

quarterly review. Our colleagues in the House have been busy. In 4 months, over 100 pieces of legislation passed their Chamber. Here are some of them: Legislation to oppose the lawsuit that would eliminate protections for Americans with preexisting conditions. Who is opposed to that? Leader McConnell is. Legislation to reform our democracy and improve elections, restore voting rights, and get the money out of politics; legislation on paycheck fairness so women are treated equally to men; commonsense background checks for which 98 percent of Americans support; upgrades to the Violence Against Women Act; legislation to restore net neutrality; and despite the fact that the President shut down the government for over a month, these bills have passed the House, most every one of them, with bipartisan support. These aren't partisan bills. They are commonsense proposals to help the middle class solve our country's basic problems.

The Republican leader told the American people that under his leadership, the Senate would debate and vote on issues of the day no matter if his party supported them. Yet not one, not one of these bills has come to the floor of the Senate—not one. Not one has been debated in the Chamber. These are the bills. If the Republican leader doesn't love every aspect of one of these House bills, fine, we are not saying take them or leave them. Let's have a debate. Let's have amendments. At least let's try to compromise on language that can get through both Chambers.

What has the Senate been doing instead? Leader McConnell has wasted precious time on basically two issues, "gotcha" votes like a stunt on climate change and Republicans' cynical attempts to limit women's reproductive health choices. The remainder has been spent on approval of alarmingly unqualified nominees to executive agencies in the judiciary.

What are we doing this week on the calendar? Not one piece of legislation, just nominees. Next week could probably be more of the same. So over the next 2 years, the Republican Senate is in danger of becoming little more than a staffing agency to the administration's radical nominees. That is a tragedy because at the start of this Congress, the American people sent a clear message. They wanted us to work together on legislation in a bipartisan way. The American people voted for action: action on healthcare, action on prescription drugs, action on climate change, and gun safety. Poll after poll shows that these issues are on the minds of Americans. Substantial majorities, Democrats and Republicans, supported them. We cannot, simply because we have a divided government, allow this entire Congress to go by without making meaningful progress on these issues. This is not good for the country, certainly not good for the Senate or the Republican Party and the incumbents in those Chambers. The

American people cannot afford to have Leader McConnell turn one Chamber of their government into a legislative graveyard for 2 full years. We hope he will realize the folly of this both substantively and politically, and maybe we will start doing some real work.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Madam President, finally, on the economy, that is one area that deserves our attention, although you wouldn't guess it if you were listening to President Trump. President Trump repeatedly brags about low unemployment numbers and a rising stock market—two trends that actually began long before he took office. President Trump should say "Thanks, Obama" for handing him an economy that was well into recovery from the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. But what the President has done since taking office has been to tilt the playing field to allow most of the benefits of this recovery to flow to those at the very top. He can brag about GDP numbers, but when most of the wealth is going more and more to the highest level of people, it doesn't benefit enough people.

President Trump has consistently weakened programs that help middle-class Americans afford healthcare. He has rolled back critical worker and consumer protections and rammed through a tax bill that gave egregious giveaways to big corporations. Instead of the wealth trickling down, corporations have spent the lion's share of their new profits on corporate stock buybacks, which benefit shareholders and the CEOs—most of them very wealthy—not average Americans or workers.

If the economy is so strong, why is it that 4 out of 10 Americans can't afford a \$400 emergency expense? Why is it that income disparity grows, with the middle class left holding the bag? Recent polls confirm—and this should be a watch word, Mr. President—Americans don't believe the Trump economy is working for them. In a recent ABC poll, most Americans see the Trump economy as primarily benefiting those who are already in power, those who are already wealthy. According to Monmouth, most Americans say the economy hasn't benefited them much, if at all.

To simply brag about large macro numbers but not look at the effect on the average person who is making \$40-, \$50-, \$60,000 a year—that is wrong. That is not helping them. The group who believes the economy is benefiting them the most is making over \$100,000 a year. God bless them, but we ought to be working to spread economic benefits to the middle class.

Despite the President's trumpeting of self-selected economic data, the bottom line is this: The Trump economy is working OK if you are already doing quite well, but it is not doing enough—not close to enough—for working America and the middle class.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NOMINATION OF GORDON HARTOGENSIS

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I come to the floor to oppose the nomination of Mr. Gordon Hartogensis to serve as Director of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation and, really, to express my continued frustration with the Republicans' efforts to weaponize the nomination process for partisan gain, including their unprecedented refusal to move Democratic nominees for important Agencies, like the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the National Labor Relations Board, in order to tilt them in favor of corporations, and including their continued attacks on women's healthcare and reproductive rights by stacking our courts with far-right judges.

The Director of the PBGC is responsible for protecting the retirement security of almost 40 million people. We owe it to workers and retirees to make absolutely sure a nominee for this position has the relevant pension-related experience and knowledge to handle that challenge. One needs to have the determination to fight for workers and retirees and to have the willingness to work with Members on both sides of the aisle.

When it comes to Mr. Hartogensis, I am simply not convinced that this is the case. It is unclear to me why he was nominated to replace Director Reeder, who is doing a commendable job, well before Director Reeder's term was completed. What makes this even worse is that the Senate HELP Committee didn't have a hearing at which members could question Mr. Hartogensis.

I have asked the Trump administration why it decided to replace Mr. Reeder. No response. My Democratic colleagues on the committee asked the chairman for a hearing with Mr. Hartogensis. No hearing. We should be giving Mr. Hartogensis' nomination serious scrutiny, including having a hearing with the Senate HELP Committee, especially considering the complex challenges that the PBGC Director must help the Agency navigate amid our country's multiemployer pension crisis. Millions of workers and retirees across the country are at risk of seeing the pensions they were promised—that they earned and planned their financial futures around—thrown into jeopardy through absolutely no fault of their own.

I am hopeful we can focus on this issue more going forward, and I look forward to taking bipartisan steps to address this crisis, but I am disappointed that our committee, which