



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 115th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 164

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, APRIL 17, 2018

No. 62

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, Ruler of the Universe, the Sustainer of Life, and the Father of Humanity, great is Your faithfulness. Lord, forgive us when our courage wavers in the face of difficulties because we ignore Your abiding presence. Thank You for imparting wisdom, patience, and strength to our lawmakers. Sustain them with Your presence, and strengthen them with Your love. Lord, keep them strong, hold them steady, and carry them through each challenge with honor. Grant that they will meet their hardships and setbacks with a firm faith in Your sustaining presence.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The majority leader is recognized.

COAST GUARD AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, yesterday afternoon I filed cloture on S. 1129, the Coast Guard Authorization Act, a comprehensive package that equips an adaptable force to meet a variety of important missions. I hope my colleagues will join me in ensuring its swift consideration and passage this week.

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT RESOLUTION

Mr. McCONNELL. First, Madam President, the Senate will consider yet

another chance to use the Congressional Review Act and repeal yet another of the last administration's run-away regulations. Thanks to Senator MORAN and Senator TOOMEY, today's effort will protect consumers from a brazen attempt by the past Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to stretch his authority and interfere in the auto industry.

The Dodd-Frank Act of 2010 got a lot of things wrong, but one thing Dodd-Frank got right was protecting auto dealers from meddling by the CFPB.

Our Democratic colleagues are usually fans of Federal regulations. I guess even they had a hunch that, left unchecked, the Federal bureaucracy would find a way to put the brakes on this key industry—and how right they were.

In 2013, Federal regulators concocted a loophole. They bypassed standard review and public comment periods for Federal regulations and instead issued guidance that would regulate auto dealers' ability to negotiate loan terms with their customers.

Dodd-Frank already gave the CFPB unprecedented insulation from the American people's elected representatives, but apparently that wasn't enough because they still attempted an end run around the express prohibition on the regulation of auto dealers with guidance they assumed would not be subject to the Congressional Review Act. Well, today Senator TOOMEY foiled that plan when he asked GAO for an opinion on whether this guidance was, in fact, intrusive rulemaking that should be subject to congressional review. GAO decided that indeed it was, and now Congress will have its say.

Republicans are chopping away at the tangled mess of regulations that the last administration left behind. Our whole economy is getting a tune-up, and now it is time for the front end of the auto industry to come along for the ride.

We used the Congressional Review Act a record 15 times last year. Let's

join with our colleagues from Pennsylvania and Kansas and add another victory to that list.

TAX REFORM

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, today is tax day, the deadline for most Americans to file their tax returns. For many middle-class households, that means sending too much of their hard-earned money off to the IRS—hardly cause for celebration. But this year, the gray clouds of tax day have a silver lining. Today is the very last time that American families will have to file under the unfair, outdated Tax Code that Congress and the President got rid of a few months ago. Out with the old and in with the new.

Republicans' historic overhaul cut taxes for families and small businesses. We doubled the standard deduction, expanded the child tax credit, and lowered rates as well. And we accomplished all of this while preserving key middle-class provisions, such as the mortgage interest deduction. The upshot of all of this is simple: major tax relief for middle-class families and a big shot in the arm for the U.S. economy, which will lead to more—and higher-paying—homegrown American jobs.

Already, tax reform has given American workers a raise, since less of each paycheck needs to be withheld for the IRS. When all is said and done, the Treasury Department estimates that our tax cuts will leave 90 percent of wage-earners with more take-home pay—that is 90 percent of wage earners with more take-home pay as a result of our tax reform measure.

In addition, millions of Americans are receiving special bonuses, pay raises, or new benefits from their employers as a direct result of tax reform. Thousand-dollar bonuses for workers at Kansas City Southern Railway in Missouri; a higher starting wage at First Farmers Bank & Trust in Indiana;

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

S2191

higher wages and new job opportunities at CSS Distribution Group, a small business packaging and distribution company in Kentucky; billion-dollar investments in pension plans for UPS and FedEx workers—the list goes on and on.

My Democratic colleagues from New York and San Francisco scoff publicly at the idea that a \$2,000 tax cut or a \$1,000 bonus would make a difference for American families. They have called these things “crumbs.” Something tells me they haven’t tried that talking point around many middle-class kitchen tables. I suspect they would be laughed out of the room.

And these are just the first fruits. Tax reform laid the foundation for a more prosperous future with more good-paying American jobs. That is because we made sending jobs overseas less appealing. We created new incentives for businesses to invest, expand, build, and hire right here at home. We gave overseas competitors something to worry about—a healthy, competitive U.S. economy. Already, job creators of all shapes and sizes are investing more and expanding. For example, a furniture store in Ohio is planning a 4,500-square-foot expansion, a craft brewery in Iowa is planning to open a new production line, and a deck and patio builder in Virginia is hiring 10 new employees to meet rising demand, just to name a few.

Republicans designed every piece of tax reform to benefit middle-class families and small businesses, both right now and in the years and decades ahead. That used to be a bipartisan priority, but this time, Democrats chose to put political posturing ahead of America’s best interests. Every single Democrat in the House and every single Democrat in the Senate voted to block tax reform—and by extension, every bit of this good news—from happening. Later today, in fact, some of our colleagues across the aisle will be demonstrating against the law right here on the grounds of the Capitol. I wonder whether they are protesting all the new jobs, or maybe it is the big family tax cuts, or maybe they are protesting the bonuses and wage hikes or all of the small business expansions. Their first mistake was voting to block all of this in the first place. Now, even as the economy is starting to thrive, they want to repeal these historic tax cuts and literally claw back the money. But make no mistake—Republicans will continue to stand and fight for the American people.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CONGRATULATING THE PRESIDING OFFICER

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, congratulations. This is the first time, at least when I am speaking on the floor, that the Presiding Officer is in the Chair.

Is this the first time the Presiding Officer is in the Chair?

The Presiding Officer cannot answer. Let the record show that she nodded her head in an affirmative way.

TRIBAL LABOR SOVEREIGNTY BILL

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, first, a brief comment on the Tribal Labor Sovereignty Act, which failed to move forward in the Senate last night. Indian Affairs has very rarely found its way to the floor of the Senate, despite a number of very pressing issues in Indian Country, including homelessness, educational disparities, language loss, healthcare access, broadband access, and many more. For a number of years, Democrats and Republicans on the Indian Affairs Committee have pushed legislation that would alleviate these problems. On our side of the aisle, Senators UDALL, TESTER, SMITH, BALDWIN, HEINRICH, HEITKAMP, CANTWELL, and MURRAY have worked very hard on bills that deal with these very, very significant issues in Indian Country, but none of these bills have reached the floor.

The leader has refused to put bills that would dramatically help Indian Country on the floor. When, finally, a Tribal bill was brought forward by the majority leader, it was closed to amendments and debate. Senator UDALL, our ranking member, wished to have amendments. Senator HOEVEN, the chairman of the Indian Affairs Committee, told me he wanted amendments. But the way Leader MCCONNELL brought it to the floor was with no amendments, no debate, and no discussion. Even worse, it was a bill to scrap labor rights at a time when we should be doing everything we can to strengthen labor protections. The only bill the leader would bring to the floor is one that was divisive and destined to fail—a political act, not an act to help Indian Country.

The AFL-CIO said that passage of the measure “would have amounted to the most aggressive erosion of labor protection since the 1940s.”

After many years of waiting for Tribal issues to reach the floor, I think many of us were sorely disappointed that the majority leader opted for this incredibly divisive bill, done in such an incredibly divisive way.

I hope, now that the measure has failed to advance, that the majority leader will consent to putting other

Tribal bills on the floor, so many of which have broad bipartisan support and could pass at least the Senate.

RUSSIA AND SPECIAL COUNSEL LEGISLATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on another issue, Russia and Mueller, yesterday it was reported that President Trump overruled the decision of his administration to implement new sanctions against Russia for its support of the brutal Assad regime in Syria in the wake of a chemical weapons attack that was devastating. Our hearts go out when we see pictures like this.

It is only the latest action in a long pattern of behavior in which President Trump opts to treat Russia and President Putin with kid gloves. It took a very long time for President Trump to even utter a negative word about Mr. Putin, and his administration has time and again delayed the implementation of sanctions.

Reports in the press said that President Trump was unhappy with his administration’s decision to expel 60 Russian diplomats after British citizens were victims of a Russian-linked attack. The decision to expel those diplomats was correct, in my view, but apparently the President wasn’t happy with the decision by his own appointed national security team.

The White House shouldn’t have to drag the President kicking and screaming to do the right thing when it comes to punishing Vladimir Putin and Russia. His refusal to stand up to the Kremlin is troubling, and it leaves many Americans wondering: Why and what does the President have to hide? That is what 90 percent of all Americans are asking themselves—Democrat, Republican, liberal, conservative. His actions with Putin have been so confounding and so contrary to American interests that there is virtually no rational explanation for them.

At the same time, the President’s rhetoric about the Russia probe should concern all of us. Should he seek to shut down or impede the investigation by firing the Deputy Attorney General or Special Counsel Mueller, interfering with the chain of command, or issuing pardons, we would—make no mistake about it—be in a full-fledged constitutional crisis.

I urge my colleagues, all of my colleagues—Democrat, Republican, Independent—to support the bipartisan legislation in the Judiciary Committee that would protect the special counsel from a political firing. The rule of law is not a partisan issue. It is one of the most serious issues we face because that is what is at the core of being an American. That is why the whole world admires us. That is why so many families like mine have been able to climb the ladder, starting out in poverty as my grandparents did, to a decent life. We cannot let the rule of law become a partisan issue. Let us speak in one