

managing partner at the Graydon Head & Ritchey law firm and then as CEO and chairman of the Atkins & Pearce company, an industrial textile business.

His active service on area boards was where he really distinguished himself. I got into the habit of just calling him Chairman because he chaired everything. He chaired the Greater Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce, the Children's Home of Greater Cincinnati, the Christ Hospital Board, the Fine Arts Fund for Cincinnati, and the Cincinnati Business Committee. I know I have missed a number of entities, institutions, and nonprofits he chaired. The point is, no one was a bigger booster or bigger contributor to our community.

I think I can speak for a lot of people when I say that we are going to miss his dedication, his humor, his wisdom, and his uncanny ability to articulate and define issues. He was an impressive leader, a dear friend, and a truly great Cincinnatian.

To his extraordinary wife, Louise, of 60 years; to his children, Lisa, Jeb, and Andy, and their spouses, Nirvani, Jack, and Melanie; to his grandchildren and his one great-grandchild, Jane and I send our condolences. We are thinking about you. Joe was so proud of each and every one of you.

May we all endeavor to embrace Joe's extraordinary commitment to his community and carry on his profound legacy.

Godspeed, Joe Head.

Mr. President, I would now like to yield to my colleague from Delaware who has just come to the floor, and I would like to speak after him.

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

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT CHRISTOPHER A. SLUTMAN

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I want to thank my friend and colleague from Ohio for his kindness in yielding to me today.

I rise this afternoon to pay tribute to an American hero—this man right here—an American hero and patriot who was taken away from us far too soon.

Earlier last month, I was standing on the flight line at Dover Air Force Base alongside Congresswoman LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER; our colleague in the Senate, CHRIS COONS; and our Governor, John Carney. We were there to join the members of three families who had come to receive the remains of their loved ones, all marines who had been killed in action on April 8—a couple weeks earlier—when a roadside bomb went off in Afghanistan near Kabul as their convey was passing through.

Two of the servicemembers killed were Active Duty: Cpl Robert A. Hendriks of Long Island, NY, and SSgt Benjamin S. Hines of York County, PA, which is not too far from my State of Delaware.

There was a third marine, SSgt Christopher Slutman. Christopher was a reservist, a 15-year member of the

New York City Fire Department, and a Delawarean. The 43-year-old U.S. marine was also a loving husband to his wife, Shannon, and the father of three girls: McKenna, age 10; Kenley, age 8; and Weslynn, age 4.

In life and in death, Staff Sergeant Slutman epitomized the best of this country. He selflessly put his life on the line to protect and serve his country and his community.

We read in the New Testament these words, and I will paraphrase them: No greater love hath a man than his willingness to lay down his life for a friend.

These three marines laid down their lives for our country, and they also laid down their lives for a nation we are allied with, the government and the people of Afghanistan.

Winston Churchill said a lot of memorable things, but one of the most memorable to me, a retired Navy captain, is that a reservist is twice a citizen. A reservist is twice a citizen.

By that measure, Christopher Slutman was three times a citizen. He wore two uniforms in service to our Nation. One of them was this uniform, the fire department—a 15-year, decorated veteran of the New York City Fire Department—and also that of a staff sergeant of the U.S. Marines, serving in the 25th Marine Regiment, 4th Marine Division in the Marine Forces Reserve, which is based in Harrisburg, PA.

Christopher's family calls him Chris. Chris had always dreamed of being a firefighter. He grew up in Maryland. He graduated from Frederick Douglass High School, where he played football, basketball, wrestled, and achieved Eagle Scout status. As a father of two Eagle Scouts, that is quite an achievement. Eventually, he volunteered with fire departments in Maryland and in Washington, DC. Most recently, he spent his time between the Bronx and Wilmington, DE, where his wife and three daughters lived full time.

As my colleagues know, I live in Delaware, and I commute to work here by train almost every day—3, maybe 4 days a week. Christopher Slutman had a similar kind of commute. His family was in Delaware, and instead of coming this way, he would go north to work as a firefighter in New York City. He took the train in the opposite direction to do his job. He so wanted to serve that he would travel from his home in Delaware to Ladder Company 27 in New York City almost every day. In fact, he was on military leave from Ladder Company 27 and nearing the end of his most recent deployment with the Marine Reserves in Afghanistan when he and his two comrades lost their lives.

It was for Chris Slutman's work in the Bronx that in 2014 he won the Fire Chiefs Association Memorial Medal for rescuing an unconscious woman from the 11th floor of a high-rise apartment building. I heard a firsthand account of that rescue, and it tells the story of a hero and a woman who could easily have died, and she didn't, and it was

because of his actions. Staff Sergeant Slutman lived that kind of profound love. He dedicated his life to serving others even at his own peril.

It seems that this kind of selflessness and devotion to service was a hallmark of the Slutman household. Staff Sergeant Slutman is survived by three brothers. One of his brothers is in the Marines, another is in the Army, and the third is a firefighter in Washington, DC—right here. Their father was an Army veteran and was also a volunteer firefighter, as was Chris Slutman's mother. What a family—Marines, Army, volunteer firefighters, firefighters up in New York City. I like to say leadership is leading by example. Leaders lead by example. It is not do as we say, but do as we do. They provide an incredible example for all of us.

Last Friday, I was honored to have been able to join our Governor, John Carney, and Staff Sergeant Slutman's family, friends, and fellow servicemembers in New York City to pay our respects, along with the mayor of New York City and many other dignitaries who were there to pay their respects to a man who gave his life for this country.

The first speaker at his funeral was Marine SgtMaj Christopher Armstrong—another Christopher—who served alongside his friend Chris for 8 years. Marine Sergeant Major Armstrong remembered Chris Slutman with these words. Here is what Christopher Armstrong had to say:

Upon joining the unit, I began observing the Marines; who they watched, how they looked at their leaders, and what they said. There were a small number of men that when they spoke, silence fell; when they issued an order, the response was immediate; and when they were looked upon, it was with reverence. Christopher Slutman immediately stood out as a leader who was both respected and admired. He didn't pound his chest, he didn't try to impress or go on about what he was going to do. He just did it.

He just did it.

Sergeant Major Armstrong continued:

Chris Slutman placed his Marines' welfare before his own. Chris never sought credit, but he always gave it.

Think about that. That is a good lesson for all of us, even here. Chris Slutman never sought credit; he always gave it to others.

Fire Department New York Commissioner Dan Nigro also spoke. He described Chris Slutman as "the type of American we can all be proud of." He continued: "Chris was a protector of those in danger and a defender to those who needed him, a rescuer to those who needed saving, and a leader who demonstrated his valor on every tour of duty, both here and abroad." Those are the words of the Commissioner of the New York City Fire Department.

I believe there was a poet named Edgar Guest—like a house guest—Edgar Guest. I think he spent most of his life in Detroit, MI. He was often-times referred as a people's poet. He

used to say: "I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day." Think about that. "I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day."

Chris Slutman, your life was better than any sermon.

Chris demonstrated the absolute best of our country every day with his heroism and his service to others. The way he lived his life and the way he give his life is a language that is clear to one and all.

It is with a heavy heart that I, along with the entire First State—that is the State of Delaware—and the people of this country, offer our sincere condolences to Chris's wife, Shannon, and their three girls. Their dad is an American hero.

Our congressional delegation and our Governor promise that he will not soon be forgotten.

I know that his legacy lives on in his daughters and in his wife Shannon.

A friend of mine was married to a Navy SEAL a number of years ago. That marriage produced a daughter who is 18 years old and who will graduate from high school later this month. Her dad died of complications of PTSD. He served in Iraq and Afghanistan, as I recall. He later came down with ALS, Lou Gehrig's disease. He succumbed to that about a year ago. Members of my staff in Delaware—constituent service staff—have worked for months trying to make sure that his 18-year-old daughter would be eligible for the benefits of her Navy SEAL dad, now deceased. We learned last month that she will be eligible.

One of the things our congressional delegation will work hard to do is to make sure that to the extent that Chris Slutman was eligible for the GI bill—and our guess is that he was—those benefits, under the law, if not used by the veteran, by the soldier, by the sailor, or by the airman, could be used by the spouse, and if not used by the spouse, could be used by a dependent child.

There are three dependent children here—three daughters who are beautiful girls, who anyone would be proud to claim as their own child, grandchild, or niece. We are going to work hard to make sure that those GI bill benefits—if there is any way to do this legally—accrue to Chris and Shannon and Shannon's three daughters.

I, again, thank my friend Senator PORTMAN for his kindness in yielding tonight.

To Chris Slutman: God bless you, Chris.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Ohio.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, first, I say thanks to my colleague from Delaware for the touching tribute to Chris and his service in the U.S. Navy.

I am here to talk about our economy, what is going on out there, and how we can do a better job of bringing people

off the sidelines and into work. They are needed.

Right now we have an incredibly strong economy. We just learned in the first quarter of this year that the economy grew by 3.2 percent. That is strong and way above expectations. In fact, when you look at the expectations that were set by the Congressional Budget Office, which is a nonpartisan group that analyzes what is going to happen in the economy going forward, prior to the tax bill being signed into law—that is, the tax reform and tax cuts from the end of 2017—they said this first quarter growth would be 1.6 percent. It is interesting. It was exactly twice the economic growth than was projected before the tax bill.

By the way, before the tax bill, they also made a projection on jobs. Over the last year, we have produced just about exactly twice as many jobs—a little more than that—than was projected. The tax cuts and the tax reform have worked, along with regulatory relief, to give this economy a shot in the arm. That is so important.

I will say that when you look at what happened in the first quarter of this year, the 3.2 percent is great, but it would have been even better had we not shut down the government. I say that because we have some new numbers from the Congressional Budget Office that say that the level of GDP this first quarter would have been 0.2 percent more if we had not had the government shutdown late last year, which was the longest government shutdown in the history of our country. So it would have been 3.6 percent instead of 3.2 percent. Wow, that would be terrific. I guess I bring that up only because I think it is time for us, again, to prepare for the potential of our having another impasse year at the end of this fiscal year on September 30. I hope we will avoid going into another government shutdown. It just doesn't make sense. It is shooting ourselves in the foot.

There is legislation called the End Government Shutdowns Act. Almost all of my colleagues on this side of the aisle have now sponsored that legislation. It just avoids our going into a shutdown but still allows us to continue to move forward on our spending and, over time, reduce that spending until we get our act together and do the appropriations bills here. Again, there is good news in terms of job growth in the first quarter.

The other thing I think is really important and may be the most important statistic of all is the fact that wages are going up for the first time in a decade. Really, in Ohio, for a decade and a half, we have had flat wages—higher expenses but flat wages. It is really frustrating to the families who are working hard and doing everything right but can't get ahead. Over the last year now, we have seen wage increases. A 3.4-percent wage increase is the strongest we have seen since the great recession. I love the fact that this wage

growth is happening not just among higher paid individuals but, actually, primarily among what is called non-supervisory employees. That is how the Department of Labor terms it. These are blue-collar jobs. These are middle-class jobs. These are jobs of people who, again, have had a tough time making ends meet. I know in my State most people work paycheck to paycheck, and it is great to have that higher wage come in.

We passed tax reform because we believed it is the right thing to do for our economy, for employers, for investment, and we have seen that positive impact. I have had over two dozen townhall meetings and roundtable discussions in my State, talking to employers, usually smaller businesses, about what happened to them with regard to tax reform. Every single one of them said the same thing: We have re-invested in the business. We have invested in technology, in new equipment, and we have invested in our people. In some cases, that means better benefits. In two cases, small businesses acknowledged to me that they weren't providing healthcare before the tax cuts, and now they are because of the savings from the tax cut. They have also invested in people's 401(k)s and other benefits. That is what is happening out there in terms of the business side of the tax reform and tax cuts.

In addition to that, there are also a lot of Americans who now have more of their hard-earned money coming home. Their paychecks are better because of the middle-class tax cuts that are in the legislation. For Ohio, this amounted to \$2,000 per year, on average, for a median-income family. I know there has been a lot of discussion by others saying: Well, really, these tax cuts didn't happen. Yes, they did. They did. That is a fact. Most people I represent have seen a tax cut, and a lot of those individuals saw their overall tax liability go down—not just that the monthly checks were better, but on April 15 they had better news. Let me give you some facts about that.

According to H&R Block, which is probably the firm that handles more middle-class tax returns than any other firm in the country, the average Ohioan saw a 23.3-percent decrease in their overall tax bill in 2018. This is from H&R Block. They also said that there is a 2.3-percent increase in the average refund in Ohio. I know there has been a lot of discussion about this back and forth, and early on people were concerned about their refunds. These are the numbers. These are the facts from H&R Block. Overall, about 90 percent of middle-class Americans received a tax cut in 2018, which means more money in their pockets to pay down student debt, to save for retirement, to take a long-awaited family vacation, and to be able to, again, achieve whatever their dream is in life.

The economy is growing, creating jobs, and wages are rising. That is all