

that would snatch away the private health insurance plans that more than 180 million Americans rely on and jeopardize the Medicare coverage counted on by tens of millions more. That is what they are up to this week.

The House Rules Committee, and by extension the Democratic leadership, have officially granted a platform to this proposal, which could best be described as Medicare for None. That is not just some cute phrase. It is literally what the plan would usher in—an end to the Medicare Program as American seniors have known it for generations. Democrats want to take the program that seniors have paid into, which we ought to be shoring up and stabilizing, and, instead, pile every other American into it—one size fits all. That is what it is: End Medicare as we know it; reuse its name for a new sort of built-from-scratch, government-administered plan, and make sure the resulting Washington nightmare is the only game in town by outlawing choice and competition from the private sector. That is what they want to do.

To the 60 million seniors on Medicare, most of whom like things the way they are, Democrats say: Too bad. To the 180 million-plus other Americans who rely on private health coverage from their employers, many of whom like their own plans, our Democratic colleagues say: Too bad. All of these things that American families count on, I guess my Democratic colleagues want to wipe them all away in favor of this untested government takeover—completely untested.

In Congresses past, this kind of far-left proposal would have been unlikely to even receive a hearing. Democrats would have taken one look at this socialist steamroller and run away from it like the plague. Jeopardize current health coverage for nearly all Americans—one way or another—for the sake of leftwing ideology? Who would go for that?

Needless to say, times seem to have changed. Now, across the aisle, this level of radical intrusion is the proud rallying cry both here in Congress, and, of course, out on the Presidential campaign trail. One of the major ironies is that Medicare is not even safely on autopilot as things stand right now, let alone herding every other American into the system. As I have noted, the Administrator of CMS herself recently explained that “the program’s main trust fund for hospital services can only pay full benefits for seven more years.” That is the Medicare we have now.

Instead of a serious plan to shore up Medicare or address costs for middle-class families, Democrats are focused on raising taxes massively, trading consumer choice for Washington control, and destabilizing the current system in the process.

Senate Republicans will stay focused on middle-class families’ priorities. We will leave the destructive daydreams to our friends across the aisle.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, 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 senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination J. Campbell Barker, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Texas.

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

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. 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.

TAX REFORM

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, last week we got the first estimate of economic growth for the first quarter of 2019, and the news was excellent. The economy grew at a robust 3.2 percent in the first quarter of 2019, smashing expectations. The news is particularly notable because the first quarter of the year is typically regarded as a weak quarter for growth.

Then, this morning, CNBC reported that 275,000 jobs were created in April—also, far exceeding expectations.

And of course these are just the latest pieces of good news about the economy. The economy is thriving, unemployment is low, job creation is up, personal income is up, wages are up, business investment is up, and much more.

How did we get here? Well, just a couple of years ago, our economy was struggling. Some experts were predicting that weak growth would be the new normal and the economic progress we have made over the past 2 years wasn’t supposed to happen.

At the beginning of 2017, the Congressional Budget Office projected growth of 2.3 percent for 2017, 2 percent for 2018, and just 1.7 percent for 2019.

Actual growth, of course, exceeded those numbers: 2.5 percent for 2017, 3 percent for 2018—a full percentage point higher than the CBO’s projection—and 2019 is clearly off to a great start.

So, again, how did we get here? Well, after President Trump was elected and Republicans took office, we set out to do something about the economy. We knew that Americans were struggling. Recovery from the great recession was long and slow, wages were stagnant, and too many families were living paycheck to paycheck. American families needed relief, and Republicans were committed to giving it to them. That meant getting our economy going again.

If the economy isn’t thriving, then, American families aren’t thriving. You need a strong economy to produce the kinds of jobs, wages, and opportunities that American workers need to flourish.

So we got right to work trimming some of the burdensome regulations that were acting as a drag on economic growth, and we made it clear to businesses that we were committed to creating the conditions that would allow them to create new jobs and opportunities for American workers.

But we knew that while cutting oppressive regulations was important, more needed to be done. So at the end of 2017, we passed a historic reform of our outdated Tax Code. We lowered tax rates for businesses, expanded business owners’ ability to invest in their operations and their workers, and made American businesses more competitive in the global economy.

Now we are seeing the results: a thriving economy that is producing good jobs, better wages and benefits, and more opportunities for American workers.

Importantly, the benefits of this economic growth are being spread far and wide. In March, the Wall Street Journal noted:

All sorts of people who have previously had trouble landing a job are now finding work. 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.

That, again, is from the Wall Street Journal.

Getting our economy going again was a huge part of tax reform. We wanted to make life better for American workers, and we knew that a strong economy was the only way to create prosperity for Americans. We wanted to make life better for American workers, and we wanted to make sure that their families and the employees in the workplace all participated in a stronger economy. So we focused on creating the conditions for economic growth.

But that is not all we did with tax reform. We also cut individual tax rates across the board, we doubled the child tax credit, and we nearly doubled the standard deduction. Thanks to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, the average family

of four received a tax cut of more than \$2,000 in 2018.

We also made it easier for millions of Americans to file their taxes by reducing the need to itemize. In addition to promoting economic growth generally, we created opportunity zones to focus specifically on helping to revitalize distressed communities. Championed by Senator SCOTT, the opportunity zones provisions of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act provide incentives for long-term investment in low-income communities, with the goal of creating new jobs and economic opportunity for local residents.

We also took action to provide additional support to families by creating an incentive for employers to offer paid family leave to their workers.

Two-plus years ago, Republicans in Congress and the President set out with one goal in mind—to make life better for American families. I am proud that tax reform has expanded opportunity for Americans and made life easier for families, and we are not stopping here.

Republicans will keep working to ensure that the economic growth that we are experiencing continues and that every American has access to a secure and a prosperous future.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. 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.

NOMINATION OF RODOLFO ARMANDO RUIZ II

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the nomination of Rodolfo Ruiz to serve as a judge for the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida.

I first met Judge Rudy Ruiz in 2012 when I appointed him to the Miami-Dade County Court, when he was only 33 years old. He served Miami-Dade County very well, and 3 years later I had the opportunity to appoint him to the circuit court bench.

Judge Ruiz has an impressive record. He graduated from Duke University and earned his law degree from Georgetown University.

Following law school, Judge Ruiz clerked for Federal Judge Federico Moreno in the Southern District of Florida and later served as assistant county attorney for Miami-Dade County.

With 7 years of distinguished service as a judge in Florida, it is no surprise that the administration has nominated him for this position, and the American Bar Association agrees. They unanimously rated him as “well qualified” for the robe.

Judge Rudy Ruiz has honorably served the State of Florida, and I am proud to support his appointment to the Federal bench today.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

ATTORNEY GENERAL WILLIAM BARR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, as we speak, Attorney General William Barr is testifying before a hearing in front of the Judiciary Committee.

There may not be a member of this administration with more to answer for than the current Attorney General, and that is a pretty high bar. His confirmation occurred only a few months ago. Yet, in a short time, Mr. Barr's conduct has raised damning questions about his impartiality and about his fitness.

Just last night we learned that Special Counsel Mueller sent a private letter more than a month ago to the Attorney General that took issue with Mr. Barr's early description of the Russia investigation's conclusions.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a letter dated March 27, 2019, to Mr. Barr.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, THE SPECIAL COUNSEL'S OFFICE,

Washington, DC, March 27, 2019.

Re Report of the Special Counsel on the Investigation Into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election and Obstruction of Justice (March 2019).

Hon. WILLIAM P. BARR,

Attorney General of the United States, Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

DEAR ATTORNEY GENERAL BARR: I previously sent you a letter dated March 25, 2019, that enclosed the introduction and executive summary for each volume of the Special Counsel's report marked with redactions to remove any information that potentially could be protected by Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 6(e); that concerned declination decisions; or that related to a charged case. We also had marked an additional two sentences for review and have now confirmed that these sentences can be released publicly.

Accordingly, the enclosed documents are in a form that can be released to the public consistent with legal requirements and Department policies. I am requesting that you provide these materials to Congress and authorize their public release at this time.

As we stated in our meeting of March 5 and reiterated to the Department early in the afternoon of March 24, the introductions and executive summaries of our two-volume report accurately summarize this Office's work and conclusions. The summary letter the Department sent to Congress and released to the public late in the afternoon of March 24 did not fully capture the context, nature, and substance of this Office's work and conclusions. We communicated that concern to the Department on the morning of March 25.

There is now public confusion about critical aspects of the results of our investigation. This threatens to undermine a central purpose for which the Department appointed the Special Counsel: to assure full public confidence in the outcome of the investigations. See Department of Justice, Press Release (May 17, 2017).

While we understand that the Department is reviewing the full report to determine what is appropriate for public release—a process that our Office is working with you to complete—that process need not delay release of the enclosed materials. Release at this time would alleviate the misunderstandings that have arisen and would answer congressional and public questions about the nature and outcome of our investigation. It would also accord with the standard for public release of notifications to Congress cited in your letter. See 28 C.F.R. 609(c) (“the Attorney General may determine that public release” of congressional notifications “would be in the public interest”).

Sincerely yours,

ROBERT S. MUELLER, III,

Special Counsel.

Mr. SCHUMER. What a stunning indictment of the Attorney General, whose principal job in all of this was to make sure—to make sure—that he wasn't mischaracterizing or spinning results. This letter shows what an awful, awful Attorney General Mr. Barr has been so far. I will have more to say on this later.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. President, on infrastructure, yesterday Speaker PELOSI and I had a productive meeting with President Trump at the White House on the topic of infrastructure. We all agreed on the need to invest substantial resources in infrastructure. We all agreed on the need to modernize and rebuild our roads, bridges, highways, and also our schools, our housing, and our power grids, and there was a specific conversation about the need to invest in expanding broadband to underserved communities.

We told the President we needed labor protections, we needed a green bill, and we needed to see that minorities, women, and veterans got their fair share when contracts were let out.

It was a good discussion, but there is more to be decided. So what we agreed was that we would have another discussion in which the administration will present proposals for how to pay for the bill.

Let's face it, the reason we haven't gotten far in infrastructure is that the administration has come up with no way for pay-fors. We Democrats put in a \$1 trillion plan—not \$2 trillion—but we paid for all of it. We used tax breaks on the wealthy and the powerful who got huge, huge benefits recently to pay for it. That may not be the way the President wants to pay for it, but we want to know how he would because last time he came up with a bill that had virtually no real pay-fors—public-private partnerships, which even he discredits.

The bottom line is simple. We will get an infrastructure bill if the President will come up with pay-fors, and then we can put ours forward—we have