

by 71 percent and the Dow Jones stock market index topped 18,000 in 2015, an increase of 177 percent over where it stood the day President Obama took office.

And, as an added benefit, the average price of gasoline has been reduced from more than \$4.11 per gallon to \$1.80, the lowest price since before the tragedy of September 11.

In short, Mr. Speaker, President Obama bequeathed a booming and vibrant economy to his successor, who promptly took actions to undermine it and explode the national debt.

Mr. Speaker, the GOP TaxScam was the wrong policy at the wrong time because it showered benefits on the top 1 percent large multinational corporations while doing little for everyday working Americans and Main Street small business owners.

GOP TaxScam also raises the nation's debt by \$1.9 trillion at a time when the economy was already strong, and when we are facing major long-term budgetary challenges driven by our aging population.

And rather than devoting resources to wise investments in our workers and small businesses, the GOP TaxScam further burdens working families, endangers Americans' retirement security, and worsens our budgetary outlook.

Our long-term economic growth trajectory is unchanged and there is no sign of an investment boom.

Real wage growth for workers remains modest and factories and jobs are more likely to go overseas.

The federal deficit is soaring as corporate tax receipts plummet and the tax code is riddled with even more special-interest tax breaks and loopholes.

THE GOP TAXSCAM LED TO A RECORD-SETTING \$1 TRILLION IN STOCK BUYBACKS

The GOP TaxScam delivered huge benefits to rich investors and CEOs through record-setting stock buybacks in 2018 while average workers struggle to pay for rising health care and living costs.

Stock buybacks do nothing to improve business operations or help workers.

THE GOP TAXSCAM SHOWERS BENEFITS ON THE WEALTHY AND LARGE CORPORATIONS WHILE DOING LITTLE FOR WORKERS AND MAIN STREET SMALL BUSINESSES

The GOP tax cut is heavily tilted toward the wealthy and corporations and exacerbates the stagnation of wages for the vast majority of workers and worsens income and wealth inequality.

The GOP tax law does nothing to help small businesses gain access to capital and grow their receipts.

Only 5 percent of small businesses pay taxes at the corporate level and most of the pass-through tax cuts go to the largest 2.6 percent of businesses.

THE GOP TAX LAW ENCOURAGES COMPANIES TO SEND FACTORIES AND JOBS OVERSEAS

Under the GOP tax law, income generated by American companies abroad face tax rates that are half the new top corporate rate of 21 percent.

Some companies may be able to avoid tax altogether on tangible investments made offshore.

This further incentivizes companies to move tangible assets, such as factories and machinery, overseas.

Rather than protecting workers and their families, the GOP tax law tilts the playing field against American workers.

THE GOP TAX LAW INCREASES DEFICITS BY \$1.9 TRILLION WHEN WE ARE FACING MAJOR BUDGETARY CHALLENGES DRIVEN BY OUR AGING POPULATION

Even after accounting for any economic growth effects, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates the GOP tax scam increases deficits by \$1.9 trillion over the ten years 2018 to 2028—hardly the “pay for itself” message we heard from the Administration and Republicans in Congress.

Our friends across the aisle promised the GOP TaxScam would significantly boost economic growth, spurred an investment boom, drove unemployment down to the lowest level since the 1960s, created jobs for millions of workers, and helped middle-class families keep more of their paychecks.

All of these claims have collapsed in the crucible of actual experience.

THE GOP TAXSCAM DID NOT SIGNIFICANTLY BOOST THE ECONOMY

In the seven quarters before and after passage of the Trump TaxScam, GDP growth is unchanged from the Obama economy, averaging 2.5 percent.

By 2023, the tax law's positive effect on economic growth will fade away entirely.

THE GOP TAXSCAM DOES NOT SPUR BUSINESS INVESTMENT

There is no evidence of an investment boom, which Republicans promised would be the key to unleashing unprecedented economic growth and wage gains.

Nonresidential business investment grew by less than 1 percent in the third quarter of last year, while business' orders for durable goods (another measure of investment) fell in December for the fourth time in five months.

Instead of encouraging investment, the tax cut triggered a record level of stock buybacks.

THE GOP TAXSCAM IS NOT THE CAUSE OF LOWEST UNEMPLOYMENT SINCE 1968

President Trump is coasting on an economic expansion—now the second-longest on record—that began under President Obama.

The law has not changed the unemployment trend.

The unemployment rate has fallen steadily since the end of the Great Recession.

THE GOP TAXSCAM HAS NOT CREATED JOBS FOR MILLIONS OF WORKERS

More jobs were created in President Obama's last two years in office than President Trump's first two years, a monthly average of 227,000 for Obama contrasted to an average of 191,000 for Trump.

Monthly non-farm job growth has slowed in the first 35 months of the Trump administration compared to the last 35 months of the Obama administration—36,000 fewer jobs per month under Trump.

The tax law also encourages companies to send factories and jobs overseas rather than protecting jobs at home.

THE GOP TAXSCAM IS NOT HELPING MIDDLE-CLASS FAMILIES KEEP MORE OF THEIR PAYCHECKS

There has been very little increase in private sector compensation or wages since the tax law passed.

Real wage growth continues to be disappointingly modest, and real bonuses increased by just 2 cents per hour between December 2017 and September 2018.

The law ignores the stagnation of working-class wages and worsens income and wealth inequality.

In fact, only 35 percent of the tax law's benefits in 2018 will go to the bottom 80 percent

of households making less than approximately \$150,000 per year.

EVEN THOUGH FEDERAL REVENUES HAVE RISEN, THE GOP TAXSCAM HAS CREATED A MAJOR REVENUE DEFICIENCY PROBLEM

Corporate tax receipts dropped an astounding 31 percent drop in 2018, with total receipts as a share of GDP falling to the lowest levels since the end of the Great Recession despite healthy economic growth and a tight labor market.

Revenue last year was 16.4 percent of the economy, almost two percentage points below the so-year average of 18.3 percent in years in which unemployment fell below 5 percent.

By contrast, spending as a share of GDP last year fell right at the historical average.

Predictably, the President and our Republican friends seeks to evade blame and responsibility for the fiscal mess and exploding debt they have created.

Instead of redressing the harm caused by the Trump TaxScam, Republicans resort again to their past practice of blaming the deficit on the entitlement programs such as Social Security, Medicare, SNAP, and veterans benefits and seek to slash these programs to the barebones.

For example the President sought to cut non-defense discretionary (NDD) programs by \$1.4 trillion, including cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, reduce funding for SNAP by \$220 billion or 22 percent, and deny infrastructure funding for cash-strapped state and local governments; and pile more hardships on struggling Americans with \$327 billion in cuts to direct spending programs that safeguard basic living standards they need to get by.

The President is obsessed with dismantling and destabilizing health care for millions of Americans by making yet another attempt to “repeal and replace” the Affordable Care Act passed under the extraordinary leadership of President Barack Obama which provided health security to more than 20 million Americans.

Mr. Speaker, we are now entering Act III of the immorality play we predicted the President would write.

Act I was the cutting of taxes for the rich; Act II was the inevitable exploding of the deficit we predicted would result and our Republican friends denied would ever happen.

And now we have Act III, in which Republicans claim to have newly rediscovered their horror over the deficits created by their fiscal irresponsibility and insist that the mess they created but be cleaned up by slashing investments in the programs relied upon by the 90–95 percent of Americans who were made worse off by the GOP TaxScam.

The President should be embarrassed and ashamed of his economic stewardship and thankful every day to President Obama for tackling and solving the major economic challenges facing Americans.

OPPOSITION TO IMPEACHMENT TRIAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. MASSIE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MASSIE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the marathon impeachment sham trial currently underway and occupying the Senate's valuable time.

Frankly, the American people tuned out a long time ago. They find the proceeding simply boring, and rightly so. In fact, a recent focus group of Democrats said they don't even care about this impeachment trial. They are not interested, and they are ready to move on.

The truth is that, despite all of the repetitive accusations of coverup, quid pro quo, he said, she said, et cetera, et cetera, this is nothing more than an attempt at a soft coup against President Trump by the people who still can't get over the fact that he beat Hillary Clinton fair and square at the ballot box.

Just listen to some of the recent rants made by the impeachment managers. As one manager says: "The President's misconduct cannot be decided at the ballot box, for we cannot be assured that the vote will be fairly won."

What an insult to American voters. If we can't trust the American voters, who can we trust? Does he think they are gullible? Does he think he is better than them?

Or take the comments of another impeachment manager, a Democrat. He said, referring to President Trump: "He is a dictator. This must not stand, and that is another reason he must be removed from office."

These are insulting to the American public who chose this President over Hillary Clinton.

But these are the types of comments you would expect in a Third World country in which military coups are a common occurrence, not in the United States of America where we honor the votes and choices of the American people.

President Zelensky and President Trump both said there was no pressure or coercion, and the call transcripts have been released to the public to prove this.

But even if there had been pressure, if withholding foreign aid is an impeachable offense, why did Joe Biden threaten to do it?

As I have stated repeatedly, if the bar of high crimes and misdemeanors has been brought down so low to include President Donald Trump's so-called abuse of power, then Joe Biden should be charged for his actions in Ukraine. Instead, he gets a pass.

This impeachment trial is simply a farce. But it is an expensive and time wasting one foisted on the American people by those who do not have our country's best interests at heart.

Even the Speaker of the House, who is a Democrat, said, if there is going to be an impeachment trial, if there is going to be impeachment proceedings, it should be bipartisan, it would have to be bipartisan.

Mr. Speaker, the only thing bipartisan about this sham is the opposition to it. Democrats joined every Republican to vote against it in the House. I expect we are going to see similar results in the Senate, a bipartisan opposition to this partisan sham.

I look forward to the Senate bringing this farce to a speedy conclusion.

END THE USE OF TOXIC MILITARY BURN PITS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. RUIZ) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address one of the most pressing health threats facing veterans across this Nation: exposure to burn pits.

Burn pits are literal pits, sometimes 10 acres large, used by the military to burn trash, medical waste, jet fuel, batteries, even human waste. As you might imagine, this creates large plumes of toxic black smoke, which can have terrible health effects for anyone exposed.

Our servicemembers and veterans who were exposed to burn pits are developing severe, debilitating pulmonary diseases like pulmonary fibrosis and constricted bronchiolitis, leaving them oxygen dependent. And young veterans are dying from rare cancers of the brain, pancreas, blood cells, and other organs.

This means that many of our servicemembers survived the battlefield but only become delayed casualties of war at home, dying due to lung and pulmonary illnesses, from cancers, from autoimmune diseases from their burn pit exposures.

If we don't act now, they will be resigned to the same fate as our Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange, who waited up to 30 years to get the help they needed. For many, it was too late.

Our veterans cannot wait. It is my objective to end the use of toxic military burn pits once and for all and give servicemembers and veterans the care they need. That is why, today, I urge a vote on two bills that would go a long way to address this critically important issue:

H.R. 4574, the Veterans' Right to Breathe Act, which would establish presumption of service-connected exposure to burn pits for nine evidence-based pulmonary diseases, including chronic bronchiolitis and others; and

H.R. 4137, the Jennifer Kepner HOPE Act, which would make veterans exposed to burn pits eligible for low-cost healthcare through the Priority Group 6 under the Veterans Health Administration.

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These bills are part of the comprehensive plan to end the use of burn pits, educate physicians and veterans on their health effects, get veterans and servicemembers exposed to burn pits the healthcare and benefits they need, and continue research to fully understand the health impacts posed by burn pits.

We cannot let burn pit exposure become this generation's Agent Orange. We must act now for veterans and for their families.

CBP DIRECTIVE FALLS SHORT

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because children and families in CBP

custody continue to be without basic humanitarian standards of care.

Late last year, Customs and Border Protection put out a directive outlining its "enhanced medical support efforts," with the objective of mitigating risks for people in CPB custody along the southwest border. But their directive for addressing medical needs falls short of even basic humane treatment to prevent the heartbreaking conditions I saw when I visited the southern border: people piled on top of each other in cold, windowless, concrete rooms, crowded with so many bodies you couldn't even see the floor; open toilets in crowded cells; and visibly sick children coughing on one another.

The conditions I witnessed were inhumane and inconsistent with our American values and our moral conscience, and the CBP directive does nothing to address them.

The directive does not include, for example, pregnant women, the elderly, or disabled individuals as vulnerable populations who need priority screening. The CBP medical directive does not address humanitarian standards for water, sanitation, hygiene, shelter, or food and nutrition, nor does it even set standards for private, safe, clean, and reliable toilets with proper waste disposal.

Last year, I wrote the House-passed H.R. 3239, the Humanitarian Standards for Individuals in CBP Custody Act. This bill sets basic public health standards for people in CBP's care, such as health screening priorities, nutrition, food standards, water, sanitation, hygiene, and reporting requirements. It makes sure individuals have essentials, such as toothbrushes, diapers, and baby formula.

Because this bipartisan bill was blocked from consideration in the Senate, these standards of care for children and families are not currently law, and the recent CBP medical directive falls short. It fails to outline proper humanitarian standards of care.

This is why the Senate must take up and pass the bipartisan bill, the Humanitarian Standards for Individuals in CBP Custody Act, to ensure CBP's treatment of children and families is consistent with our American values and the principles of basic human dignity and prevent children from dying under the custody and responsibility of CBP.

CELEBRATING HICKORY'S 150TH ANNIVERSARY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Hickory, North Carolina.

In 1870, Adolphus Shuford founded Hickory Tavern, which would later become the city of Hickory. Originally, it