in our State—the payroll deduction would indicate that this year, \$32½ million from just that group of employees that was sent to Washington, DC, last year—it will stay in Missouri this year.

I mentioned on the floor not too long ago that one of our counties had reported that their county payroll—that the average county employee would take home \$1,800 more this year, with the same paycheck to start with. That is beyond what they would have taken home last year. For all of those county employees put together, in Boone County, MO, it would mean that \$946,000 will stay in Boone County that previously would have gone to Washington, DC. That makes a difference in the economy of the county because there are a lot of other people beyond those 485 employees who see the same kinds of things happening to them, but it really makes a difference for families. That take-home pay difference that some people here in the Senate and other places in this building would suggest won't matter to families—it turns out it matters a lot. And I will say again that it particularly matters a lot if you don't have it. If you have all kinds of money, it is easy to say: Well, \$200 a month—what difference does that make? Let me assure you, it makes a difference if you don't have it. Lots of families and individuals are beginning to see the ability to do more things with their own money.

The second thing I consistently heard about was just the difference in the regulation atmosphere. Earlier this week, a dozen Federal agencies came together in an effort to improve the environmental review process to allow infrastructure projects to go on more quickly—not only to diminish the time it takes to get a project started but also to be able to, with more certainty, go out and start the process of bidding and acquiring and the things you need to do to make that happen.

There were a dozen Federal agencies working together with a common purpose, asking: What can we do to make this system work better? We have had up to 29 statutes and 5 Executive orders that resulted in a number of different decisions under Federal law that allow those projects to move forward more quickly.

We had a discussion in the Commerce Committee this morning with one of the nominees for the Surface Transportation Board who had been instrumental in helping put together a more streamlined way to get things done if, for instance, you were putting some-

thing back exactly where it had been. It makes sense to everybody in America that if you are building a bridge where there was a bridge, it should take less of an environmental impact study than if you are building a bridge where there has never been a bridge before. But until right now, those two things were not treated in a significantly different way; they were treated in the same way. Now, because of legislation that we passed and the President signed, they will be treated in a different way, as they should have been.

Location is a great advantage to our whole country. Again, in the middle of the country, where I live, I have seen—I think it may be our greatest competitive advantage—access not only to the national marketplace but to the world marketplace. Generally, we have the same things in America. Things that allow us to put infrastructure in place more readily and make it more affordable to get it done in a quicker way are all good things.

This week, one of the nominees we will be voting on is the Deputy Administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency. Over the last decade, based on their own estimate, the Environmental Protection Agency imposed somewhere between \$43 and \$51 billion in regulatory costs annually. You have to be an incredibly strong economy to absorb another \$50 billion in regulatory costs from one agency. And that is their estimate; you could get other estimates that say: Oh, no, it is going to be a lot more costly than that. These are the costs they are willing to admit to.

The current administration has turned the page. I hope that the new Deputy Administrator becomes an active part of that. I think the EPA has been on the forefront of really looking at the kinds of things that are holding back the economy and trying to do things that make sense.

The EPA Administrator, Administrator Pruitt, quickly got on the job of dismantling two of the most costly and burdensome regulations that may have ever been proposed by any Federal agency. One is the waters of the United States, where the EPA decided that virtually all of the water in the country was somehow related to navigable water. Some of it might eventually run into navigable water, but the law says that the EPA has the authority to regulate navigable water.

The EPA said: Oh, no, that means any water that could ever run into any water that could ever run into any water that could ever run into navigable water.

In our State, that meant that 99.7 percent of the State would have been under the EPA authority, if they wanted to exercise it, for things that would have slowed down the economy, made it harder to resurface your driveway or dig a utility pole or put fertilizer on your field or get a building permit.

It was a ridiculous proposal, and Administrator Pruitt and the EPA under-

stood that it is ridiculous—just as, by the way, the courts did. The reason this had not gone into effect yet is largely because the courts basically said to the EPA, in many instances: You don't have the authority to do that. This change was made because the EPA realized that they didn't have the authority. Frankly, if they did have the authority, it would have been a bad idea.

There was a power plan that would have been so excessive that, in the State where I live, the utility bill would have doubled in about 10 or 12 years—a power plan that would have added up to \$39 billion in compliance costs, every single penny of which would have been passed along in your utility bill and mine, all of it added to the utility bill in ways that just, frankly, didn't make sense.

The EPA has moved away from that but not away from the idea of regulation or environmental control. In fact, Administrator Pruitt came to the Thomas Hill Energy Center in our State in April of last year to hear directly from workers, from the electric co-op members that provide electricity to many of our rural residents, and from ag leaders about the impact of that. He listened to that and went back—I am sure he did that in other places—and withdrew that rule but at the same time proposed a solution for West Lake Landfill, which has been on the critical “we need to take care of this” list for 30 years.

The job of the EPA is not to strangle the economy. The job of the EPA is to make the environment more protected by doing the things that the EPA was designed to do. I think that is what they have been doing—looking at the rules that don't make sense, trying to be sure that we don't do things at the Federal level that cost people their jobs, their livelihood, and their opportunities for no reason at all.

I had a meeting this week—it was Friday a week ago—at the Missouri State University, where the head of the Missouri Department of Agriculture, Chris Chinn, and the Missouri Farm Bureau president, Blake Hurst, and I answered questions for about 45 minutes from a crowd there to talk about agriculture and the future of agriculture. Not a single question was asked about the farm bill. The questions were basically about trade, rural broadband, and regulation. I think you could go to lots of other places and say: What do you want to talk about that you are most concerned about with the Federal Government, and two or three of those topics would come up again.

Last year the Senate used the Congressional Review Act to block 15 new major rules that had come up late in the previous administration. That act had been used exactly one time since it was put into law, in 1995 or 1996. It had been used exactly one time during the entire life of the law until we were able to look at it and use it 15 times last year to eliminate rules that would

have cost our economy \$36 billion in compliance costs. They were not rules that we had before. In the case of the last administration, the country had gone along without these rules even being proposed for 7½ years but, suddenly, on the way out the door, there were all these new things that would have held the economy back in a way that, frankly, nobody would want to have to do if they were still there to take responsibility for it. So we are looking at what we can do in regulation, looking at what we can do in transportation, looking at what we can do to make us more competitive and allow things to happen so the taxpayers have the benefit of a process that works for them instead of a process that works with them.

Rolling back unnecessary redtape isn't just important for infrastructure. It isn't just important for individuals. It is also important for strengthening our economy. I think we are seeing that happen. These people who are willing to serve, like some of the individuals we will be voting on this week, are people who are willing to give of themselves and their time, their effort, and their energy to work for the citizens of our country. We should be grateful to them, but we should also be sure that we are watching carefully to be sure that they continue to do the kinds of things that create opportunity and competition.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

(Mr. TOOMEY assumed the Chair.)

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

TAX REFORM

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, it was about 2 weeks ago that I had the opportunity to tour a steel plant in Redding, PA. The plant is owned by Carpenter Technology. It is a company that was founded in 1889. It is quite extraordinary. It is a vast complex in Redding, PA. They have 2,000 employees in Berks County, which is where Redding is located, and they have an additional 1,200 or so folks throughout other parts of Pennsylvania.

Carpenter Technology is a leading producer and distributor of specialty metals, including what they call soft magnetics. As I understand it, soft magnetics increase the efficiency and the power and the battery life of electric motors. That is one of the main applications of these soft magnetics. It is a feature in steel and other metals that allows the magnetic properties to be turned on and off very rapidly. It is an amazing technology. It is an absolutely essential component for all kinds of products, including aircrafts, electric cars, even medical devices. It

is quite a range of products. One of the things I learned, of the many things I learned while I was at Carpenter Technology, is that tax reform is working for Carpenter Technology.

While I was there, the CEO announced a \$100 million investment, right there in Redding, Berks County, PA, to upgrade their capabilities and their capacity to produce these soft magnetics. To be more precise, they are buying an entire new hot rolling steel mill in Redding, PA. It is a \$100 million investment in a new mill that will allow them to expand their output and meet increasing demand for this really fascinating product that they make.

One of the things the leadership of Carpenter Technology made abundantly clear in their press release and in their public statements was that they were able to purchase this mill and make this \$100 million investment in their company now because of the tax reform we passed. This is exactly the type of capital investment we envisioned when we passed the tax reform bill. It was exactly for this kind of economic activity and expansion that we wanted to lower the cost of deploying this capital and expanding business and generate the economic growth and prosperity that comes with this.

By the way, Carpenter Technology is not an outlier. This kind of investment is consistent with the sentiment we are seeing all across the country.

Just at the end of the first quarter—the quarter that just ended—there was a large survey of American chief financial officers—CFOs—across the country. It was carried out by Deloitte LLP. It was exploring the question of growth expectations for capital expenditure. The fact is, their conclusion is that these CFOs anticipate greater growth and more hiring. In fact, the sentiment is at a multiyear high. Why is that? Here is what Deloitte had to say about it:

Clearly, there's a high desire for investment in the U.S., and that is coming from just the structure of tax reform. [CFOs] are expecting higher domestic wages, almost 40 percent are anticipating and planning for higher and front-loaded capital investments, and about a third higher research and development. What they've said is because of tax reform they're going to take those actions.

It is very straightforward. It is very clear.

So here we are, just 3½ months since passage, and the tax bill has already and continues to benefit workers and businesses, and, boy, these are not the crumbs some of our friends on the other side of the aisle have tried to suggest they are. There are over 500 businesses that we know of—businesses that are sufficiently high profile that we have read about and we can track their announcements. These 500-plus businesses employ over 4 million workers. Over 4 million workers across America have already received bonuses, wage increases, enhanced benefits, and increased contributions to their pension plans. It has already hap-

pened, and it is attributable entirely to the tax reform. So the benefits from this tax reform are clearly already flowing to the very workers we intended to benefit from it.

So my friends on the other side have had some struggles in thinking about how they can disparage this tax reform. They have come to realize that calling \$1,000 bonuses and multi-thousand-dollar pay raises crumbs is probably not such a good idea. So they have shifted the argument to be a kind of class warfare argument.

I hear two varieties of this most frequently. One is this idea that, well, the benefits all flow to the rich. The second is this idea that, well, these are greedy corporations that get this tax savings, and they just use the money to buy stock back.

Let's unpack this a little bit. What about this argument that it all flows to the rich? Well, there is one problem with that argument. That problem is it is not true; it is not true at all because when we did this tax reform, we did it in a way that makes the Tax Code more progressive. What does that mean? That means that upper income Americans—the wealthiest Americans—have an increased percentage of the total tax burden. So while everybody gets a savings in percentage terms, the savings disproportionately go to lower and middle-income workers and a disproportionately small amount of the savings go to upper income workers. So when the dust clears, the net effect is wealthier people are paying a larger percentage of the total tax bill than they paid beforehand.

So, clearly, the benefits of this tax reform are flowing to everyone and disproportionately to low- and middle-income people.

What about this idea that stock buybacks are such a terrible thing? There have been some stock buybacks. What does that mean? That means companies have taken the additional pretax cash flow they have, and they have decided in some cases that they will take a portion of it and return it to the owners of the company.

It just so happens that about 40 percent of the owners of the public companies in America are the people who have saved in their retirement plans—401(k) plans, IRA savings accounts, 529 plans, defined benefit pension plans. These are middle-income Americans whose savings are invested in the stocks of companies.

In some cases, yes, there have been stock buybacks. That means these savers have had cash introduced into their accounts, which then can be deployed by the managers of these accounts into new investments, which is what happens for anyone who is selling their stock in response to a buyback. They get cash.

What do they do with that cash? They get the chance to reassess where they invest their money, making new

investments, making different investments, reallocating capital, and shifting capital to where there is the greatest demand for it. This is exactly the way a free enterprise system should work. This is exactly the mechanism that allows capital to flow to its highest use and helps to encourage still more economic growth.

Better still, this is just the beginning. We are only 3½ months into this. We haven't yet even begun to reap the benefits—as a country, as a society—of this reformed Tax Code. Businesses are already responding to the incentives, and with the lower after-tax cost of capital we have created, we are seeing increased investment. Whether it is a tractor or a new factory or a piece of machinery or a steel mill in Redding, PA, that investment invariably requires workers to produce that investment, so there is greater job security and more opportunities for those workers. But then the company that actually deploys that investment, such as Carpenter Technology in the case I just mentioned—their workers become more productive; their workers have new tools that allow them to command higher wages and a better standard of living. That is what is happening, and that is going to continue to develop as companies are just now beginning to have the opportunity to deploy that capital only 3½ months into this new tax regime.

I am just delighted that every week that goes by, I learn about more Pennsylvania workers and more American workers who are working for businesses that are benefiting and enhancing their investments. It is a really good-news story.

Now I will shift a little bit to the CBO report that came out earlier this week, which said a few things worth noting. One should be on all of our radars, and that is the fiscal challenge we face. We have too much debt, and that number is growing too rapidly.

This fiscal year, the gross amount of Federal debt is \$21 trillion. By the end of this 10-year window, CBO contemplates that number will go up to \$33 trillion. This is a huge problem. But I think it is important that we stress where this problem comes from. This is a spending problem; this is not a revenue problem, and we can see this in CBO numbers.

In June of last year, almost a year ago, CBO projected that over the 10-year window they were considering at the time, we would have \$43 trillion of tax revenues flowing into the Federal Government, with \$53 trillion of spending—a net deficit over that period of \$10 trillion.

One year later, CBO has updated its projections, and now it is calling for \$44 trillion in revenue over the current 10-year window. So there will be \$1 trillion more in revenue, but \$56 trillion in spending—\$3 trillion more in spending. So we go from a 10-year window that looks as though the CBO is projecting a \$10 trillion deficit to a \$12 trillion

deficit. Clearly the deficit is growing, and clearly it is driven by the increase in spending.

The bottom line is, whether it is \$10 trillion or \$12 trillion, this deficit is way too big. But tax reform is going to enhance the revenue collected by the Federal Government by helping us create a larger economy to tax. The spending is our fault. That is something we have to get under control.

CBO has observed a couple of other things. They talk about our tax reform, and they talk about terrific things. They say in the report that the tax reform results in “higher levels of investment, employment, and GDP.” We can see dramatically different projections of economic growth post-tax reform, according to the CBO, than we had pre-tax reform, according to the CBO.

In January of 2017, they projected that this year the economy would grow 2 percent. But after tax reform passed, they reassessed this year. They took the projection of 2 percent for this year, and they said that now it will grow 3 percent based on tax reform. That is a 50-percent increase in the growth of our economy. That is huge.

For next year, 2019, they were projecting 1.7 percent growth. Now, post-tax reform, they are estimating 2.9 percent growth—1.2 percentage points—again, an almost 50-percent increase. These are huge increases, and they explain it. They say: “The largest effects on GDP over the decade stem from the tax act . . . boost[ing] the level of real GDP by an average of 0.7 percent . . . over the 2018–2028 period.”

The fact is, this tax bill is already working. It is making the structural changes in the Tax Code that create a greater incentive for businesses to invest. It is making American companies and American workers more competitive than we have been in a very, very long time. It is going to increase the capital stock, the invested assets in our businesses that allow our workers to become more productive, and it is going to continue to allow those more productive workers to earn higher wages.

Let's be honest. No one can prove with certainty what the future holds, so it is worth looking at what is happening in the present. As a result of our tax reform, what is happening today, what is happening in the present is this: Millions of Americans have been receiving bonuses; millions of Americans have been receiving pay raises; millions of Americans have seen increases in their pension contributions; millions of Americans have seen an increase in the value of their pensions; and millions of Americans—like the workers at Carpenter Technology—have seen greater job security and greater opportunity as their employers are investing in their companies, and that is already beneficial for all of us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, as my colleague from Pennsylvania has pointed out, the recently passed tax bill is already having a profound impact on the economy, and, as the Congressional Budget Office report points out, over the course of the next decade, it will significantly increase economic growth in the economy and increase the number of jobs. It said that over 1 million jobs would be created as a result of the passage of the tax bill.

To his point, as well, they talk about deficits and debt projected out into the future, which clearly are major issues but, again, I would point out, are a result of the rate of growth in spending and not of the impact of the revenues generated by lowering taxes because when you get greater growth in the economy, it means that more people are taking realizations and more people are paying taxes. The Congressional Budget Office, as a rule of thumb, suggests that for each percentage—a 1-percent increase in growth of the economy—you get about \$3 trillion in additional revenue over the course of a decade.

If we assume, and I believe we will—even the CBO, which I think is very conservative in terms of growth estimates, suggests that there is higher growth attributable largely to the changes we made in the Tax Code, reducing taxes on families in this country and reducing taxes on our small businesses, which incentivize them to expand and grow their operations and, therefore, create better paying jobs and higher wages, but also will generate more revenue coming in to the Federal coffers.

Clearly, the issue that we have in terms of the debt picture in the long term is not about revenue; it is about spending, which is growing dramatically over that next decade, particularly in what we refer to as mandatory spending or entitlement programs. This cries out, I would argue, for reforms in entitlement programs. But to say that somehow tax reform is contributing to that is a far cry from the truth, and I think the Congressional Budget Office numbers bear that out. Again, I would argue that in terms of what they suggest we are going to see in growth as a result of the changes we made in the Tax Code, I believe it is going to be dramatically understated.

When it came time to draft tax reform, Republicans really had two goals in mind. First, we wanted to put more money in the pockets of hard-working Americans, and we wanted to do that right away. Second, we wanted to create the kind of economy that would give Americans access to economic security for the long term.

Less than 4 months after we passed this bill, I am proud to report that the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act has already achieved the first goal and is well on its way to achieving the second.

To put more money in Americans' pockets, we lowered tax rates across the board for American families, nearly doubled the standard deduction, and

increased the child tax credit to \$2,000, doubling the amount that families can deduct per child in terms of the child tax credit.

In February, that relief started to show up in Americans' paychecks. According to Treasury Department estimates, 90 percent of the American people are seeing bigger paychecks this year, thanks to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. And thanks to the IRS's new withholding calculator, families with children can adjust their withholding to take into account the individual tax relief provided in the new tax law, in particular, the increased child tax credit. That means even more in the paychecks of hard-working Americans without their having to wait until they file their 2018 tax returns next year.

When it came to our second goal, we knew that the only way to give Americans access to real long-term economic security was to ensure they had access to good jobs, good wages, and real opportunities. We knew that the only way to guarantee access to good jobs, wages, and opportunities was to make sure businesses had the ability to create them.

Before the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, our Tax Code wasn't helping businesses to create jobs or to increase opportunities for workers. In fact, it was doing the exact opposite. Large and small businesses were weighed down by high tax rates and growth-killing tax provisions, and all the regulatory and compliance burdens that came along with them.

Our outdated international tax rules left America's global businesses at a competitive disadvantage in the global economy. That had real consequences for American workers. A small business owner struggling to afford the annual tax bill for their business was highly unlikely to be able to hire a new worker or to raise wages. A larger business struggling to stay competitive in the global marketplace while paying substantially higher tax rates than its foreign competitors too often had limited funds to expand or increase its investment here in the United States.

When it came time for tax reform, we set out to improve the playing field for American workers by improving the playing field for businesses as well. To accomplish that, we lowered tax rates across the board for owners of small and medium-sized businesses, farms, and ranches. We lowered our Nation's massive corporate tax rate, which until January 1, was the highest corporate tax rate in the developed world. We expanded business owners' ability to recover investments they make in their businesses, which will free up cash 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 territorial system with a modernized territorial tax system so that American businesses are not operating at a disadvantage next to their foreign competitors.

The goal in all of this was to free up businesses to increase investments in the U.S. economy, hire new workers, and increase wages and benefits. I am happy to report that this is exactly what they are doing. Since tax reform became the law of the land, we have seen a steady drumbeat of businesses announcing good news for American workers. So far, more than 500 companies, and counting, have announced pay raises, bonuses, 401(k) match increases and other benefits, business expansions, and utility rate cuts: Starbucks, McDonald's, Jergens, McCormac & Company, Apple, Best Buy, Walmart, Bank of America, ExxonMobil, Hormel Foods, UPS, and American Express. And the list goes on and on.

I don't need to tell anyone that Americans had a tough time during the last administration or that our economy had stagnated. But under Republican leadership, we are finally starting to see the economy turn around, and tax reform is playing a very big part. Unfortunately, Democrats seem unable to accept the fact that tax reform is benefiting middle-class Americans. In fact, Democrats recently introduced an infrastructure plan that they want to pay for by repealing features of the tax law that are producing so many new benefits for American workers.

Republicans wanted Democrats to join us in the process of drafting tax reform. After all, a lot of the provisions in the final bill were the result of years of work by Republicans and Democrats. I was a part of that process. We had working groups that spent a good amount of time looking at every element and feature of the Tax Code—bipartisan groups of Republicans and Democrats, working together, making recommendations about things that we could do to reform our Tax Code in a way that would incentivize greater growth and expansion and better jobs and higher wages.

Democrats had previously expressed their support for things that became key parts of the bill, like lowering our Nation's massive corporate tax rate. Unfortunately, instead of working with us, Democrats chose to play politics. Apparently, it was more important to them to attempt to score political points against Republicans than to work on a bill that they knew had the potential to help the American people. Almost 4 months after the bill's passage, they are still playing politics, despite the fact that in the face of the bill's success, their attempts to criticize it are sounding pretty desperate.

Take their attempt to portray the bill's benefits for workers as "crumbs." Let me tell you that a worker whose salary just increased by \$3 an hour does not see that additional \$500 a month as crumbs, especially when you combine it with the rest of the tax relief in the new tax law. A worker who gets an increased match in her 401(k) account will see her retirement savings increase significantly as a result of the

Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, and she will not see that benefit as crumbs.

It is too bad that Democrats can't accept the fact that the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act is working. At the very least, they should stop trying to undo the benefits that it is bringing to the American people. Over 500 companies across this country have announced increases in wages, increases in benefits, and bonuses—direct benefits to American workers, to the tune of over 5 million Americans who already have benefited from this. That is the short-term impact that we have seen already.

The American people spent long enough in a stagnant economy. It is time to get this economy jump-started and to see those wages and those good-paying jobs come back into this economy so that American families can benefit, can experience, and can enjoy a better standard of living, a higher quality of life, an opportunity to do more for their children, to help them with their college education, to set aside a little bit for retirement, and to take care of those day-to-day bills.

Fifty percent of the American people, according to polls, say they are living paycheck to paycheck. One thing we can do to help them is to make that paycheck bigger and, hopefully, to put them in a position where they can put aside a little bit for retirement and where, maybe, they can help save up for their kids' college education, and maybe take a vacation with the family.

There are so many ways in which the benefits of this bill are delivered to the American people and to American families and can help them in their daily lives. We shouldn't try and go back. We ought to try to go forward and recognize that the near-term benefits of this bill are very real to American workers. The long-term benefits are going to be, I think, even more beneficial to American workers, to American businesses, and to American families because not only now will they benefit from the lower tax rates that are delivered to the entire tax table, but they are also benefiting from the doubling of the standard deduction, the doubling of the child tax credit, and all the other benefits that are included in this bill. American businesses, small and large, are also seeing those benefits on a daily basis, so much so that they have already made these commitments to over 5 million Americans. That is 500 companies that are paying out bonuses, higher pay, and bigger benefits for their workers. That is only going to increase over time as this economy starts to take off because they now have an incentive to expand and grow their operations through reduced rates, when it comes both to large and small businesses, through the ability to recover their costs more quickly and to free up that capital with which they can invest in and expand and grow this economy and create those better paying jobs.

This is a win-win for the American people. It is a win-win for our country.

I hope our colleagues on the other side of the aisle will quit referring to it as “crumbs” because I know the American people don’t see it that way.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to oppose in the strongest terms the nomination of Patrick Pizzella as Deputy Secretary of Labor.

With this nomination President Trump is once again breaking his promise to put workers first. Mr. Pizzella has a record that is time and again at odds with the goals of the very Department he would help to lead as Deputy Secretary. His track record is one of not merely failing workers but of failing to enforce laws to protect the health and safety of workers, seeking to diminish workers’ rights and protections, and undermining the unions that represent and fight for them.

In fact, his record includes working with convicted lobbyist Jack Abramoff on behalf of causes that are counter to the mission of the Department of Labor.

In the 1990s, Congress was moving to expand labor and immigration protections to the Northern Marianas Islands, a U.S. Territory, to end the operation of sweatshops that did not follow Federal labor laws. The law at the time let companies bring in foreign workers to toil under inhumane conditions. The workers were underpaid. They were forced to sign contracts signing away their rights to protest labor conditions, and some were even coerced to have abortions.

The companies operating under these inhumane conditions were able to print the words “Made in the U.S.A.” on their products.

While Congress was looking to take action to change the law so we could better protect workers, Pizzella was working with Abramoff to coordinate all-expense-paid trips for dozens of Republican lawmakers and staff and seeking to maintain the sweatshop status quo.

Patrick Pizzella chose not to work for workers but for corporations. These efforts are not just counter to the mission of the Department of Labor, they are counter to our national values.

The rest of Mr. Pizzella’s record shows that he has taken equally extreme positions throughout his career. Take, for example, his radical record as the sole employee of the Conservative Action Project, a far-right group funded by billionaire donors like the DeVos family, or his record when he last served in the Department of Labor. Under his leadership, the Department

of Labor cut its budget in part by cutting down its own employees’ collective bargaining rights and decreasing official time.

Then there is his long record championing anti-union policies and arguing to limit collective bargaining rights.

At the Federal Labor Relations Authority, Pizzella not only ruled consistently against workers and unions, but he repeatedly broke with longstanding policy by calling out the names of individual workers in his decisions. He chose to call out defendants by name and put them in the public spotlight. The pattern of Mr. Pizzella’s anti-worker ideology is clearly unchanged today. Throughout his career, Mr. Pizzella’s record has been alarmingly consistent. From his years serving as the right hand to Jack Abramoff until now, he has shown that he is not going to fight for workers. He will fight against them.

It would be irresponsible to put a man with such a strong track record of anti-worker conviction a tweet away from leading the Department of Labor. It is unconscionable that someone of Mr. Pizzella’s background would be the No. 2 leader at the Department of Labor. It is unacceptable that he could be in line to serve as Acting Secretary should Secretary Acosta leave the Department.

I strongly oppose his nomination. I will be voting against him, and I encourage our colleagues to do the same.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LEE). The Senator from Colorado.

OPIOID CRISIS

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, over the past couple of weeks Congress and the Senate had its State work period, and during that time we go back to our State and travel, listening to our constituents. I had the incredible opportunity to go to Colorado and spend time on the Front Range, on the I-25 Corridor, where the vast majority of the population of Colorado lives, and also spent some time in Western Colorado, which most people identify as being where they travel to Colorado, with the ski resorts, mountains, Rocky Mountain National Park, and the Great Sand Dunes National Park.

I also had a chance to visit some of the smaller communities in Southern Colorado, including an area known as the San Luis Valley, where some of the longest living Colorado families have farms. There are families and businesses.

The focus of this visit was about how we grow the economy in the San Luis Valley, the Eastern Plains, and the Western Slope—areas that haven’t seen as much economic growth as, perhaps, Denver, Fort Collins, or Colorado Springs.

I also wanted to spend some time getting into the community and talking about a couple of the issues they face when it comes to the opioid crisis that this country faces. Over the past sev-

eral years, a great deal of attention has been paid to prescription drug addiction and to prescription drug overdoses.

My home State of Colorado actually has an average that exceeds the national average when it comes to prescription addiction and overdose. We are losing a person in Colorado to drug overdose every 36 hours—far too many people. In our rural communities, it is not just the wealthy who are immune or the poor who are immune or the wealthy who are affected or the wealthy who are affected. It is everyone—wealthy, poor, low- and high-income. The opioid crisis and prescription drug addiction have affected every nook and cranny of our communities.

The attention that has been paid to the addiction crisis in this country has resulted in some of the greatest bipartisan achievements Congress has had over the past several years. The passage of the 21st Century Cures Act will expedite new treatment methods through the FDA and provide research treatment dollars for the opioid crisis and the prescription drug crisis and addiction.

It also led to passage of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, legislation that had great bipartisan support. People on both sides of the aisle worked on this legislation together to pass a bill to address what is happening to our communities.

Every single one of us has a story about somebody close to us, near to us, perhaps a friend or relative—probably both—who has fallen victim to prescription drug addiction and opioid addiction. Of course if you end up with a prescription drug addiction, that one pill might be \$60 or \$80, but you can go out on the streets and find heroin for \$10 to \$15. Now we see the rise of heroin replacing prescription drugs and you see the cycle. The drug dealers have figured out a way to lace cocaine with fentanyl so that it becomes a little bit more addictive and so people are hooked on cocaine more than they already are.

You know the dangers of fentanyl, a synthetic drug so powerful that you can’t have a dog sniff for it at the Post Office because it would kill the animal.

During these roundtables that were held in the San Luis Valley about opioids, I learned a couple of things. In Alamosa, CO, I learned that about 90 percent of the jail population in Alamosa is addicted to drugs. At the same roundtable, we talked about the challenges that rural communities have in treatment. We know that if a police officer or law enforcement officer or paramedic finds somebody who is overdosed and they are revived with Narcan, yes, you saved their life. You brought them back, but what happens after that? They are left to their own devices. Do they return to that abuse? Do they return to that cycle of overdose? Without treatment, yes, they will.

We learned in Swedish Medical Center Englewood, CO, the Front Range

suburb of Denver, that 1 out of every 10 visitors to the emergency room of people who are revived by Narcan or some other treatment after an overdose will be dead within a year. So 1 out of 10 who come into an emergency room will be dead within a year.

We know that there has been great success in finding alternatives to opioid medication. In fact, Colorado emergency rooms and the Colorado Hospital Association, working together with a number of hospitals, developed a program called Alternatives to Opioids, or ALTO, which is a program that we actually introduced legislation on—Senator BOOKER, myself, Senator BENNET, and others—to try to make sure that emergency rooms don't just turn to opioid medication but find other alternatives because there are other alternatives. You don't just have to prescribe an opioid-based medication.

As a result, opioid prescriptions out of the emergency room have decreased by 36 percent over the 6-month course of this pilot program in Colorado. Those are remarkable results. We introduced legislation to mimic the same thing and to learn best practices at the Federal level so that hospitals around the country can work together, share those best practices, identify what works, and use them.

We have to reform the Medicaid Program so there is no incentive for doctors to overprescribe addictive medication. In Alamosa, physicians we talked to are entering into contracts with their patients. At San Luis Valley Health Regional Medical Center, they are entering into contracts with patients about the responsibility that goes with taking these powerful, powerful drugs.

We found new ways to make sure that the pill mills are being discovered and abandoned. We try to make sure that people can communicate with each other on how these treatments work.

While I was in Colorado, we talked about the devastation that drugs are having on their small communities. We learned about a group of high schoolers who are talking to other high schools about the dangers of addiction and prescription and drug overdose. They are trying to work with each other to stop the cycle and to make sure that people who need help find help and hopefully will avoid it in the first place.

Perhaps, one of the most frightening things that I heard during this roundtable—being a parent with three children of my own, I often worry about what happens to them when they go to school and what pressures they face. Two of them are young now. Our daughter is 14, and she will be entering high school. I worry about the pressures they will face from their peers. I worry about them, and I worry about what happens to our community and to their friends with what is around them. But I never thought that I would hear what I heard in the San Luis Valley.

We were talking about prescriptions and reimbursement from Medicaid. One of the providers brought up a challenge

that they had with getting reimbursement. I later learned from a pharmacist that it may simply be a coding problem, and if it were coded correctly, the reimbursement would occur.

This is what this provider said. They were trying to make sure Medicaid could reimburse for the nasal spray of Narcan so that children could administer it to their parents when they overdosed, because it is easier for a young child or a little child to administer a nasal spray than to give an injection.

Kids are given nasal spray so they can revive their parents. If that parent goes to the emergency room at Swedish hospital in Denver, CO, revived by that child, 1 in 10 of those parents revived will not come back again because they will be dead.

We have done a lot of work in this country, and we have a lot more work to do when it comes to opiate addiction and crisis. We have a lot of work to do in this Congress to come together and find ways to stop this—to break the cycle, to make sure it is easier to prescribe the drugs that will help instead of create addictions.

We have talked to people who said they have to have 8 hours of training and certification, which makes it impossible for certain drugs to be administered by a physician in the emergency room because they don't have time to comply with the paperwork. They actually would rather prescribe this drug than the opiate-based drug because the opiate-based drug, they know, would create the possibility of addiction. Yet this other drug wouldn't. There are more barriers to prescribe the drug that wouldn't cause the harm than the drug that would cause the harm. So we have a lot of work to do. These aren't Republican issues or Democratic issues. They are our families' issues. They are our friends' issues. They are our communities' issues.

I will end it with this story. One of the healthcare professionals we talked to told a story of their son who was a golfer—an athlete, loved to golf. He was injured golfing, so they wanted to make sure their son was cared for so he could recover and go on to a golf career or whatever career he had in front of him. They took their son to the doctor. Their son was given Vicodin to address the pain from the injury. At this point in the story, the mother started to cry because she feels guilty and responsible for the very first treatment that led down a path of addiction and the eventual death of their son. All this mom wanted to do was help, and she now feels the blame of the powerful drug that led to the addiction and death of their son. It is not a unique story. That story has been shared far too many times around the country, and yet here we are once again talking about it.

So I encourage my colleagues, let's continue the great work we have already done. Let's do more. Let's work together, and let's make sure we can find solutions this country will be proud of. We will know this when our

communities recover and people stop dying.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

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

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, all postclosure time on the Pizzella nomination expire at 9:30 a.m. tomorrow and the Senate vote on confirmation of the Pizzella nomination; further, that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; finally, that there be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to each vote.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

FISCAL YEAR 2018 INTELLIGENCE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I am putting a hold on the Fiscal Year 2018 Intelligence Authorization Act, as currently drafted, for two reasons.

The bill marked up by the Senate Intelligence Committee included three amendments I offered, one of which required that the Director of National Intelligence, working with the Department of the Treasury, produce a report on the threat to the United States from Russian money laundering. My first objection to the current version of the bill is based on a change to that provision which downgrades responsibility for the report and removes the Department of the Treasury. The critical importance of this issue to our national security requires the highest level responsibility within the intelligence community. It also requires the direct involvement of the Department of the Treasury to ensure that all the Department's financial intelligence resources, including those that fall outside the intelligence community, are brought to bear.

My second objection, as I explained in my minority views to the bill in committee, is that it includes a provision stating that it is the sense of Congress "that WikiLeaks and the senior