

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 pre-election 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 DELAURO 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