

and business owners are achieving economic growth that is unmatched in recent memory. It is driven by a 21st century tax code that lets Americans keep more of their own money and encourages job creators to invest in our Nation's workers.

It is made possible by historic regulatory reform, which has leveled the playing field for American consumers and small businesses. From farmers and ranchers to community bankers, the burdens of an out-of-control regulatory state are being lifted.

So after a decade of stagnation, Republican policies have gotten Washington out of the way and freed American workers and job creators to do what they do best—build a dynamic economy that is literally the envy of the world.

But as impressive as some of these statistics may be, I think it is important to keep in mind that these stories are, at the end of the day, human stories. More than 1 million new jobs have been created just since we passed tax reform last December. That is not an abstract number. That is 1 million opportunities for young workers who are just starting out and need to begin climbing the first rungs of the economic ladder; for young fathers and mothers who can now leave a position where their pay has stayed flat for a new opening in their industry; or for midcareer professionals who were sidelined by a tough economy and can now suit up and check back in to the game.

These aren't just economic statistics; they are American men and women who have new chances to support their families and build their lives that they simply did not have under the policies of the previous administration.

I am glad that we fought and won—and will continue to win—major accomplishments for the middle-class families we represent.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert Earl Wier, of Kentucky, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Kentucky.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, this week, we will be taking up the National Defense Authorization Act, which Congress has passed for 57 consecutive years to support and guide our country's military. Earlier this month, the Armed Services Committee voted overwhelmingly—25 to 2—to advance this important legislation to the Senate floor, so when I hear people say that there is no bipartisan consensus for anything in Washington these days, I think that is belied by the facts and certainly in this case by our bipartisan commitment to provide that support and guidance for our Nation's military.

According to the Department of Defense, there are 1.8 million Americans around the world on Active Duty in the U.S. military. The United States has 737 installations overseas, and the DOD—the Department of Defense—is the world's largest employer. Supporting all these people and the facilities they occupy is a Herculean task, and the Defense authorization bill is one very significant way that we do just that. It is how we make sure that all of our American servicemembers are trained, equipped, and paid and that our alliances are strengthened and our military facilities are properly modernized and maintained. We have an All-Volunteer military, and it is important for us to do all of these things in terms of quality of life, in addition to the basics, to prepare our warriors for hopefully an avoidable fight, but when it is unavoidable, to prepare them for that conflict.

In Texas, there are roughly 200,000 military men and women stationed in places like Fort Hood, Joint Base San Antonio, the Red River Army Depot, and Ellington Field. These are the people I think about as we take up this Defense authorization bill. They rely on us to deliver what we have asked them to do, to give them the tools, the equipment, and the training to do what we have asked them to do. That goal is increasingly difficult because the world is a very complex and dangerous place. The array of national security threats facing the United States is more complex and diverse than at any time since World War II. Our leadership at the Pentagon says that the strategic environment has not been this competitive since the Cold War. Simply put, America no longer enjoys the competitive edge it once had over our competitors and adversaries.

Secretary Mattis and the Department of Defense have admirably craft-

ed the national defense strategy that was delivered to Congress earlier this year laying out its strategic goal. This was a critical first step, but now the strategy must be implemented. The Defense authorization bill will align that strategy with the resources necessary to implement it—the investments, the policies, the authorizations—with the new orientation articulated in that strategy.

The Secretary of Defense will reevaluate the highest priority missions for the Department of Defense, the roles of the joint force, as well as the capabilities required to complete these missions.

All told, in its current form, the Defense authorization will support \$716 billion for our national defense. To those who would think that the price is too high, I would say there is no option. There is no nation in the world that is as capable of keeping the peace and deterring aggressors around the world. In fact, the No. 1 responsibility of the Federal Government is to provide for our common defense.

All of the rights that we enjoy in this great country of ours flow from the freedoms that are protected by our men and women in uniform. We have seen what has happened in the last few years when America has receded and retreated from its leadership role.

We don't have to fight all of these fights on our own. As General Mattis says, it is appropriate for Americans to fight by, with, and through our allies, which is the strategy we are using now rather than placing boots on the ground in many of these locations.

One important piece of the bill is bolstering recruitment, retention, and effectiveness of our Armed Forces.

A second important piece that was included in the committee markup of the NDAA is legislation I introduced called the Children of the Military Protection Act. This will close a jurisdictional loophole affecting military installations when minors commit criminal offenses on base. Because it is a military base, the Federal Government has the jurisdiction, but frequently Federal prosecutors don't have the time or the resources to prosecute the cases, so they fall through the cracks. This legislation will allow Federal prosecutors to relinquish jurisdiction to the State in these instances, allowing State-level authorities to take up the case when the Federal Government's other responsibilities and finite resources prevent it from being able to do so.

I am proud to join with Senator KING, the junior Senator from Maine, in this effort. This is a bipartisan priority that Members on both sides of the aisle should rally behind. Our children on our military bases must be protected at all costs. When they are assaulted, their assailant should not escape justice because of loopholes in the law.

Although the Federal Government maintains jurisdiction over military