

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the title of the joint resolution for the first time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 59) expressing the sense of Congress on the precipitous withdrawal of United States Armed Forces from Syria and Afghanistan, and Turkey's unprovoked incursion into Syria.

Mr. MORAN. I now ask for a second reading, and in order to place the joint resolution on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to my own request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the joint resolution will be read for a second time on the next legislative day.

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2019

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m., Wednesday, October 23; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, morning business be closed, and the Senate proceed to resume consideration of S.J. Res. 50. I further ask the debate time on the joint resolution expire at 2:45 p.m. tomorrow and the Senate vote on passage of S.J. Res. 50; finally, that following the disposition of S.J. Res. 50, the Senate resume consideration of H.R. 3055.

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

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senators MERKLEY and BENNET.

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

TRIBUTE TO KAITLIN GAFFNEY

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I come to the floor today to recognize Kaitlin Gaffney, a longtime member of my Senate team who, after nearly 11 years, is leaving to start a new chapter in her life.

Kaitlin has been a key part of Team Merkley since our earliest days. In fact, she was part of the original team that built our office and our constituent services operation from scratch. I don't know how many folks here have been part of opening a Senate office, but it is not easy. It is daunting. You walk into a completely empty office. There are no computers, no phones, not even the basics in terms of pens and paper, and you know you have responsibilities, and you need to start fulfilling them.

In the early days, we didn't have a computer system to track our constituents' thoughts or opinions, so Kaitlin and the team wrote everything down on paper before moving to spreadsheets. There was no training on how to serve constituents, but from day one, that is exactly what we were determined to do and she was determined to do.

So you have to hit the ground running, learning as you go, and Kaitlin did hit the ground running like an Olympic Gold Medalist. She built our constituent services operation from the ground up, and I am proud to say that today, 11 years later, it is an operation that is second to none and one that Oregonians across our State know they can rely on for help.

It is Oregonians who know that if they are in a bind, the team they can call on is my constituent services team, and often that is Kaitlin, specifically. In the beginning days, we were in the middle of the mortgage crisis, and that crisis was forcing Oregon families out of their homes—where they couldn't afford the balloon payments or the doubling of the interest rate at the expiration of the teaser rate. They couldn't pay the high rate on the triple option loan. They were desperate, and they called Kaitlin. Kaitlin was the point person on our team fighting to keep roofs over their heads. She is the one who day after day had to consult with them in that very stressful situation where often a mortgage company was simultaneously telling a family they will be evicted for nonpayment and simultaneously saying we have this program in which you can sign up and don't worry. She is the one who brought together advocacy organizations, housing authorities, and local elected leaders to help assist a massive caseload of struggling Oregonians. Her direct involvement meant that a very large number of them were able to solve the challenge and stay in their homes.

Even today, as I go around the State, I hold a townhall in every county every year, and people will come up to me at those county gatherings and say: By the way, I just wanted to tell you that a decade ago a person on your team, Kaitlin, helped me out and I still have my home today and it is en route to being paid off. That meant so much to families.

There were all kinds of different challenges that came up over the years that she was able to assist with. There was a time when she helped rescue an Oregon constituent who was stranded on an island in the Pacific. One day, she got a call from a woman who was worried about her son who was on a trip to Thailand and had gone missing. His friend said he had told them he was going to swim across the ocean to a specific island, and they hadn't heard from him. There were strong currents between the mainland and that island, and the efforts to find him on that island had turned up nothing. There

wasn't really any organized effort to look for him. So Kaitlin did what she does so well. She picked up the phone, and she started making calls. Eventually, she was able to convince an office in Thailand to send out a search and rescue helicopter to go looking for this lost Oregonian. Because she did, he was eventually found, and he was rescued. Thus, the currents of the world changed with him still with us when it might have turned out quite disastrously.

That is the type of team member she is—always determined to go to any length necessary. That includes a situation when the life of a sick baby was in danger because this baby was being barred from the United States to receive a lifesaving medical procedure. Baby Fatemah was being barred because of a policy that had been adopted to block Muslims from coming into the United States.

It was early 2017, and this baby needed an immediate procedure to save her life. It was considered by the experts that there was a very small chance of her surviving with this procedure in Iran. The Oregon Health Science University in Oregon said they really understood this procedure, had very high odds of it going well, and that was her best shot.

So we had to work to lobby the administration, and, boy, I tell you, Kaitlin was right at the heart of that, working to coordinate all the phone calls. In the end, Baby Fatemah was granted a waiver, she did come to Oregon, and her life was saved.

In case after case, Kaitlin succeeded because she cared about the individuals involved, and she worked every avenue to assist them. She certainly embodied the spirit of my complete constituent services team.

I can't thank her enough for her dedication, the intensity of her efforts, and her incredible contributions to solving challenges for Oregonians. She leaves extremely large shoes to fill, and we will dearly miss her. After almost 11 years, she is on to another chapter, and I know she is just going to be as much of a phenomenal success in that chapter as she has been on my team, and we wish her well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

TAX LEGISLATION

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, Republican tax legislation in 2017 was completely misguided. Despite our best efforts, the bill passed in the middle of the night. It was completely partisan, not a single hearing. There wasn't a single Democratic amendment, and this is what that bill looked like.

As I repeatedly pointed out, the Republican taxpayers gave 572,000 taxpayers, with incomes over \$1 million, more in tax cuts than the 90 million Americans who had incomes below \$50,000 a year, making income inequality worse in this country.

In all, 43 percent of the benefits of the GOP bill went to the top 5 percent, households with incomes over \$319,000 per year. It is why I came down to this floor repeatedly to oppose that tax bill.

Since 2001, the United States of America has borrowed \$5 trillion from the Chinese for the privilege of giving tax cuts mostly to the wealthiest people in our country. We never paid for any of it. We said the tax cuts would pay for themselves. They never have paid for themselves.

Instead, we issued bonds, and we issued debt. The Chinese bought most of that debt to finance tax cuts for the wealthiest people in America. Over that period of time, we actually made income inequality worse during a time when income inequality is the highest it has been since 1928. We have had no economic mobility for 50 years for the bottom 90 percent of Americans—for 9 out of 10 Americans.

If I had to summarize my townhall meetings in Colorado, a place with one of the strongest economies in this country, it would be that people come to the townhalls and they say: MICHAEL, we are working incredibly hard, and no matter what we do, we can't afford housing, we can't afford healthcare, we can't afford higher education, and we can't afford early childhood education. "We can't afford a middle-class life" is what they are saying to me, the vast majority of people.

I have said that in an editorial board recently, and somebody said: Do you mean the vast majority? And I said: Yes, the vast majority. That is what it looks like when you have an economy that is not driving growth from the bottom up, when only the people at the very top are the ones that are benefiting from it.

There are people who don't come to my townhalls because they are too busy working two and three jobs, like the people I used to work for when I was superintendent of the Denver Public Schools, a school district where most of the kids live in poverty and most of the kids are kids of color. I know what their parents would say if they weren't too busy to come to my townhalls. This is what they would say: We are killing ourselves. We are killing ourselves, and no matter what we do, we can't get our kids out of poverty.

That is straining our democracy. It is straining the whole idea that we are a land of opportunity, when there is no economic mobility for 90 percent of Americans and when people who are in poverty, no matter how hard they work, can't get out of poverty, can't get their kids early childhood education, and can't get their kids decent health care. And most places don't have access to early childhood education, even if they could afford it.

Notwithstanding this challenge over the decade, what we have done in Congress is to borrow money from the Chinese to give tax cuts to the wealthiest people in the country. That is not all we have done. We borrowed another

\$5.6 trillion to pay for 20 years' worth of wars in the Middle East. That is \$11 trillion, \$12 trillion, \$13 trillion that from the vantage point of the people struggling in this economy, we might as well have lit on fire.

For that amount of money, we could have fixed every road and bridge in America. We could have increased teacher salaries by 50 percent. We could have paid for preschool for every kid in America who needs it—and that is every kid in America. We could have made it easier for people to afford college instead of having to spend 25 years of their life paying back their college loans, like some of the pages who are here tonight are going to have to do when they graduate from college. We could have made Social Security solvent for my kids' generation. We could have paid down some of our deficits and our debt, which is now over \$1 trillion, thanks to irresponsible policies of the President with the able assistance of the majority leader.

Tomorrow—I take no pleasure in saying this—we are being asked to vote on something that will make the Republican tax bill much worse, effectively repealing the cap on the State and local tax deduction, what is known as the SALT cap. It is a bad idea.

Before I get into that, I want to acknowledge my colleagues' very legitimate concerns who are going to be supporting this legislation. First, the Trump administration designed the SALT cap to take revenge against people who didn't vote for Donald Trump, to take revenge against some deep-blue States and districts. That policy shouldn't be designed with political retribution in mind. Every single passing day, this guy who is our President looks more and more like a tyrant or a dictator who believes that the only people he serves are the people who voted for him, and he doesn't have a responsibility for the rest of the country. That is not right, and I can see why people would want to correct that injustice. It is an injustice, and I am not here to defend that injustice. It is wrong.

Second, the Treasury rules to implement the SALT cap are overly broad in ways that harm existing programs with legitimate purposes. Nobody should be surprised at all that the Trump administration issued another sloppy policy that makes unnecessary opponents out of potential allies; that is, after all, their general approach to government.

But while I agree with the concerns of the proponents of the resolution, I believe we can address all of them in a much more effective and targeted manner than undermining the SALT cap. Some proponents have said that this isn't actually valid—the State and local tax deduction—and if we wanted to write a bipartisan bill that isn't about SALT, we could deal with the other tax policy issues affected by the Treasury rule. But this is about the State and local tax deduction.

So let me be very clear, the vast majority of the benefits of repealing the

SALT cap would go to high-income Americans. Repeal would be extremely costly, and for that same cost, we could advance much more worthy efforts to help working and middle-class families all over the country.

Let's take a look at what lifting the SALT cap would do. On this chart, these are the incomes of Americans, starting over here with people earning less than \$25,000 and over here with people earning more than \$153,000, and everybody else in between. The benefit of this resolution goes to people at the very top—the top 0.1 percent, who are people who have \$3.3 million of income on average; the top 1 percent, who have an average income of \$755,000; and the next 4 percent, who make \$319,000. Together, that comprises the top 5 percent in America. Under this resolution, the top 5 percent will get 83 percent of the total, and 83 percent of the benefit will go to people making more than \$319,000; and 56 percent of the benefit will go to the top 1 percent. So 56 percent of the benefit goes to the top 1 percent, or people making \$755,000 a year.

If we want to help the middle-class families who are harmed by the SALT cap, there are much less expensive and better targeted ways to do it. To put this in some perspective, SALT cap repeal is even worse for inequality than the Republican tax legislation—far worse. To summarize, 83 percent of the benefits of the SALT cap repeal go to the top 5 percent—83 percent—versus 43 percent in the GOP tax bill.

We can say we are for a progressive tax bill and for fighting inequality or we can support the SALT deduction, but it is really hard to do both of those things.

I feel strongly about it because of how irresponsible the other side has been. I know that is not the objective of people on my side, but the way we approach these issues really matters to the American people so they know whom we are fighting for.

Instead of repealing the SALT cap, which gives 83 percent of the benefits to the richest people and makes income inequality even worse in America, for almost exactly the same amount of money, we could cut childhood poverty by 40 percent. That sounds like a useful thing to do for America at a time when you have the worst income inequality that we have had since 1928. In 1 year, we could cut childhood poverty in America by 40 percent with a simple change to the Tax Code that SHERRON BROWN and I have written, called the American Family Act. It will cost \$1 trillion over 10 years, which is about what the SALT cap costs. That would be a much more valuable use of our resources than giving the money to the people who are making more than \$319,000, especially after the Republican Party passed the irresponsible bill they passed and we passed \$5 trillion of tax cuts since 2001, almost all of which went to the wealthiest people in America, making income inequality worse

instead of investing in our country, vainly waiting for it to trickle down to everybody else.

As you can see on this chart, these are almost the same income levels that are seen on the previous page of who benefits from the American Family Act. Thirty-one percent of the benefits go to the people who are making less than \$24,000—not 54 percent going to the top 1 percent, but 31 percent going to the bottom, the lowest income earners in America. Then, 24 percent goes to the folks who are a little less poor than that and, then, 19 percent and 19 percent. And if you are making above \$119,000, you get 2 percent of the benefit of it.

That to me seems like a much more reasonable approach, at a moment in the country's history when income inequality has been on the rise, economic mobility has been stagnant, and when we have an education system—and I say this as a former school superintendent, with no joy at all—that is actually reinforcing the income inequality we have rather than liberating people from it, because the best predictor of the quality of education is your parents' income to the point of savagery. That is the best predictor because your parents' income is an excellent predictor of where you will live,

and that is an excellent predictor of the education you will have.

The American people are desperate for relief in this economy. Republicans have made matters much worse by passing the Trump tax bill. I think Democrats should be on this floor fighting for progressive legislation that supports working people, that gives people a chance who are living in poverty to lift themselves out of poverty, and to give kids in this country a fighting chance no matter what the circumstances are of their birth.

The good news is that all of those things are available to us if we would come together in a bipartisan way and actually invest in our country again and create a Tax Code that actually drives economic growth for everybody, not just the people at the very top; rewards work again, ends childhood poverty, and delivers an education system that liberates people from their economic circumstances instead of shackling them to it; and pursuing a climate change policy that actually drives economic opportunity throughout the United States in rural and urban areas. We have an incredible opportunity in front of us as a democracy to change the way our economy works so that everybody benefits from it when it grows. That is how you build a strong democracy.

Donald Trump doesn't understand any of that, which is why he has pursued the policies he has pursued. It is important for us to fight those policies as well as offer ideas like the American Family Act, like increasing the earned income tax credit, like passing paid family leave, and raising the minimum wage. These are things we could do that will make an enormous difference to working people all over this country, and I believe that is the agenda we should be pursuing.

With that, I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL TOMORROW
AT 9:30 A.M.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 9:30 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 7:11 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, October 23, 2019, at 9:30 a.m.

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate October 22, 2019:

UNITED NATIONS

ANDREW P. BREMBERG, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA, WITH THE RANK OF AMBASSADOR.