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Senate

The Senate met at 4:03 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JONI ERNST, a Senator from the State of Iowa.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God, our Father, in these turbulent and uncertain times use our lawmakers to live to bless others, bringing glory to Your Name with their sacrificial service. Lord, give them wisdom to persevere through the difficult, to stay calm when facing the irritating, and to experience Your peace even when things go wrong. Enable them to be helpful to the challenged, kind to the needy, and sympathetic to those whose hearts are bruised by life's setbacks. Surround our Senators with Your protection and the shield of Your Divine favor, bringing them to Your expected end.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, November 13, 2017.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable JONI ERNST, a Senator from the State of Iowa, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. ERNST thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

TAX REFORM

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, for too long many in America's middle-class families felt left behind by the Obama economy. Paychecks seemed to stagnate, good-paying jobs seemed harder to find, and opportunities seemed difficult to come by.

Our country can do better for hard-working families, and that is exactly what we are working to deliver as we continue our efforts to pass tax reform. It is a once-in-a-generation opportunity, and it is the most important thing we can do today to get our economy really growing again and going again.

Last week, the House Ways and Means Committee passed its proposal to lower taxes and to boost economic growth. I would like to commend Chairman BRADY for his efforts to get the bill approved by the Committee and to the floor of the House.

Here in the Senate, we also remain focused on tax reform this week. Today, the Finance Committee began its mark-up of the tax reform proposal released last week. Under the leadership of Chairman HATCH, the committee will consider this plan that really has been many years and dozens of hearings in the making.

The Finance Committee's tax plan will help hard-working Americans keep more of their own money. It will help

create more jobs here at home, and it will help increase opportunities for the middle class. Consider this from a recent news report titled: "Middle class biggest winners in Senate tax plan, study says."

"Moderate-income people would consistently see the largest percentage declines in their tax bills," the article says, "according to an analysis released late Saturday by the official, nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation."

"In 2019," the article continues, "people in the middle of the income spectrum earning, between \$50,000 and [\$75,000], would see their taxes fall by 7.1 percent. Those earning between \$20,000 and \$30,000 would see a 10.4 percent decline."

Here is another recent article, titled: "Senate bill would cut taxes by \$1.78 trillion, create [925,000] new jobs, study finds."

The article noted that the Finance Committee's bill "would boost the economy, creating 925,000 new jobs and raising wages by 2.9 percent over 10 years, according to a new analysis released Thursday by the Tax Foundation." According to that study, families in my home State of Kentucky can see a boost to after-tax incomes for middle-income families," of nearly \$2,000.

Earlier today, I had an opportunity to meet with a number of Kentucky small business owners and workers to hear from them about the importance of tax reform. We discussed how this effort can help provide relief to small businesses and middle-class families by making taxes lower, simpler, and fairer. Tax reform can help provide real relief to families and small businesses that felt left behind by our economy.

The proposal that the committee will take up today is the product of years of listening to people across the country who are calling out for relief. It is from careful study of our current Tax Code, understanding what it gets right and what it too often gets wrong.

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



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