

and her commitment to the Native people of our country.

One example is a bill that Senator HEITKAMP and I worked on together called the POWER Act. The whole focus is to get more legal representation for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. When we were working on this bill together, she was obviously a huge advocate, but she came back to me and said: We need to make this especially focused on the Native communities. That was her idea. That was in the bill. The bill was passed in the Congress and signed into law 2 months ago. I have no doubt that bill, for which she was the strongest advocate, is going to make lives better for women throughout our country who have gone through horrible experiences, particularly in the Native communities, whether in North Dakota or Alaska or New Mexico, and that was because of her hard work.

So I want to echo what so many others have said. In those areas and so many others, it has been my honor to serve with Senator HEITKAMP. I know she is going to continue to serve her community, State, and country in important ways. My best to her.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

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

There being no objection, the Senate, at 1:18 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

MORNING BUSINESS—(Continued)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 2

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 3:45 p.m. today, the Senate vote on adoption of the conference report to accompany H.R. 2.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will re-

sume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Jonathan A. Kobes, of South Dakota, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Eighth Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Kobes nomination?

Mr. ROUNDS. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 50, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 258 Ex.]

YEAS—50

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

NAYS—50

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

The VICE PRESIDENT. On this vote, the yeas are 50, the nays are 50. The Senate being equally divided, the Vice President votes in the affirmative, and the nomination is confirmed.

Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PORTMAN). The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the 115th Congress is drawing to a close, and it has been a good 2 years. Our goal 2 years ago was simple: to make life better for American families—which is exactly what we have done. We knew that

a huge part of making life better for American families was in the expanding of opportunity and putting more money in their pockets, so we passed a historic reform of our outdated Tax Code that slashed tax rates for families and removed barriers to economic growth.

It is already producing results. Since we passed tax reform a year ago this December, we have seen unemployment drop to its lowest rate in almost 50 years, and we have seen job openings reach a record high. For the past 7 months, there have been more job openings than there have been Americans looking for work. We have seen company after company dispense raises or bonuses or boost benefits for their employees. We have seen the best wage growth since the great recession and more.

Most importantly, the economic benefits of tax reform are reaching the people who need them the most. During the Obama administration, what economic prosperity there was tended to be concentrated in large metropolitan areas, but under Republican government, growth and prosperity are reaching small cities and rural families and communities. Thanks to tax reform, a lot of families are finding it easier to pay their bills and to put a little bit away for the future.

Yet, of course, tax reform is far from the only thing we did in this Congress to improve the lives of the American people. Along with the White House, we lifted burdensome regulations. We enacted legislation to improve career and technical education programs. We passed legislation to make it easier for Main Street banks and credit unions to lend money to small businesses and farmers and ranchers. We passed the largest pay increase in nearly a decade for our men and women in uniform.

We delivered real reforms for our veterans through the VA MISSION Act. This legislation streamlined the VA's community care programs to help ensure veterans receive efficient, timely, quality care. Once fully implemented, it will also expand caregiver assistance to disabled pre-9/11 veterans—an overdue benefit for generations of our heroes. We also modernized the Veterans Benefits Administration's appeals system to develop a quicker, more responsive system for veterans.

On the national security front, we have reinvested in our Nation's military to ensure that our troops are equipped not only for today's missions but to meet the threats of the future. A recent report from the bipartisan National Defense Strategy Commission outlined how dangerously our military superiority has eroded—to the point at which it would be difficult for us to win a war against two major powers. This alarming reduction in our military's readiness is why Republicans have made rebuilding our military such a priority in this Congress. There is no better way to ensure peace for our country than to make sure that the