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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.

Answer us when we call, O God, and have mercy upon our Nation. May, our lawmakers work to do Your will, remembering that You have set apart the godly for yourself. Provide our Senators a refuge in You, enabling them to shout for joy, blessed by Your righteousness and favor. Continue to supply their needs, teaching them how to abound and abase.

Lord, keep us all from slipping, representing us one day before Your throne with great joy.

We pray in Your majestic 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The Senator from Iowa is recognized.

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF APOLLO 11

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, July 20 marks 50 years since Neil Armstrong took “one small step for man” and, for the first time in human history, walked on the Moon. The Apollo missions should be remembered for generations to come as a triumph for innovation, for hard work, and for the American spirit. As we commemorate the mission to the moon that captured the world 50 years ago, we should look with anticipation to the next “giant leap for mankind,” and thus work to

ensure that the United States remains at the forefront of innovation and technology.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, economic data continue to confirm what we have been hearing from American workers and job creators for 2 years now: This is a pro-worker, pro-family, pro-opportunity economic moment. Hardly a day goes by without new headlines highlighting the new prosperity in communities that the last administration’s policies overlooked and the red-hot market for American workers.

Since January 2017, Republican policies have focused on letting the American people control more of their own money and letting American businesses create jobs more easily.

So what are the results? On our watch, unemployment has fallen to near 50-year lows and stayed there. Underemployment has fallen too. Wages are growing. Month after month, we have had more job openings nationwide than Americans looking for work. Specifically, there are currently about 1.6 million more job openings than Americans looking for work, the widest margin ever recorded.

Now, these aren’t Washington accomplishments. They are the American people’s accomplishments, but public policy can certainly change the conditions. Government can either create the conditions that help lead to success or to stagnation.

For example, bad public policies under the Obama administration help to explain why the insufficient and unfair economic “recovery” left so many

places behind. High taxes, heavy regulation, and a hostile climate for business—these things all add up. They took a real toll in many places.

Take my home State of Kentucky, for example. Kentucky is proud of our diverse economy. We are proud of our great healthcare and aviation sectors. We are proud that we are a tourist destination. It turns out that Bourbon and horse races are a winning combination.

We also take huge pride in the kinds of industries that liberal policies tend to either forget about or actively work against. I am talking about manufacturing and agriculture and mining and coal-fired electricity—the things that keep the lights on in America’s heartland. We could not be prouder of the huge role these sectors play in our Commonwealth.

So it is not surprising that leftwing policies dreamt up in places like New York and San Francisco, for places like New York and San Francisco, were not too kind to Kentucky—growth that was too slow, jobs that were hard to come by. Some so-called experts said it was just the “new normal,” but we knew better. We knew Kentucky could get back on track if we could only get a fair shot and fewer hurdles from Washington. We needed the government to stop creating headwinds and maybe even create a few tailwinds. That is exactly what happened over the last 2½ years.

Since January 2017, Republicans in Congress have partnered with the Trump administration to get our Nation’s opportunity economy going and growing again—for everyone. We passed the first comprehensive overhaul of the Federal Tax Code in more than a generation. We cut regulations that had reduced liberty and stifled our competitiveness. We helped American workers and entrepreneurs hang up a big, bright neon sign saying “Open for Business.” And—no surprise here—working Americans have taken the ball and they have run with it.

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



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I have already read the national statistics. I am even prouder about this. Instead of being left behind, Kentucky is helping to lead the charge. The State's unemployment rate has hit and sustained its lowest level on record. Again, that is recordbreaking low unemployment.

Last year, Governor Bevin helped Kentucky to welcome more than \$5.3 billion of planned business investment. This new growth isn't just concentrated in urban areas. Rural communities in the Bluegrass are seeing more jobs, investment, and expansion as well.

Of course, it takes more than 2 years to unwind the mistakes of the past. Parts of Kentucky are still struggling from the effects of liberal policies, and this Republican Senate, the administration, and leaders in Frankfort are laser-focused on continuing to invest in and fight for recovery.

In many communities, particularly in rural Kentucky, the lingering pain has been hard to shake—the damage to the coal industry, the devastation caused by opioid and substance abuse. So more work is certainly needed, and I am honored to lead the charge in Washington to help Kentuckians confront these challenges.

Through programs like the Appalachian Regional Commission and the abandoned mine land pilot program, we are investing hundreds of millions of dollars into struggling areas and out-of-work Americans. In Eastern Kentucky, Congressman HAL ROGERS and I have partnered with local organizations to secure Federal resources for everything from skills training to water infrastructure improvements.

I have helped to secure tens of millions of dollars to aid the retraining efforts of the Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program and job-creating programs like the Kentucky Highlands Community Development Corporation. We have also secured grants to bolster good jobs, support the environment, attract tourism, and promote healthy lifestyles.

These are just a few examples from just one State. There are stories like this all over our country. While the previous administration left these men and women behind, Republicans recognize their skills and their drive. We are investing in their futures.

TREATIES

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, speaking of economic growth and development, the Senate will soon turn our attention to a number of bilateral tax treaties with important U.S. trading partners. We have these kinds of agreements in place to reduce tax evasion, tax avoidance, and unfair double taxation of U.S. citizens and businesses who conduct businesses overseas. The four we will consider this week are agreements with Spain, Switzerland, Japan, and Luxembourg.

The U.S. Government and each of these foreign governments have pains-

takingly negotiated updates to existing agreements about how certain kinds of commerce would be taxed and which country will tax them. In short, Senate ratification of these protocols would mean less confusion, more certainty, and, often, fewer taxes for U.S. job creators—and, by the way, a simpler rule book for overseas investors who want to invest their money here. Fairer treatment for our own American job creators and more enticement for foreign investment to head to our country—that is what we would call a win-win.

We are talking about a serious economic impact. In addition to the four countries we are tackling this week, there are three more nations with tax treaties pending which I know the administration is continuing to work on with the Foreign Relations and Finance Committees to finalize work on these remaining agreements.

Combined, these seven foreign countries invest more than \$1.2 trillion in the United States. That is more than \$1 trillion in foreign investment and, by some estimates, hundreds of thousands of U.S. jobs are tied up, either directly or indirectly, in trade with these countries.

These trading relationships touch all 50 States. Every one of my colleagues is familiar with communities that benefit from the foreign investment. For my part, that includes thousands of workers in Kentucky.

One major manufacturer with ties to Spain employs 1,500 people in my State. It accounts for more than one third of all the stainless steel produced in the United States every year. Over the three decades it has operated in Carroll County, the surrounding communities benefited from more than \$60 million in tax revenue.

That is just one of many job creators in my home State, and it is far from the only one with a serious interest in seeing these measures get across the finish line. From consumer goods makers to industrial suppliers, Kentucky continues to welcome job-creating investment from around the world.

I think practically every American is familiar with Hot Pockets, a culinary staple of busy families, workers, and college students everywhere. But not everyone knows that, as of several years ago, every single Hot Pocket is cooked in Mount Sterling, KY. The facility employs more than 1,000 Kentuckians. The parent company is Nestle, based in Switzerland. So there are not only hard-working Kentuckians but also a lot of hungry consumers across the country who can understand why we need to keep our international trade in sync.

Passing these agreements will help every State to keep up the economic momentum. It will reinforce the international trade that is so essential to our economic success and help stave off further trade disruptions. I urge all of our colleagues to join me in voting for these this week.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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 of Peter Joseph Phipps, of Pennsylvania, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Third Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I listened as the Republican leader came to the floor and announced the business of the Senate for this week. Highlighted in the business will be tax treaties—tax treaties with Spain, Switzerland, Japan, and Luxembourg. According to the Republican leader, these are critical to economic development in the United States. I don't question their importance, but I will tell you that, routinely, these are done by voice vote. We don't spend the time of the Senate to come to the floor and talk about our relationship with Luxembourg.

When you look at the issues that most American families expect us to address, I would say the tax treaty with Luxembourg would be low on the list. What might be high on the list and should be considered in the Senate this week is the No. 1 concern of families across America—Democrats and Republicans. The highest concern and the No. 1 issue when asked about the economy of the United States is the cost of prescription drugs.

The United States Senate has the authority to do something about the cost of prescription drugs. We will not be doing it this week. We will be dealing with a tax treaty with Luxembourg.

What kind of issues, when it comes to the cost of prescription drugs, might be important? Let's start with one that I have started focusing on back home.

Did you know that there are 30 million Americans who suffer from diabetes, type 1 and type 2 diabetes? Did you know that 7.5 million Americans use insulin every single day to stay alive? Four of them were in my office last week from Illinois. They were between the ages of 10 and 17. Talk about amazing young people. Three young women and a young boy talked about their lives and what had happened to them since it was discovered that they had juvenile diabetes.