

two, climate change is caused by human activity; and, three, Congress must immediately act to address the problem. Leader MCCONNELL could bring that resolution to the floor. He could say he believes climate change is real and deserves our time and attention. Given the rampant denialism from some wings of the Republican Party, including so many in the White House, that would be notable progress, but I don't think it will happen.

You scratch your head and wonder why. Why would they be so afraid to even say climate change is real? One possible answer many people think is the cause, one of the main causes, is oil money—oil money. The oil industry has such power around here—and much of that money is dark, by the way—that Republicans are afraid to admit the candid truth and say climate change is real.

Our resolution doesn't talk about how you propose to deal with this very real issue. We are not locking people into this proposal or that proposal. We are simply saying, let's start talking about it. Actually, the one good thing about Leader MCCONNELL's stunt is we are talking about it, and that is a good thing. I have news for the leader. We will keep talking about it throughout this whole Congress, and we will keep trying to use our leverage to make it easier to resist the bad forces of carbon dioxide entering our atmosphere.

So we are going to keep at this. We are going to keep at this, Leader MCCONNELL. No stunt that you put on the floor is going to deter us. We are preparing legislation to defund President Trump's attempt to create a fake climate panel within the executive branch. Leader MCCONNELL can bring that legislation to the floor once it is ready so Congress can tell the President that we do not tolerate the intentional dissemination of disinformation to the American public on any issue, especially climate change.

Democrats have also said any infrastructure bill must include substantial investments in green jobs. That is something Leader MCCONNELL could pursue. We all like jobs. Many Members on his side of the aisle believe in wind and solar power—well, not many but at least some. Let's move forward on that. We need to upgrade our power grids. We need to make energy more available and cheaper and greener. Let's do that.

There are many more things besides, but make no mistake, before and after Leader MCCONNELL's political stunt on climate change, Democrats will continue to focus on the issue, propose solutions, and try to get some of those solutions enacted into law in the places we have some leverage, even as a minority.

There is an enormous energy—enormous energy in this country, particularly among young Americans—to take bold action on climate change. They see the planet on which they live changing before their eyes, not for the

better, and they are absolutely right. It is our job to channel the energy of those young people—wonderful energy; I am so glad it is out there—into bold legislation that addresses the climate crisis head on, and that is exactly—exactly—what Democrats will do, even if Republicans continue to play these political games in their efforts to try to keep their heads in the sand and ignore that climate change is real.

CHINA

Madam President, finally, on China, recent news reports have described an emerging trade deal with China that would see the United States ease up on tariffs in exchange for the Chinese buying more American goods and making some—some changes to its trade practices.

As the New York Times reports this morning, "The agreement does not appear to require the sweeping changes to China's economy that prompted Mr. Trump to begin the trade war." If the reports about the emerging agreement are accurate, I would say to President Trump, you are heading down a precarious road.

The President's instincts were right when he took a hard line on China. I supported his hard line on China. China is killing us in terms of stealing our intellectual property, in terms of not letting American companies compete fairly in their large market while they are allowed to come here, in terms of not creating a level playing field for companies no matter what country they are from.

The President was right when he said we have to do something about it. In fact, as he began on this road, he did a lot more than previous Presidents. Both President Bush and President Obama did less to get China to understand the seriousness of this problem than President Trump did. He knows that.

When you are getting close to a victory, to relent at the eleventh hour without meaningful, enforceable, and verifiable structural reform to China's trade policies would be an abject failure of the President's China policies, and people will shrug their shoulders and ask, what the heck did he begin this for if he will not complete it?

We need to put an end to the forced transfer of American technology and American know-how as a ransom for doing business in China. We need to put an end to China's systemic theft of American intellectual property. A big hack from China was found out just last month. Our companies need the same unfettered access to China's markets that we allow Chinese firms to have to markets in America.

This may be our last shot. If the President squanders his own efforts now, there will be lasting and untold consequences for generations to come.

The President is too focused on trade imbalances. That is short term. Those come and go. The reason our trade balance is so bad is because of all of the structural things China does to make

it harder for us to export to China and easier for them to import here after stealing a lot of our know-how. A temporary narrowing of the trade deficit would be cold comfort to the millions of American workers who have suffered and will continue to suffer the abuse of China's policies.

When the President was headed to North Korea, I said to him: When it comes to North Korea, don't let March go in like a lion and come out like a lamb.

The President did the right thing on North Korea, and I got up here and said that he did. He backed out when the North Koreans wouldn't give him much and resisted the opportunity of a photo op, which we know is hard for him to resist. He should do the same thing on China.

He got a lot of credit for backing out on North Korea. The President will get a lot of credit if he stands up to China and will eventually win because the Chinese economy is hurting. They just reduced their own biased estimates on growth. It is lower.

My plea to President Trump is this: Stand firm. We will win this fight that you correctly began, but don't back off for some temporary salve. America's future depends on it. The income of our workers and the number of good-paying jobs we create all depend on our standing tough with China right now when we sort of have them where we want them and completing a strong deal. Please, Mr. President, don't back off. When it comes to China trade and your actions, don't let March come in like a lion and go out like a lamb.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, last week, we learned that the economy grew at a rate of 3.1 percent from the fourth quarter of 2017 to the fourth quarter of 2018. That is the strongest economic growth in over 10 years. Economic growth for the fourth quarter of 2018 smashed market expectations.

In January, the economy created more than 300,000 jobs. More than 5.3 million jobs have been created since President Trump was elected. Job openings hit a record high of 7.3 million in December, substantially exceeding the number of those looking for work. The Department of Labor reports that the number of job openings has exceeded the number of job seekers for 10 straight months. Unemployment is low. January marked the 11th straight month that unemployment has been at or below 4 percent. That is the longest streak in nearly five decades.

Wage growth has accelerated. Wages have now been growing at a rate of 3 percent or greater for 6 straight months. The last time wage growth reached this level was in 2009. Median household income is at an alltime high.

U.S. manufacturing has rebounded. The Wall Street Journal reported on Friday:

America's factories are hiring again.

After years of job losses, U.S. manufacturing employment has risen for 18 straight months among those holding production or nonsupervisory jobs, the longest stretch of gains since the mid-1990s.

That is from the Wall Street Journal. The list goes on.

The economic growth we are experiencing is the direct result of Republican policies. Economic growth has accelerated over the past 2 years, thanks to the lifting of the burdensome regulations and a historic reform of our Tax Code.

Before we passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, our Tax Code was acting as a drag on economic growth. Small businesses faced heavy tax burdens that frequently made it difficult for them to expand and create jobs or even to get their businesses off the ground in the first place. America's global businesses faced the highest corporate tax rate in the developed world, which put them at a competitive disadvantage on the international stage.

Of course, all of that had real consequences for American workers. A small business owner facing a huge tax bill was highly unlikely to be able to expand her business or to hire a new employee. A larger business was going to find it hard to create jobs or improve benefits for employees while struggling to stay competitive against foreign businesses paying much less in taxes. So we reformed our Tax Code to make it easier for businesses to grow, create jobs, and expand opportunities for American workers. Now we are seeing the results—economic growth, low unemployment, higher wages, a record-high number of job openings, and more.

Importantly, the benefits of this growth are being experienced widely. The Wall Street Journal reports:

Racial minorities, those with less education and people working in the lowest-paying jobs are getting bigger pay raises and, in many cases, experiencing the lowest unemployment rate ever recorded for their groups. They are joining manufacturing workers, women in their prime working years, Americans with disabilities and those with criminal records, among others, in finding improved job prospects after years of disappointment.

Again, that is from the Wall Street Journal.

The Obama administration was characterized by a weak recovery and years of economic stagnation. There were predictions that 2 percent growth would be the new normal. But Republican economic policies have turned the economy around. Now we need to focus on ways to extend the benefits of tax reform even further and to secure the gains we have made for the long term.

Unfortunately, our colleagues across the aisle are more focused on dismantling the policies that created the growth we are experiencing today. Apparently, it doesn't matter to them that workers are doing better after years of economic stagnation or that jobs and opportunities are increasing.

They are set on dismantling tax reform and raising rates to fund their socialist fantasies. They want to spend \$93 trillion—more money than the GDP of the entire world—to put the government in charge of Americans' healthcare, energy usage, and more.

I wish I were joking, but Democrats' turn toward socialist insanity is all too real. The kinds of tax hikes that would be required to pay for Democrats' proposals would cripple our economy and severely downgrade America's standard of living—not to mention robbing Americans of their freedom to make their own decisions about all the various aspects of their lives.

It is mind-boggling that more and more Democrats are embracing socialism and the less free and less prosperous future it would bring. Let's hope their socialist fantasies stay just that—fantasies—because our economy might never recover from the reality of Democrats' proposals.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, when I hear my friend from South Dakota describe the state of the economy, it is amazing how political amnesia can take over on the floor of the Senate Chamber.

Do you remember the election of 2008 when Barack Obama was elected President of the United States? Was there anything going on with the economy when he took office? Oh, something that the Senator failed to mention—our country was facing the one of the worst recessions in the history of the United States.

You had to go back to the Great Depression to see the impact of this recession on the American economy, and it happened under a Republican President—George W. Bush. President Obama inherited that, and most people will never forget it because in 2008 and 2009, many people saw their savings devastated by the drop in value in the stock market. They saw this economy teetering on the edge and financial institutions failing. This all happened on President George W. Bush's watch. President Obama inherited it and had to turn it around—without the cooperation of the Republican Party, I might add. A handful of them stepped up to join him in a bipartisan effort, but most of them opposed him. He did everything he needed to do to save this economy and then started turning it around with job creation—unprecedented job creation—throughout the 8 years of his term.

Now, of course, along comes a new President who wants to take credit for all of it and, as the Senator from South Dakota suggested, blame President Obama for the state of the economy he inherited. History tells us a different story.

After this tax cut that the Senate Republicans are so proud of, I think you ought to ask the American families paying their taxes now to take a

look at their taxes and tell you how the Trump tax cut helped them as working families. For some, there is some value to it, but for most, there is none. You see, over a long period of time, the vast majority of the benefits of this Republican tax cut go to people in the highest income categories. If there were ever a group who didn't need a break, it is people who are already making millions of dollars each year. Yet this Republican tax cut gave them the break. It added trillions of dollars to our deficit, it helped the richest people in America, and it forgot working families and left them behind. Yet Republican Senators still come to the floor and boast about it with regularity.

There is a better way to approach this. Yes, I want to give tax incentives and tax relief to working families because we know they are not getting the paychecks they need to meet their obligations, to save for the future, and to make sure their kids have a better life. We should be focused on them, not the wealthiest among us—they are doing quite well, thank you. Let's focus on working families instead. The Trump tax cut forgot that.

(Mr. SCOTT of Florida assumed the Chair.)

#### DIABETES

Mr. President, millions of Americans got up this morning and faced the challenge of diabetes. For most of them, it is now routine to measure their blood sugar and to inject insulin when necessary so that they avoid the terrible outcomes of untreated diabetes.

At the highest levels of government, the person I think about immediately is Sonia Sotomayor, who is an Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Hers is an amazing life story. This woman from a Puerto Rican family went to law school, became recognized as a talented and brilliant lawyer, and eventually ascended to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court.

I got to meet her during the period of time when she was going through her nomination process. She slipped and fell at an airport in New York and broke her ankle and couldn't get around as much as she wanted to, so she parked herself in my office upstairs and invited Senators to come in to meet her. Between those meetings, I stepped in the room and got to know her and learned a lot about her.

It turns out, to no surprise, that this wonderful Supreme Court Justice from the Bronx is a passionate fan of the New York Yankees baseball team. We talked about baseball, and I said to her: Occasionally, the Yankees play the Cubs at Wrigley Field. Would you join me there?

She said: Sure. Invite me.

Well, I wasn't sure she would actually show up if I did, but I invited her. A few years ago, Justice Sotomayor came to Wrigley Field. She was a great sport. They had a Cubs jersey for her to wear, which I am sure she didn't exactly feel comfortable in, and she went