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Senate

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

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Our Lord and our God, as the waters fill the sea, fill our Nation with people who know and love You. Remind us that righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to many people.

Today guide our lawmakers so that they will live for Your honor. Increase their faith, hope, and love, enabling them to become more effective instruments for Your glory. Lord, give comfort to all who seek You, for You have promised to supply all our needs from Your celestial bounty.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SENATE AGENDA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, yesterday the Senate took another step toward delivering an important package of legislation. We passed my amendment to Strengthening America's Security in the Middle East Act and voted to advance the bill, both by very wide bipartisan margins. S. 1 represents the broad consensus of this body about our Nation's responsibility

as an ally and a partner. It reaffirms our promise to uphold Israel's security, to help Jordan face complex security challenges, and to hold Bashar al-Assad's murderous henchmen accountable.

I look forward to the Senate voting on final passage soon and sending this bipartisan legislation over to the House.

After we complete that work, the Senate will return to the Natural Resources Management Act, a high-priority bill containing more than 100 proposals concerning economic development, public lands, water resources, and conservation.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on another matter, tonight Congress will host President Trump for his second State of the Union Address. I am looking forward to attending and hearing the President reflect on the great strides our Nation has made over the past 2 years and his vision for the challenges that are still before us.

From historic tax reform and regulatory reform, to huge progress in the fight against ISIS, to landmark progress in the nationwide fight against opioid addiction, the story over the last 2 years has been one of immense policy progress for our country.

The American people are less interested in beltway melodrama and more interested in the classic question: Am I better off than I was 2 years ago? On this front, thanks to a few key Republican victories and a number of major bipartisan accomplishments, the state of the Union is strong and growing stronger.

It has now been more than 2 years since the American people hired President Trump and a Republican Congress to get Washington's foot off the brake of our economy. Since then, we got to work rebuilding the middle-class prosperity that had hollowed out commu-

nities across America under the Obama economy.

After 8 years of watching leftwing policies disproportionately benefit coastal cities and our Nation's largest metro areas while mostly leaving small cities, small towns, suburbs, and rural America behind, the American people wanted a change.

That is exactly what the last 2 years' policies have delivered. Historic tax reform delivered higher take-home pay and helped breathe life into the engine of American job creation and innovation. Landmark regulatory reform cut burdensome compliance costs for small businesses, reigned in Federal overreach on education policy, and defended Americans' rights of conscience.

So what are these policies doing for the American people? I think the answer is pretty clear. All those Americans who had been struggling to find work? Well, today a higher percentage of Americans are working than were ever working at any point under President Obama. For the first time in modern recorded history, we have reached and stayed at a level where there are more job openings nationwide than Americans looking for jobs.

Listen to these headlines: "Employers' Hiring Push Brings Workers Off the Bench." "Disability Applications Plunge as the Economy Strengthens."

Listen to this, from one news article: The tighter labor market is delivering opportunities to a broad swath of workers who were disproportionately affected by the last recession. Unemployment has fallen sharply for blacks, Latinos, younger workers and those without a college education . . . [and] the deeper jobs pool has been particularly crucial for improving the economic outlook for disabled Americans.

These and many more Americans have been able to find work, but what about Americans who already had jobs but felt like their families were treading water and needed to get ahead?

Last year, the amount of money employers spent compensating American workers—those already working—grew

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



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