

and we brought the U.S. international tax system into the 21st century so American businesses are not operating at a competitive disadvantage next to their foreign counterparts.

Over the last 2 years, tax reform has done exactly what we intended. It has allowed American families to keep more of their hard-earned money, and it has helped spur wage growth and increase the availability of good jobs for American workers.

For 2018, the average family of four with an income of \$75,000 saw a tax cut of more than \$2,000. On top of that, company after company responded to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act by issuing bonuses, improving benefits, or increasing wages. At least 100 utility companies around the country announced plans to cut utility rates for consumers.

Then, of course, there is the economic growth that the law has spurred. A whopping 266,000 jobs were created in November, smashing expectations and bringing the average monthly job creation for 2019 to a strong 180,000 jobs per month. Job creation since President Trump was elected has exceeded the Congressional Budget Office's 2016 preelection prediction by more than 5 million jobs. The unemployment rate is at a 50-year low and has been at or below 4 percent for an incredible 21 straight months. The year 2019 has also seen record-low unemployment rates for African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, Americans with a disability, Americans without a high school diploma, and veterans. For 20 straight months, there have been more jobs available than Americans looking for work.

Meanwhile, wages for American workers are growing steadily. Wage growth has been at or above 3 percent for 16 straight months. Before the start of this streak, the last time wage growth had reached 3 percent was more than a decade ago. Income inequality has declined. The poverty rate has fallen to a 17-year low. The list goes on.

Those are a lot of numbers and percentages, but they all boil down to one thing, and that is that American families are doing better. Thanks to Republican economic policies, fewer Americans are having to choose between a car repair and a doctor's bill. More Americans are able to put away money each month for their retirement or their children's education. There are more good jobs available for Americans looking for work.

Of course, there is still more work to be done. Our farm economy, for example, is not doing as well as the economy as a whole. Passing policies that will bring relief to our farmers and ranchers and expand markets for their products is a priority of mine.

But 2 years on from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, we can celebrate the fact that millions of American families are bringing home more money in their paychecks and have access to better jobs and better opportunities. Preserving and building on those accomplishments is a Republican priority.

Unfortunately, our Democratic colleagues are more likely to suggest tax hikes than preserving the tax cuts that have brought so much economic progress over the past couple of years. Democrats opposed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, despite the fact that many of the ideas included were the product of both Republican and Democratic proposals. They objected to it, and they fought it because they were determined not to work with this President.

Two years on, Democrats would still like to pretend the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act didn't help American families, despite the reams of statistics on the economic progress we have made and the fact that an estimated 90 percent of middle-class families received a tax cut. After all, if Democrats acknowledged that tax cuts have made life better for families, it would be even harder for them to defend the massive middle-class hikes that would be needed to fund their socialist proposals like Medicare for All and the Green New Deal. It is unfortunate the Democrats are so opposed to policies that have made life better for millions of Americans.

I am proud of all we have achieved for American families with the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. I will continue to work with my colleagues to keep our economy growing and to expand opportunities for Americans even further.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### SIGNING AUTHORITY

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the senior Senator from South Dakota and junior Senator from Tennessee be authorized to sign duly enrolled bills or joint resolutions during today's session of the Senate.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I am glad to finally be here today, talking about the final conclusions we have reached on the appropriations bill generally but, specifically, the Labor and Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill.

We are now a bipartisan Congress, with Democrats in control on one side,

Republicans on another. On this side, of course, we always have to have 60 people to go forward on these bills. We generally have had to have a bill here that would appeal to enough Democrats or enough Republicans to make this happen, but we have come to the conclusion of what is normally the hardest bill to negotiate. It is about 30 percent of all the spending after you take defense off the table. Defense is half of the discretionary spending; then you have 11 other bills that have the other half of that spending.

This bill has 30 percent of that half. It has lots of things that you could argue about and, frankly, lots of things that you would just say "If we can't all be happy about this, we won't move forward," which would mean you wouldn't move forward.

This is a bill where Senator MURRAY and I and Congressman COLE and Chairman DELAUNO on the other side had to decide if we were going to have a bill or not, and we decided we were going to have a bill. We decided at the end of the process, with some help from others, that we wouldn't have things in the bill that hadn't traditionally been there.

This is the place where much of the language that we debate in the appropriations bills occurs—what can happen and what can't happen. Things like the Hyde amendment have been in the appropriations bill for a long time, and it is in this one.

Other things that have not been there in the past are not there, and that was one of the things that allowed us to move forward.

Again, we had one body controlled by a different party, and we had to come to a bipartisan consensus, and I think we have.

There were lots and lots of competing programs, some of which we are all for, but maybe our priorities are different. In fact, it could be that we just have more priorities on one side than on the other. But these programs range from workforce training to early childhood education to infectious disease control. That is a pretty big span of things to try to come to a conclusion on.

Then, from our colleagues, we had 7,800 different requests—not necessarily requests that would be considered "I want you to spend this money in my State" but 7,800 requests that said "We think this program should be increased" or "This program should be decreased."

So with all of those requests and that broad span, we came together with a bill that I am going to vote for tomorrow and look forward to voting for tomorrow. It is not exactly the bill I would have done if I had been doing it by myself, but by the very definition of both democracy and the Congress, you don't get to do these by yourself.

The bill, which will reflect the priorities of both sides of the aisle and both

sides of the Capitol, invests in those priorities. We expand medical research—something that has been one of the things at the top of my list as the chairman of this committee. This is a moment when medical research is so critical, when we know so much more than we did about the human genome, so much more than we knew about immunotherapy just 5 or 6 years ago. This is a topic that wasn't on the radar screen of treatments. Now, for many cancers, it is one of the first things you think about: Does it work if we get this person's body focused in a way that it fights back this cancer that is trying to overcome it? Often, that produces a great result now that wouldn't have been happening 5 or 6 years ago.

The opioid epidemic is one that we deal with in this bill.

Investing in high-quality early childhood care and early childhood education and education generally are in this bill—trying to make college more affordable with things like Pell grants that not only work for people who don't have the income to do this without some help, our government has decided, but also now work year round for about the third year, when, once you get started, you can keep on going if you have a pattern that is working.

We spent a lot of time in the last year talking about what to do in this growing economy, where more jobs are available than people looking for work. What do we do to better match the people looking for work with the jobs available? More importantly, how can we anticipate that that will happen in the future?

For the fifth straight year, after 12 years of no increase, the National Institutes of Health in this bill will get a significant increase, an additional \$2.6 billion, which increases them in the last 5 years over 40 percent—again, at a time when this investment can mean so much to so many people.

We specifically targeted the investment toward Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's and dementia are the things that taxpayers pay the most on in order to help, and taxpayers don't pay nearly all of the costs that families have with Alzheimer's and dementia.

The President's Childhood Cancer Data Initiative is here. Precision medicine, combating foreign threats to research, addressing the facilities backlog on the campuses, all of those are here.

Our investments in NIH are making a difference for families and making a difference, we hope, for the future. That NIH-based research has helped raise life expectancy. It has vastly improved the quality of life for many Americans. It has lowered healthcare costs. It has very dramatically decided, in some healthcare situations, either how invasive you need to be or how much pain has to be involved in getting you headed in another direction but also, by the way, on the opioid front, understanding that the complete elimination of pain is not necessarily a good

thing unless you are sure you are going to be able to deal with that pain medicine and that moment later.

The bill fully funds the President's request to do everything we can in the next 10 years to eliminate the HIV epidemic. It would have been hard to imagine 5 years ago or 10 years ago saying that we would be in sight of a vaccine and eliminating HIV as an epidemic problem in our country.

We spend money on that, but we have fully funded what the President and others believe would be necessary to achieve that goal. We spend \$20 billion a year right now on direct health expenditures on HIV prevention and care. Our goal in the next 10 years will be to reduce the number of new infections of HIV by at least 90 percent every year.

Third, this bill, the fiscal year 2020 bill, continues our commitment to the opioid epidemic, providing money to do that, providing money for prevention, for education, for research, and for treatment, as well as recovery programs.

In this bill we put new flexibility in for the opioid epidemic to where those things you may go to after you have become addicted to opioids, like meth, can also qualify for the kinds of help that people need if they are trying to escape their addiction to pain medications or other things that they have become critically linked to.

This bill includes new and substantially expanded investments in Head Start, in high-quality early childhood care; programs that provide more flexibility to school districts to use the limited resources they have, whether that is title I, if you are a school person and know what that means, or title II, supporting effective instruction State grants; IDEA, the ability to help people with disability education issues; Impact Aid in communities that have significant Federal investments in military bases or a national forest or things like that. These are all things we deal with in this bill. We also target STEM education, including the focus on computer science.

We are also trying to bring focus for young people to make them more quickly understand what the options are out there. Clearly, the college path that has been so pervasive in the last two decades isn't the right path for everybody. And even if it is the right path for everybody, if it doesn't hurt to go to college—I am the first person in my family to graduate from college. If it doesn't hurt to go to college, it might not necessarily get you a job unless you know what job it is you are thinking about as you put your college life together. Even that might not give you the job that you really would like to do. So part of what we are trying to do here is to connect people earlier with the opportunity to do that. If they do go to college, we are increasing Pell grants for the third year in a row by about 2.5 percent. We are increasing programs—the so-called TRIO Programs—for people who haven't had

members of their family go to college before, to help them get ready for college, get them thinking about what they need to do to be the first person in their family to go to college, to help them figure out how to stay in college, because nobody in their family can give them the exact advice they might need on how to stay in college, and how they can get prepared to get a job out of college and avoid the kinds of loans they cannot afford to pay back.

There is something I call lost equity. I have talked to so many people in the last 2 years who are about 28 years old, and over and over again, the story was so similar. They went to college for a year or a semester and then held a series of jobs that were not too hard to get but didn't lead anywhere. They were landscapers or Uber drivers or bartenders or whatever else, with no sense that that was a career and not the underpinnings they would like to have. Then finally, in their midtwenties, somebody tells them or they figure out on your own that they have to have something that can support them the way they would like to be supported and help them with a family, might have retirement and certainly has benefits. We are trying to do what we can to be sure that focus comes earlier as they begin to think about what they like to do and what they find fulfilling.

Let's talk about the jobs that are out there, whether it is STEM education or health services. Let's talk about the difference between a nurse practitioner and being a doctor. Let's talk about the difference between being a doctor and a specialist. Let's talk about where the job opportunities are in physical therapy, occupational therapy, or health tech. All of those things are a way to a great career if you know what you are doing.

If you missed that launching point, if you missed those 10 years, that lost decade, it is pretty hard to ever catch up to your schoolmates who understood what they wanted to do and maybe had no more resources or capacity than you, but they had an extra 10 years on you in preparing for the career they would like to have and the work they would like to do and where that might lead them.

The President really has been focusing on apprenticeship programs. An apprenticeship is a good way to learn firsthand and see firsthand what you want to do, whether it is an apprenticeship program or community college or traditional college or skills you learn in the military that you should be able to immediately transfer into a private sector, nonmilitary opportunity. We need to spend some time and some money on that, and this bill does.

The bill continues to try to do what we can to be looking carefully at reducing fraud, reducing waste, and seeing that tax dollars are being spent properly, and a lot of them are spent right here in this bill. We prioritize

programs that really will provide benefit to, we hope, large groups in our country.

The bill reflects compromises on both sides. The people of this country send 100 different people to the Senate and 435 different people to the House to vote and to make decisions that reach conclusions. This bill does that. All 12 of these bills we will vote on sometime in the next 3 days do that. They allow us to defend the country and to meet the obligations that people have asked the government to look at for them and hopefully do that in a way that produces real results.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### BATTLE OF THE BULGE

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I come to the floor today to mark the 75th anniversary of the epic Battle of the Bulge. It was an incredible battle in World War II. To quote British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, this was "the greatest American battle of the war."

It was an incredible privilege to join veterans this past weekend at the 75th anniversary ceremonies in Luxembourg and Belgium. Remember, it was 75 years ago. The youngest among these veterans, if they went into the service at the age of 18, would, as of today, be 93 years old.

The World War II Memorial in Washington pays special tribute to the 16 million Americans who served and especially to the 400,000 who gave their lives for our freedom. There are two flagpoles at that memorial, and at the base of these flagpoles are the words "Americans came to liberate, not to conquer, to restore freedom and to end tyranny." In winning World War II, this generation gave their all to ensure that we continue to live in freedom. These heroes didn't return home until the war was over.

This weekend, we recognized a number of veterans who are still with us who helped win the pivotal Battle of the Bulge. For these soldiers, the brutality of the battle came in the bitter cold of winter. They battled the elements—wet snow, intense cold, and freezing fog. Every one of them suffered from hyperthermia, trench foot, frostbite, and illness. They shivered in their foxholes. They shivered from frigid conditions and maybe some from fright. I speak with deep appreciation and admiration and awe for their efforts, their excellence, and their remarkable endurance.

The battle began on December 16, 1944. That is when Germany launched a

surprise attack on the Allied forces in Europe. The Allied troops were generally outnumbered by more than three to one. In addition to the harsh weather, they faced treacherous terrain. Still, GEN Dwight David Eisenhower spoke with confidence. He said: "United in this determination and with unshakable faith in the cause for which we fight, we will with God's help go forward to our greatest victory." The Germans sought to divide and destroy the Allies, but it was the Allies who ultimately crushed the German Army.

The Bulge was one of the most punishing battles in the history of the U.S. military. Most of the 650,000 Allied troops were Americans. From December 16, 1944, to January 29, 1945, the Americans suffered 75,482 casualties; 8,407 were killed. The brave soldiers who fought in this brutal battle saved the free world.

Every soldier was a hero, and every soldier has a story to tell. My father, CPL John Barrasso, was one of those heroes. He reported to duty to the Pennsylvania Army National Guard in 1941, 4 days after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. He didn't return home for 4 years.

He was a gun crewman in the 108th Field Artillery Battalion of the 28th Infantry Division. He wore on his arm the red keystone patch. The Germans called the patch the Bloody Bucket, referring to the ferocity of its fighters.

He was one who landed at Omaha Beach, but he was always clear to point out that he wasn't there on that very first day. That is how humble these men are. He landed in Normandy in July of 1944. They beat back the German Army through France and then into the fiercest battle of them all. In combat for nearly 200 days, they fought against 45 of the 90 German Army divisions. He was awarded five Bronze Stars.

I have with me my dad's dog tags from World War II, along with his military prayer book. On the front it says "My Military Missal." On the back cover is a rosary, and there is a cross, as well as the beads, and you could work your way through the beads in your hand in your pocket in a foxhole, praying the rosary, as many of them did. I would point out that these beads are very well worn. My father was a man who always put his family, his faith, and his country first.

On this, the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, we honor the heroic and selfless efforts of our Allied forces. Their triumph over evil speaks to the core strengths of courage, character, and commitment.

We will forever give thanks for all of our World War II veterans and their families. We will never forget those who made the ultimate sacrifice. And we will always remember the valiant Allied forces who saved the free world.

In closing, I want to wish everyone—especially our dedicated men and women in uniform—a very Merry Christmas, a Happy Holidays, and a Happy New Year.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

#### TRIBUTE TO NEWELL HARWARD

Mr. ROMNEY. Madam President, I rise today to honor the extraordinary service of one of Utah's most dedicated county commissioners, Mr. Newell Harward. He has served Wayne County for the past 7 years, but he has taken on responsibility well beyond that, advocating for rural Utah with honor and distinction as chairman of the Six County Association of Governments. Newell has had an esteemed career and life of service to family, country, and God.

Growing up on the family farm in Loa, UT, Newell gained an early appreciation for the value of community, family, and hard work. He also developed a spirit of adventure, later serving a mission abroad in Scotland and joining the Wayne County Flying Club.

As the founder of Harward and Rees Construction, Newell is also an entrepreneur whose craftsmanship is literally built into Utah's infrastructure. His company has undertaken everything from city water projects, designs at Lake Powell, to a new bridge over Hell's Backbone in Southern Utah.

Newell is perhaps most widely known as a public servant who was elected to serve as Wayne County commissioner. After 4 years, Newell considered stepping down due to illness, but he was undeterred. With a writing campaign, Newell Harward was reelected in a landslide. In October of this year, the President welcomed Newell to the White House to recognize him for his lifelong advocacy on behalf of rural Americans.

A true appreciation for Newell's life of service would be incomplete without recognizing his unwavering faith and service to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Newell has served in three bishoprics, as bishop of a large ward, and in the stake presidency. As a loving father to Kelly, Lynette, Sarah, Shonna, Carol, and Travis, a grandfather to 18, and a great-grandfather to 3, Newell has left an indelible mark on Wayne County, the great State of Utah, and indeed our Nation.

All of us should strive to live our lives as Newell does, with an overwhelming love of family and community, an enduring faith, and a boundless spirit of adventure.

Newell, Gloria, and their family continue to be in our prayers as they fight health challenges with great courage. May God bless the Harward family.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.